

We have always wondered why it has never occurred to some ingenious barrister, in defending a prisoner, to contend and tell the jury that the rules have no legal validity, and to challenge the judge to direct them in accordance with the charge in Hadfield's case. It would be difficult for any judge to refuse to reserve a point of law of such vital importance.

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*Inebriates Bill.*

We cordially hope that the report that the forthcoming Government Bill to amend the Inebriates Acts will deal only with police court cases, may prove to be inaccurate. Such a Bill would be scarcely worth accepting, even as an instalment; for having once touched the question again, in however perfunctory or unsatisfactory a manner, the legislature would certainly leave it alone for another decade. The minimum that can be regarded as acceptable is the enactment of a measure (1) providing for compulsory sequestering, (2) raising the maximum period of compulsory detention from one to two years, and (3) simplifying the procedure relative to admission and recapture. We trust that magisterial bodies throughout the country will follow the excellent example of the Manchester Justices in pressing the Home Office for a really serious measure of reform. The evidence furnished by the recent report of the Lunacy Commissioners that the insane population of the country is increasing, constitutes a good reason for the exhibition of some insistence in the matter; and much as a readjustment of the powers of the Lunacy Commissioners and the various local authorities in regard to pauper lunatics is needed, we shall be quite content to wait another session for it, if only an adequate Inebriates Bill is passed.

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*Medical Confidentiality.*

The public discussion of the legal aspects of the question of medical confidentiality, to which a recent *cause célèbre* has again given considerable prominence, has, in our judgment, proceeded too largely on the assumption that the sole point at issue is whether confidence is a necessary implication in the contract between doctor and patient. The basis of the doctrine of confidence must, in truth, be sought far less in any contractual relationship than in the policy of the law. The law recognises that there are certain relations in which it is of high social importance that the utmost mutual confi-