

regards voluntary action and sensation. What can be done in certain cases by the nervous system without any influence of the will is sometimes immense. The will simply states that a particular movement is to be done; the act of performance does not in the least belong to the will. The mechanism by which the performance takes place is rather complicated, but the facts show that Nature in that respect has been exceedingly provident, providing 1,000 fibres where one would be sufficient.

MEDICAL STATISTICS OF THE CENSUS.

(From the "Medical Record" for March 11, 1874.)

The following highly valuable and important particulars with regard to the idiots or imbeciles in Great Britain are extracted from the final report of the Census Commissioners, which have just been issued:—

Idiots or Imbeciles.—In conformity with the terms of the Census Act, an attempt has been made for the first time to ascertain the number of idiots or imbeciles amongst the population of England and Wales. This has been done by means of an instruction in the householder's schedules, requiring that if any person therein mentioned were suffering from or under the infirmity of idiocy or imbecility they should be so described. According to the returns, the total number of persons described as idiots or imbeciles in England and Wales is 29,452, the equality of the sexes being remarkable—namely, 14,728 males and 14,724 females. Compared with the entire population the ratio is one idiot or imbecile in 771 persons, or 13 per 10,000 persons living. Whether the returns are defective owing to the natural sensitiveness of persons who would desire to conceal the fact of idiocy in their families, we have no means of knowing; but such a feeling is no doubt likely to exist among those who look upon mental infirmity as humiliating rather than as one of the many physical evils which afflict humanity. As regards the distribution of idiots and imbeciles, the largest proportionate numbers are in the South Eastern Division, which includes the Earlswood Asylum and other institutions containing persons of this class. The numbers are also above the average, in proportion to the general population in the South-Midland, Eastern, South-Western, and West-Midland Divisions, and below the average of England in the London, Northern, York, and North-Western Divisions.

The ratio of idiots or imbeciles to the population in the several divisions was as follows:—London, one in 1,708; South-Eastern, one in 518; South-Midland, one in 641; Eastern, one in 636; South-Western, one in 669; West-Midland, one in 642; North-Midland, one in 666; North-Western, one in 833; Yorkshire, one in 901; Northern, one in 1,028; Wales, one in 739; England and Wales, one in 771.

Idiots and imbeciles seem to be the last class which has obtained the attention of philanthropists and men of science. Less has been done for them than for lunatics, partly because they are a less dangerous and troublesome class, but partly also from the doubt which existed as to the possibility of effecting a cure, or even any material alleviation of their condition. But attention has now been directed to them, and in consequence of the observation and experience of the last twenty-five years it has been ascertained that in a large proportion of cases of congenital mental infirmity, a patient may, by care and training, be made able to contribute, at least in part, to his own support. This and other important results have been accomplished by means of the special institutions established for these unfortunate persons.

At the time of the census there were 3,456 imbeciles—1,998 males and 1,458 females—in special asylums for this class, or in lunatic asylums. This is in the proportion of one in 8.5 of the whole number. In the South Eastern Division the proportion in asylums was one in three; in the Welsh division, one in eight; in the West-Midland and North-Midland divisions, about one in nine; while in London only one in sixteen, and in the North-Western and Northern divisions

about one in seventeen were in asylums. Those not in asylums were chiefly in workhouses, which contained 7,976 imbeciles, of which 3,548 were males and 4,428 females.

A valuable institution for the benefit of this class, the Asylum for Idiots at Earlswood, Redhill, Surrey, was instituted in 1847, and incorporated by Royal Charter in 1862. This important establishment contained 510 inmates—342 males and 168 females—at the date of the census. During the year 1872 the average number of inmates was 553. The most beneficial results have followed the efforts made on behalf of these comparatively helpless persons, a large number of whom are usefully employed. As the institution has no funded property whatever, the large sum of £16,000 has to be raised annually by voluntary contributions for maintaining its successful operation.

Two important institutions, situated respectively at Caterham, in Surrey, and Leavesden, near Watford, Herts, have been established under the managers of the Metropolitan Asylum District, for the reception of harmless chronic lunatics and imbeciles chargeable to the several unions and parishes of the metropolis. These buildings were opened in 1870, and were soon fully occupied by the transfer of the imbecile and lunatic paupers from the workhouses in which they were previously maintained, or from the county lunatic asylums to which they had been removed. At the date of the census there were in the Caterham Asylum 511 male and 755 female patients—total, 1,266; and in the Leavesden Asylum 716 male and 875 female inmates, making a total of 1,591. In these asylums, as at Earlswood, measures are taken for supplying opportunities of employment and of recreation to the patients.

	Total of Idiots and Imbeciles.		Males.		Females.
Under 5 years	428	.....	210	.....	218
5 and under 20.....	7,447	.....	4,196	.....	3,251
20 and under 60.....	17,435	.....	8,512	.....	8,923
60 and upwards.....	4,142	.....	1,810	.....	2,332
	<u>29,452</u>		<u>14,728</u>		<u>14,724</u>

From the tables showing the ages of persons labouring under defect of brain power, it appears that relatively to the general population of the respective ages, the ratio per 1000 is 1·6 between the ages of twenty and sixty, and 2·4 at sixty and upwards.

To the age of thirty the males preponderate; after that age there is a considerable excess of the other sex.

The principal causes of idiocy and imbecility are spoken of by those who have studied the subject as distinctly recognised; they are connected with physical or mental weakness, or with abnormal conditions, either the fault or the misfortune of the parents. Residence in deep valleys, damp and unwholesome climate, crowded dwellings, or other unhealthy conditions, intermarriages among a limited number of families, and more especially where weakness of brain already exists, these are allowed to be predisposing causes; and as they are obviously within human control, the hope may be entertained that the extent of this affliction may be limited in the future.

CASE OF OSTEOMALACIA WITH ACUTE MANIA.

In the St. George's Hospital Reports for 1873 there is an interesting case recorded by Dr. F. W. Moore of osteomalacia associated with acute mania, tending to confirm the observation made by one of the writers in the Sussex Asylum Report for 1872 that there is probably a connection between brain disorder and bone degeneration.

"E. O. was admitted to the Asylum (Hanwell) on the 6th June, 1863, labouring under acute mania; as nearly as could be ascertained she was then seventy years old. Two years previously to this date she broke her leg, and was treated at the London Hospital, which she left recovered. A cousin, who visited her