

naturally suggests itself, is there no other way? Is it unavoidable that the great bulk of those suffering from mental disability must be housed in big institutions? If not, how else can they be provided for, and in what relative numbers?

Answers to these questions from an authoritative source are urgently needed to assist those upon whom the responsibility falls of providing for the increase of the insane, and certainly no body of men has greater knowledge or experience of this subject than the members of this Association.

The views of the members of this Association, whether individually or collectively expressed, should certainly be available for those needing information or guidance, and the Association would be only fulfilling a duty to the community in discussing, and, if possible, formulating its success on this question.

The London County Council has appointed a committee to inquire and report on this subject, so that the simultaneous consideration we have suggested would not be inopportune.

Suicides of "Unsound Mind."

Much interest attaches to the Parliamentary return* of the number of persons who committed suicide in England, Wales, and Ireland during the years 1892-3-4-5, not being inmates of asylums, etc., but who were found to have been insane by a coroner's jury.

The total numbers were: For 1892, 2,472; 1893, 2,542; 1894, 2,681; 1895, 2,764. The increase in the four years was 292, or rather over eleven per cent.

Several of the coroners furnishing the returns point out that this finding is based solely on the fact that the individual committed suicide, no other evidence of insanity being adduced. The coroner for Manchester estimates that this is the case in 90 per cent. of such verdicts.

Evidence of prior insanity in such cases is often withheld, slurred over, not inquired for, or is in many instances unattainable, so that the finding may still be correct in a large proportion of instances, although conclusive proof may be so often absent.

Greater exactitude in the wording of verdicts is certainly

* 16th July, 1896.

very desirable, and the coroners could do much to this end. This might be accomplished by using, in a definite sense, findings with which juries are already familiar indefinitely. Thus "temporary insanity" might be applied to those cases in which there was no evidence beyond the suicidal act, whilst "when of unsound mind" might be used in cases in which prior insanity was recognised, and so forth.

The increase in the number of these verdicts disclosed in the report may be related to a change of habit on the part of juries, to more frequent suicide of definitely insane persons, or to a general increase of suicide; and of the operation of the latter cause there can be no doubt.

The Registrar-General's report shows that suicides in England have varied from 67 per million in 1875 to 80 in 1879, reaching 82 in 1886, falling to 77 in 1890, and being 85 in 1891, 88 in 1892, 87 for 1893, and 91 for 1894.

The increase of suicides in 1894 was about 7 per cent. on the number in 1891; the increase of verdicts bears the same proportion, and is therefore probably due to this cause and not to any change of views by the juries; but there are no returns for previous periods by which this relation can be verified.

The occurrence of suicide per million in England in groups of years has been:—

1858-60	1861-65	1866-70	1871-75	1876-80	1881-86	1886-90
65·3	65·2	66·4	66·	73·6	74·9	79·4

whilst 1891-4 as above recorded show a still more striking increase.

The stationary state of suicide in the eighteen years prior to 1876 evidenced by these figures is very remarkably contrasted with the rapid increase since. This increase, in spite of annual fluctuations, has been rapidly progressive, and its causes are worthy of the most serious consideration of our specialty.

Female suicides have increased from 34 per million in 1875 to 44 in 1894, a rise of ten per million, whilst the male suicides have advanced in the same period from 101 to 141, or forty per million; the increase being four times as great as that of the opposite sex.

An examination of the age tables for England shows that suicides in men especially exceed those of women in the later decades of life, and that the rate of increase has been greatest in these decades, so that on comparing the

differences in the rate per million in the decade 1881-90 with that of 1861-70 we find :—

Ages :	45	55	65	75 and upwards.
Women ..	+1	+5	+3	—17
Men ...	+46	+62	+120	+123

The contrast is striking, especially in those aged 75 years and upwards, in whom the difference is no less than 140 per million.

A large proportion of the increase is therefore in men, and in men upwards of 45 years of age.

Since 1861 there has not been any increase in the proportional number of persons living at an age over 55 years, such as was shown by the census returns of the preceding decades, so that the increase cannot be accounted for in this way. The sex comparison makes it obvious that women especially at the advanced periods of life are sheltered from the causes which affect men. The annual fluctuations, moreover, prove that these causes vary in intensity from year to year.

The homicidal side of the return shows that these were 26, 23, 20, and 26 in the four years under consideration ; but as there are no previous returns of the number of homicides committed previous to suicide, no definite conclusion can be drawn.

Homicides in England have fallen progressively and rapidly from 18 per million in 1858-60 to 11 in 1886-90, and it would be interesting to learn from future returns whether these homicidal suicides were also diminishing. They are often the outcome of definite insanity, and their frequency would be to some extent a measure of the want of promptitude in treatment in the early stages of mental disorder, such as may arise from the legal difficulties of certification, etc.

The return emphasises the need for greater care in recording in verdicts the actual evidence of mental state in all cases of suicide, in place of the inaccurate and misleading findings that are at present recorded.

Insanity in Prisons.

Our prisons during the last year or two have been accused by various lay writers of producing an undue amount of insanity in the prisoners.

Undefined inhumane treatment and low diet have formed