

Many of the worst horrors connected with the treatment of the insane during the last half century were consummated within the walls of county almshouses. In New York, where the practice of transferring cases who failed to recover in a certain time from the Utica Asylum to the county poorhouses was in vogue for nearly thirty years, and where the county asylum system flourished for over eighteen years, the abuses which seem to be inseparable from almshouse and county arrangement so aroused public opinion that both methods were abolished. By the passage of the State Care Act of 1890, an act which affirms that the dependent insane are the wards of the State, and that their interests and maintenance should be confined exclusively to the State, New York justly earned the proud encomium that, "The leading chapter in the (past) century's history of the care and treatment of the insane in America will be the humane and progressive record of the Empire State."

The State of New Hampshire has also lately recognized the injustice of this method of caring for the insane, and, in 1903, passed an act abolishing county care, and providing for the removal of all lunatics confined in county almshouses to the State hospitals within a period of six years.

That those connected with and so best qualified to judge of the working of the Nova Scotia system are not themselves enamoured with it may be judged from the 1903 Report of Public Charities. Therein, the Inspector, Dr. George L. Sinclair, an alienist of repute and a former superintendent of the Provincial Hospital, says:—

"The plan of county care adopted in this province has many grave objections. In a properly equipped and well-officered local asylum, reserved for the exclusive use of insane or imbecile inmates, the objectionable features are fewest. The scheme of associating in one house both sane and insane persons is the most objectionable and unsatisfactory.

"Unfortunately our law permits this to be done, provided the building is made suitable for both classes and for both purposes to the satisfaction of the Governor-in-Council. The difficulties to be overcome to make such a plan of care unobjectionable pertain quite as much to the structure of the municipal mind as to that of the building.

"It is most unfair to the sane members of such a household, whose only affliction is poverty, to compel them to associate with the insane and imbeciles, who are not only irresponsible, but may be a source of positive danger to their companions in misfortune, and it is distinctly unjust to the insane inmates to attempt to care for them with the limited oversight and attention which the small staff of an almshouse can give.