

appears to be destroyed by the Old Age Pensions, which will probably be found to militate, not only against economy in wages, but also against the permanence of service, which is of so great value in asylum administration.

The Lunacy Commission.

The hope of an increase in the *personnel* of the Commissioners in Lunacy is still deferred. With a Chancellor of the Exchequer wanting twenty to twenty-five millions of additional revenue such petty affairs as the addition of two or three thousand to expenditure will not receive much attention.

The writer of our review on the Commissioners' Blue Book suggests that the over-full treasuries of some of the registered hospitals might serve the purpose of a suitable hen-roost for this end, but even this is not probable, since it would require special legislation.

In the meantime the overwork of the existing Commission continues ; the serious needs of the insane remain unsatisfied and are continually increasing.

The Lunacy Commission has suffered serious losses by death in the past few years ; although this may not be directly ascribable to overwork it is certain that the large amount of sickness amongst its members has caused great stress to the survivors, and is calculated to reduce their ability to cope with their annually increasing work.

Prospects of Lunacy Legislation.

The possibility of lunacy legislation in the coming year is probably very much greater than for many years past. The great Bills which absorbed all the time of the House of Commons are defunct, and there is little encouragement in the present state of parties to introduce controversial measures ; as a consequence the road is open for bills of a non-political character.

A Lunacy Bill is reported to be in preparation, and if introduced early in the Session will have a good hope of

becoming law. The Parliamentary Committee of the Medico-Psychological Association, with its usual vigilance, may be trusted to be on the alert to anticipate this probable activity of legislation affecting the interests of the insane.

Part II.—Reviews.

The Sixty-second Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy for England and Wales, 1908.

The increase in the number of certified insane persons during 1907 was 2,096, the total on the 1st January, 1908, being 126,084. This increase was less by 315, than the annual average of the last decennium, and by 328 than the quinquennium.

Hence, although the rate of increase has somewhat diminished, the proportion of insane per 10,000 of the population has advanced to 1 in 280. This proportional increase is obviously due to accumulation, since the admissions per 10,000 of the population have fallen from 6·93 in 1902 to 6·26 in 1907. The first admissions have also fallen from 5·76 per 10,000 in 1902 to 5·18 in 1907.

This diminution in the rate of increase of insanity, although it has persisted for several years and corresponds to a similar diminution in Scotland, and to some extent in Ireland, cannot be accepted as yet as evidence of an actual decrease. The social and economic causes leading to fluctuations extending over several years are too complex to be briefly stated, but the present variation probably gives more reason for hope that the high-water mark of production of insanity has been reached than any of the fluctuations at previous periods.

The fact that if the ratio of first admissions obtaining in 1902 had continued, the number of first admissions would have been upwards of 1800 larger in 1907 is evidence at least of the striking character of this statistical wave.

The proportion of private admissions has undergone a more remarkable variation, having diminished slightly from ·70 per 10,000 in 1889 until it rose suddenly in 1901-2 to ·76, since when it has dropped to ·68. The sudden rise may have been due to social conditions, etc., following the Boer War, but probably has been mainly due to the classification of paupers whose maintenance was paid for as private, and the greater facilities for cheap treatment afforded by the private annexes of public asylums. Since 1899 the Report shows that the number of private patients in county and borough asylums has increased from 1,434 to 2,801, whilst the numbers for the same dates in registered hospitals were 3,707 and 3,738, in metropolitan licensed houses 1,582 and 1,577, and in provincial licensed houses 1,289 and 1,318, and resident with relatives and others 415 and 505. The whole increase of private patients has been practically in connection with pauper asylums.