

England. Their work should probably consist in the supervision of such boarded-out cases as at present exist, and, in fact, relieve the senior commissioners as much as possible of the attention to individual patients, under ordinary conditions leaving them free, at their visits to asylums, to deal with the broad, general means of care and treatment.

The majority of the members of the Medico-Psychological Association probably favour the view that the deputies should be general, but there is much to be advanced in favour of a territorial division of work, so that each deputy should have a special knowledge of the patients in a given area. There are, however, disadvantages in this plan, and the non-territorial system is probably the more desirable.

The deputy commissioners would, no doubt, furnish a large proportion of the senior commissioners in course of time, but this should by no means be the sole avenue to the senior posts.

The Commission thus strengthened would be in a position to deal with many things that it is now too over-burthened to attempt—the boarding-out question, the defect of the present law, the treatment of the incipient insane, and many other important matters which have been too long neglected and which would absorb all the powers of the enlarged Commission.

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*The Increase of Temperance.*

The Inland Revenue returns show a steadily progressive decrease in the consumption of beer and spirits in the United Kingdom since 1899; that is in encouraging contrast with the equally steady but more rapid increase up to that date.

The beer consumption in 1899—1900 was 32·2 gallons per head of the population, making a total of 36·5 million barrels, but in 1905—1906 this had fallen to 27·9 gallons per head and to 33·5 million barrels.

The spirit consumption has also fallen each year from 1·17 gallons per head and a total of 48 million gallons for 1889—1900 to ·90 gallons per head and 39·1 million gallons in 1905—1906.

The reduction in the consumption of spirits is very striking, and in addition to the reduction in the total quantity of beer consumed there is to be added the large increase in the proportion of the lighter beers of home and foreign manufacture.

Pauperism, crime, and insanity are so largely attributable to the abuse of alcoholic drinks that the statistics of each should be carefully watched during the next few years for any indication of an improvement. It is, of course, possible that this reduction may be due only to the greater moderation from necessity or improved habits of the middle and upper classes only, although it would appear to be too large to be thus explained.

Abuse of alcohol, in the statistics of the causes of insanity, has fluctuated very little for many years past, so that any distinct diminution would be very significant, and should encourage a still more vigorous crusade in favour of true temperance—the use without abuse of the cup that cheers and may inebriate.

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*The Grantham Railway Disaster.*

It is agreed that all statistics require careful reading, but those relating to insanity are more exposed to misreading than are most others. The following abuse of statistics is so grotesque that it would not be worth criticism had it not tended to cause unnecessary alarm and mischief.

At the time of the Grantham railway disaster, the cause of which still remains a mystery, the sudden onset of insanity in one of the two engine-men was put forward as a possible solution. On this question the *Standard* newspaper in its issue of September 13th founded a principal-page disquisition, not without help from the outside. It was stated therein that, as 12·7 in every 10,000 engine-men became insane every year, this calling stood very high (seventh) in liability to mental disease; that, as 40 *per cent.* of all admissions were cases of acute mania, so 40 *per cent.* of the engine-men becoming insane might be taken to suffer from acute mania; that every case of acute mania might become insane without any warning whatever. The conclusion drawn from the foregoing statements as applied to an erroneous estimation of the number of engine-men at 40,000 is that 20 engine-men are liable in each year to become insane suddenly and unexpectedly.

As to the relative liability of engine-men to insanity, no doubt the ratio, correctly taken from the Commissioners' last occupation-liability tables, appears to be high in comparison