

in superintending the administration of the new statute will, in our opinion, be the possible abuse by counsel, from excess of zeal, of the right of cross-examining prisoners electing to give evidence on their own behalf. But from the admirable manner in which the judges have confirmed the right of "summing up" enjoyed by counsel for the prosecution under Denman's Act, within safe working limits, we have no fear of the result of the fresh test to which the Legislature is now submitting their firmness and capacity.

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*Prison Reform.*

Whether the flogging of prisoners in gaols for breaches of discipline is good policy or not is a question in regard to which experts may and do entertain very different opinions. But there will be little disposition in any quarter, we should think, to criticise adversely the provision of the new Prisons Act that such punishment shall only be inflicted in cases of mutiny and violence, and then after judicial inquiry by a Board of visiting justices, with a stipendiary magistrate to act with them if necessary, and after ratification of the sentence by the Secretary of State. This reform in the law will achieve several desirable ends. It will confine what is, under any circumstances, a brutal punishment to cases of real gravity and brutality; it will protect prisoners against the whims to which even visiting justices are subject; and it will secure that uniformity of practice in regard to prison floggings which has hitherto in England been conspicuous by its absence.

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*Inebriates Act.*

The Inebriates Act of 1898 marks a very distinct and important advance in the treatment of habitual drunkards.

The power given to courts to order the detention of habitual drunkards guilty of crime, in an inebriate reformatory for not more than three years, will go far to end the "Cakebread" class.

Crimes of alcoholic origin, too, will be probably considerably reduced. Alcoholic homicides, for example, are commonly the result of a prolonged course of alcoholic violence, and such cases, it may be hoped, will in future be arrested before attaining their full development.

The inebriate reformatories which the Act empowers the Secretary of State to establish, or which may be established by the councils of counties and boroughs, will need to be

very promptly formed if they are to cope with the number of cases that will probably require detention very early after the bill comes into operation on the 1st of January next. The number of habitual inebriates coming periodically before the courts is very considerable, and if these are at once dealt with under the Act the existing accommodation would be utterly inadequate.

The application of the powers given by the Act, although very full and extensive, will no doubt give rise to many questions of difficulty, and we shall watch the progress of its use with interest. The Act promises to prevent a very large amount of suffering at present inflicted by the habitual drunkards on their families without check or hope of redress, and there can be little doubt that beyond this there may follow a considerable reduction of casual inebriates. The popular mind will soon recognise that the law regards drunkenness as criminal, and this, it may be confidently predicted, will result in drunkenness being considered, not as a harmless indulgence, but as a moral offence against law and order—a result greatly to be desired.

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*The Lunacy Bill.*

The Lunacy Bill of the past session, after passing the Lords, was withdrawn in the House of Commons, owing to the lateness of the session.

Time, therefore, still remains to this Association to exert itself in influencing the coming legislation. The late bill, owing to our action and influence, was undoubtedly modified and improved, but much remains to be done, especially in ensuring a favourable reception of the pension clauses, in the House of Commons. In this direction individual members can do much in putting the special claims of the specialty in this respect before those members of Parliament with whom they are associated in any way. The bill will almost certainly pass next session, and if this opportunity is missed, many years will probably elapse before another is offered.

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*The Law of Settlement.*

*(The Plymouth v. Axminster Guardians.)*

This case before the House of Lords was an appeal from an order of the Court of Appeal affirming an order of the