

of cure would be greatest, and the time required for treatment at its lowest limit.

The "van system," in connection with "grocers' licences" in Scotland, appears to be the most pernicious custom in the sale of intoxicating liquors. The van may be briefly described as a perambulating drink-shop, combined with the worst evils of the tally-shop. The system is a most pernicious and insidious incitement—not only to drink, but to debt.

The Commission recommends that these vans should be liable to search ; that the drivers must produce when called on signed orders from customers, must carry no liquor beyond that in supply of such orders, and that each order should bear the name and address of the sender. These regulations it is to be feared are too easy of evasion, nor do they touch the worst feature of the system—the debt. We would suggest that all transactions under van system should be for cash, and that there should be no recovery for debt thus contracted.

The Report concludes by urging that licensed houses should be greatly reduced in number, and by asserting that, "while no claim to compensation can be urged by those who lose their licences, some allowance might be made as a matter of grace, which, however, should be raised, not from public rates or taxes, but from the trade itself."

Statistics of great value and importance in regard to the consumption of liquor in this and other countries (especially in Norway and Sweden), of cases of drunkenness, of deaths from alcoholic causes, etc., are given in an appended memorandum by Mr. Whittaker.

The Report, indeed, contains a large amount of information on the drink question, and should be studied by all interested.

The Medico-Psychological Association as a body, moreover, should note the fact that the Commission does not seem to have troubled itself with statistics in regard to the share of intoxicants in the production of mental disease.

London Lunacy.

The tenth annual Report of the Asylums Committee of the London County Council has now attained very closely to the

bulk of the blue-book of the Lunacy Commission, and contains information of scarcely less interest.

The total number of pauper lunatics of the county of London is now upwards of 21,000, being rather more than a fifth of the whole lunacy of England and Wales. This vast number, moreover, is increasing by an annual addition of upwards of 600; it is not, therefore, a matter for surprise to find that, in despite of all efforts, the provision of asylum accommodation has not yet overtaken the demand, although by the completion of the asylums now in hand (including a working colony for 300 epileptics) the total number of beds on January 1st, 1901, will be 16,500, giving a surplus of 600 at that date, which will about meet the estimated increase for that year.

Receiving-houses seem to be in a fair way to become accomplished facts, since the statement is made that their establishment has been recommended by a special sub-committee, and by a conference of guardians representing the metropolitan unions and parishes. The Commissioners in Lunacy also are said to favour their institution.

This matter has been so often and so long advocated in this JOURNAL, that the carrying out of this system of early treatment is welcomed with great satisfaction, and its influence on the admission rate to the asylums will be watched with much interest.

The examination of attendants by the Medico-Psychological Association is spoken of very favourably, and this no doubt will lead to a considerable increase in the number of candidates from the London asylums.

The statistics of relapse receive special consideration in two tables. The first shows that the relapsed cases readmitted into the asylums from which they were discharged up to the 31st March, 1899, amounted to 20·53 per cent. of those discharged recovered during the four years ending December 31st, 1898. A second table shows that 13·49 per cent. of these relapses occurred within twelve months of their discharge.

The readmissions into the same asylum in England and Wales, as stated in the Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy, varied from 14·3 in 1894 to 16·1 in 1897, but these relapses relate to patients discharged at any date, and not, as in the London County Council Report, within the four years ending

31st December, 1898. Hence the excess of relapses is probably greater than that which is shown by the figures 20·53 per cent., as compared with a mean of about 15 per cent. for the whole country.

Accurate records and other circumstances may account for some of this apparent excessive relapse rate, but not for all; and it would be of interest to arrive at any facts that might throw light on the question. Is there, for instance, any relation between the period under treatment and relapse? Do early discharges produce early relapses? What proportion of relapses is due to intemperance? Many other questions of importance might be asked.

The prevention of relapse is one of the most important subjects with which we have to deal in arresting the accumulation of lunatics, and it involves the recognition of the fact that legal mental recovery is not the same as medical recovery; that a person who is no longer certifiable may still be in such a physical state that discharge from the asylum is certain to be followed by relapse.

Convalescent care, in or out of the asylum, is needed for such cases—in asylums as voluntary patients, or out in suitable homes. Recovered inebriates should be sent to inebriate homes when the Habitual Drunkards Act comes into full action.

The report is replete with evidence of the vigorous activity of the London County Council, as, for example, in the publication of the *Pathological Archives*, edited by Dr. Mott, which are the most brilliant evidence of the dawn of a new era in the treatment of London lunacy.

The Treatment of the Poor.

There can be no doubt that legislature is tending towards methods of treatment of the poor which are indicative of the total downfall of Bumbledom. In that large class with which we are more immediately concerned, there are unfortunately all sorts and conditions of men. As Mr. T. W. L. Spence showed so clearly in a recent pamphlet, the great majority of "pauper" lunatics are gathered from strata of society which would never have touched the depths of pauperism except by reason of