

Observers would give very different answers to this question, and the estimates would probably range from 5 to 15 per cent. However valuable such an estimate might be, it would not be sufficiently reliable to form a foundation for an application to Parliament for legislation to prevent the present untrammelled propagation of the disease. The Statistical Committee appointed by the Medico-Psychological Association will do good work if it can devise a method by which, without offending the susceptibilities of patients, some definite record of inherited and acquired syphilis in the insane, and of its share in the production of insanity, could be obtained, with a view to aiding in future legislation for the prevention of this disease.

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*Drug Therapeutics.*

The investigation of the therapeutic action of drugs from the darkest ages has ever been of the most unsystematic kind, nor can the present methods of arriving at their actual value be considered as satisfactorily scientific, many new drugs being introduced into professional medical use in a manner that is open to very grave objection.

The common method is for a firm of druggists to get hold of a new chemical compound whose immediate physiological effect has been tested by laboratory experiments, to persuade a number of physicians to try it, and to select for advertisement the reports that are favourable, ignoring all others. The actual advertisement is then made in what is really a monthly drug list, garnished with a little scientific quotation and a few medical platitudes, to give it the semblance of a therapeutic journal of a professional character.

The drug is then still further distributed to medical men and druggists, and some few sanguine members of the former class venture on trying it, or the public, reading the advertisements or hearing of the marvels from the chemist, press their doctors to prescribe it.

If a physician of repute takes it up, it becomes the vogue until some other novelty arises, so that at seaside resorts the chemists complain that they are heavy losers by their stocks of drugs, which in one season are contained in every prescription, and in the next are absolutely disused.

The remote effects of these drugs are not at once ascertained, and it is only after a time that their defects or uselessness or real use are demonstrated by a very desultory experience.

Scientific therapeutical investigation indeed can scarcely be said to exist. The organised bodies of the medical profession, whose duty it should be to issue authoritative information and to protect the public, are absolutely apathetic. The College of Physicians is assuredly the one body whose clear duty it is to undertake such investigations, and it should be aided by the Society of Apothecaries. The College, instead of leading, guiding, and instructing in all matters relating to social medicine, appears to be content if its opinion is asked on any of these matters in regard to which action is being taken by public initiative. It appears to have lost all sense of its high duties and opportunities.

The Medico-Psychological Association, although burthened by no duty in this respect, might well set a good example of initiative by collecting and recording the vast amount of therapeutic experience that is available in asylums for the insane, and of which an infinitesimal portion is available for scientific purposes. New remedies are tried in every institution, and if the experience thus obtained could be to some extent combined, valuable information might be put on record, which now is almost utterly lost.

The health of the country suffers so much from quack treatment, proprietary medicines, and the attractive preparations of the advertising chemist that it has become the most prominent duty of the medical profession to combat the rapidly increasing evil. The recognition of this obligation by one association would soon be imitated by others, and might lead ultimately to a re-awakening of our somnolent medical corporations.

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*Notes of a Visit to Continental and British Asylums. (1)*

Mr. Clifford Smith's remarks on the various asylums he visited are of so much value that the report should be read by every one interested in asylum structure and management.

The report deals, as would be expected, mainly with structural and engineering points. The asylum administrator will find in it instructive and valuable information, which is set