

in Lunacy. The Commissioners, after considering what they term the "full and detailed report," write that "it appears to prove that the medical superintendent exercised due care and showed good judgment in the matter, and that the unfortunate incident which occurred did not result from any failure in the exercise of those qualities."

The judgment of the Lunacy Commission, formed after a due consideration of all the circumstances, must outweigh a thousandfold the emotional expression (for it cannot be dignified as a judgment) of the coroner, founded neither on facts nor experience.

If the coroner had obtained evidence from the asylum he would certainly have been saved from falling into such an error, and from committing an injustice to the medical officer, who has now been so fully and amply exonerated.

The lesson inculcated is that in all such cases evidence from the asylum should not only be tendered but pressed on the coroner. The pressure was impossible on this occasion, owing to the absence from England of the superintendent.

Such evidence would gradually educate the public to understand that the discharge of recovered patients is always attended with risk of relapse, and that occasionally, in spite of the greatest care and the exercise of the best and wisest experience, such regrettable incidents must from time to time occur. The public have to be brought to understand that discharges cannot be made without relapses, and that relapses cannot occur without occasional danger.

Lunacy Statistics.

"Statistics may be made to prove anything" is a common assertion, and it might also be asserted that they may be made to prove nothing. Such results, however, can only arise from the tabulation of facts too heterogeneous to be of value, or from the wilful or ignorant misuse of really valuable figures. Statistics of rightly chosen facts, when rightly used, can demonstrate, with reasonable certainty, general laws and averages of the utmost value.

The early years of a new century, like the early days of a

new year, afford a good pretext for considering old habits. Statistics of lunacy, being a very important annual habit with many of our members, seem the first to demand attention. Inquiry may fairly be made whether these have yielded, and are yielding, satisfactory results. Have they given answers to questions of fundamental importance? For example, to the inquiries whether lunacy is increasing, whether the recovery rate is advancing, whether the causes of insanity are changing, whether the type of insanity has altered, and to many others of almost equal value. The response must be, we fear, that our statistics do not yield clear answers on these points.

Lunacy statistics having now been compiled on a large scale during the last half-century this cannot be held to be a satisfactory result, and it suggests that some reconsideration is necessary to ensure that the form of the statistics and the method of dealing with them shall be improved, so that more definite results may be obtained, if it be possible.

The Lunacy Commission, as at present constituted, is so undermanned that its energies are absorbed in the attempt to carry out its routine duties of inspection, etc., and it cannot be expected, whilst so burthened, either to originate new methods or to delve in the vast stores of facts already accumulated. As this condition may continue for some years it seems worthy of the consideration of the Medico-Psychological Association whether our members should not make an effort to initiate some improvement.

The Association is already responsible for the statistical tables which are generally in use in asylums, and it would seem that the analysis of the results of these tables is as worthy of attention as their construction.

Statistical tables should certainly not be disturbed frequently or without good reason, but the existing tables have now been in use long enough to justify a reconsideration. Since they came into operation great progress has been made in every branch of the study of mental disease. Medical officers of asylums have been greatly increased in number, so that statistical efforts are now easily possible which at the time of the issue of the tables would have been a grievous tax on the then insufficient medical staff.

Statistics have reached to the eminence of a science, and if such a reconsideration of lunacy statistics is made, it would be

very desirable, if not absolutely essential, to obtain the assistance of a scientific statistician. Such assistance, if procurable, would possibly help the Association to avoid the accumulation of useless facts, the making of erroneous analyses, and the formulation of indefinite conclusions.

British lunacy statistics, unless continuously watched, and, when necessary, improved, will certainly fall below the standard of efficiency which is constantly rising in other countries. Indeed, critics are not wanting who assert that this is already the case. Vigilance in this matter should be exercised both from scientific motives and from feelings of patriotism.

The National Mental Health and the War.

In the review (in our present number) of the Scottish Lunacy Report, the reviewer gives some very striking statistics in relation to the national mental health in the last three years.

The rate of accumulation has diminished in England, Scotland, and Ireland. The rate of primary admissions has not only shown great arrest but even slight diminution in Scotland. The Irish figures correspond, and in England, if statistics were available, it is almost certain that the same result would be demonstrated. The reviewer also draws attention to the similar results recorded in France in 1870 and in the American War (1861).

It is desirable to specially emphasise these figures, since an eminent alienist has been quoted in the English lay press and in Continental journals as having stated that there had been an enormous increase in insanity in London in 1900, due to the war.

The war, we may conclude therefore, has been a national mental tonic, and once again the malice, hatred, and all uncharitableness which everything British excites in the minds of our Continental friends, and, alas! in some home-bred "men and brethren," would appear to be, as they have often proved before, merely the rubbish of which mares build their nests. In many public libraries the curious reader may still find among the volumes of the original Sydenham Society's translations