

GENERAL ACCOUNT

A SURVEY of Nova Scotia having been asked for by the Provincial Government, the Medical Director, the Associate Medical Director, and the Social Service worker of the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene, undertook the work in August and September of 1920. An extensive itinerary was mapped out by Dr. W. H. Hattie, Provincial Health Officer, Nova Scotia, and almost a complete round of Nova Scotia made, very few of the institutions included in the list given us being passed by.

The conditions met with in this important Province were so different from those encountered elsewhere in Canada that special care was taken in arriving at the truth regarding some of them. It was soon apparent that the point of view regarding the care of the insane was vastly different from that adopted in most communities in America, and it was only too evident that insanity did not come in the category of diseases, when patients had reached the so-called harmless stage.

A perusal of the Statute relating to Local Asylums for the Harmless Insane makes clear the attitude of the Province, and in the interpretation of this Statute it is laid down as follows:—"The expression 'harmless insane' in this chapter includes idiotic persons and epileptic persons who are insane, but who have not manifested symptoms of violent insanity." It is also specified that "the same building may be used for the purposes of a poor house and asylum for the harmless insane, if such building is made suitable for both purposes to the satisfaction of the Governor in Council."

The machinery for the admission of the so-called harmless insane to the poor house or asylum is similar to that employed in securing admission to the hospital for the insane. In the regulations for "Local Asylums for the Harmless Insane" are many recommendations which are of peculiar interest when compared with the conditions found during our survey. These By-Laws and Regulations are intended to instruct superintendents and the employees, but are apparently not mandatory, stating that "it is not claimed that they define with absolute accuracy the duties of the officials, or that they can in every case be entirely and rigidly followed, but it is thought that they contain directions by which the persons for whose use they are intended may carry on their work with credit to themselves and their employers, and with benefit to those who are admitted to their care."