

been imperfectly looked after, and, with her helplessness, caused her to be sent to the asylum. The deprivation of her senses, and probably some delusive impressions from them, prevented her from acting rationally.

There is an apparently great similarity in the above cases, which I have selected as a typical and progressive series. The similarity consists in the prominence of the two symptoms, exaggerated suspicion and hallucinations of the affected senses, and consequent irrational conduct. All were blind, the first blind only, the latter three blind and deaf, the deafness varying in degree. In the first case there were no distinct hallucinations, but suspicion, and delusions of conspiracies. In the second and third cases hallucinations were most prominent. In the last case there was simply fatuity, and a slight remnant of suspicion; the loss of her senses rendering her quite helpless. Had she been able to see, or even to hear, she would have been only a mild case of dotage, and might have been cared for at home.

The importance of the integrity of the senses in relation to mental health is great, as the proper performance of so many of the functions of life is dependent on them. Deprivation, partial or total, of the means of obtaining information regarding surroundings might fairly be expected to originate some derangement, both as regards the impression which the individual receives or retains respecting these, and his manner of reacting on them. Dr. Ireland\* has shown deprivation of the senses to be a cause of non-development of mind, and it may be inferred from the foregoing cases that loss of the senses may sometimes excite insanity of a more or less distinct type.

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#### OCCASIONAL NOTES OF THE QUARTER.

##### *Insanity and Intemperance.*

We extract from the "Birmingham Daily Post" of December 26th, 1876, the following instructive letter by Mr. Whitcombe, the Assistant Medical Officer of the Borough Lunatic Asylum:—

Sir,—The evil effects of intemperance cannot be too widely proclaimed, and, perhaps, a better knowledge of them would tend to check some who have already given way to excess in drink, while it may deter others from falling into a like destructive course.

\* "Edinburgh Medical Journal," Feb. 1874.

With this view I have endeavoured to collect and tabulate information as to the influence drink has in populating our lunatic asylums, from which a tolerably correct estimate may be formed of its cost.

The records of the Birmingham Borough Lunatic Asylum show that during a quarter of a century ended December 31st, 1876, no less than 3,800 pauper patients were admitted into that institution, of whom 525, or about one-seventh, had their malady caused by drink. In the same period, out of 764 private patients admitted, 142, or about one-fifth, were attributed to the same cause. These patients resided in the asylum for periods varying from one month to twenty-five years, or an average of twenty-three months for each pauper, and twelve months for each private patient. The last annual report of this asylum shows that the average number resident during the twenty-five years was 456, and that the charge for maintenance, &c. (exclusive of building and repairs), averaged 8s. 6½d. per head per week. Taking one-seventh of the average number resident as the proportion of cases caused by intemperance, at the average weekly cost per head, we have an expenditure of £1,443 10s. per annum; or £36,087 10s. for maintenance alone. Add to this one-seventh of the cost of building, &c., and we have a total expenditure during the twenty-five years of more than £50,373.

Large as this sum is, it cannot be looked upon as the aggregate cost of these cases of drink. The individual loss to the patients themselves, and the probable pauperism of whole families, are items which, though incalculable, must not be overlooked. In making these calculations I have strictly adhered to those cases which were acknowledged by the friends and relatives to have been the result of intemperance, excluding all of a doubtful character.

It may be interesting to observe that the occupations of those persons who became insane through drink varied considerably, and included 169 different employments. Among the females, two-thirds were either unoccupied or only had home duties to attend to.

It is also worthy of notice that only thirty-six out of the whole number of private and pauper cases admitted through intemperance are stated to have had a "good" education, although the majority could read and write.

It would be too great a tax on your columns to enter more minutely into these local statistics, and I would just refer to the subject generally. The last report of the Commissioners in Lunacy gives the total number of pauper lunatics in asylums, registered hospitals, and licensed houses in England and Wales on the 1st of January last, as 35,372; the number of admissions during the year 1875 as 11,020, and the average cost per head per week as 10s. 0½d. From the annual reports of fifty-five asylums for the last five years I gather that out of a total of 33,527 patients admitted, 3,172, or about one-eleventh, had their malady ascribed to drink. This, I think, may be taken as a fair average of the whole, and shows that during

the year 1875 no less than 1,000 persons became insane through drink, and were admitted into asylums, and maintained at a cost of 10s. 0½d. per head per week, or at the rate of £26,108 per annum.

To extend this further, and take the eleventh part of our asylum population in England and Wales as the proportion caused by intemperance, we have a total of 3,216 persons, maintained at a cost of about £83,964 per annum, exclusive of the cost of buildings. Great as these calculations show the influence of intemperance to be on insanity, it must not be forgotten that insanity is only *one* of the evil effects of intemperance. Could it be possible, by any means, to bring within the pale of statistical evidence the vast amount of sickness, pauperism, crime, and misery which is the result of drink, we should have such a startling account that thousands would join that band of earnest philanthropic workers who are striving by legislation or other means to eradicate this growing national curse.

Birmingham for the year 1875 shows a much larger proportion of cases of insanity from intemperance than any of the fifty-five asylums I have quoted, with the single exception of Broadmoor Criminal Asylum. Surely, this fact should urge our local legislators to be foremost in attempting to allay such an evil.

Thanking you for inserting this in your columns,

I am, Sir, your obedient Servant,

EDMUND B. WHITCOMBE, M.R.C.S.E.

#### GENERAL STATEMENT OF FIFTY-FIVE ASYLUMS.

The following table is a summary of the experience of the fifty-five asylums for the last five years:—

	Patients Admitted.			Caused by Intemperance.		
	M.	F.	Total.	M.	F.	Total.
1871	3,028	2,987	6,015	474	128	602
1872	2,820	3,041	5,861	414	154	568
1873	3,034	3,106	6,140	441	121	562
1874	3,544	3,416	6,960	541	141	682
1875	4,157	4,394	8,551	546	212	758
	16,583	16,944	32,527	2,416	756	3,172

#### *The Prevention of Insanity.*

In the Twenty-first Annual Report of the Trustees of the State Lunatic Hospital at Northampton, Massachusetts, we were attracted by a paragraph headed as above. Dr. Pliny Earle has taken to heart the complaint of some critic that superintendents of asylums do not give people any instruction as to the means of preventing insanity. In order to remove this reproach, he has made the following remarks,