

is indispensable—a thoroughly competent Commission in Lunacy, composed of experienced and tried men. That must be created before real good can result from the establishment of a Psychological Department. Without it, all will be as in the past—the men excellent as a rule, the system bad, the results most unsatisfactory.

As men with sufficient asylum experience do not exist in India, it has been suggested that a small Commission should be sent from England to inspect the asylums, and to give necessary assistance in constructing an administration which will gradually raise asylum management to the standard prevailing at home. There is much to be said in favour of such a travelling Commission. The work could not fail to be highly interesting, and the practical results should be of the utmost value. Finally, we must heartily congratulate Dr. McDowall on the achieved results of his labours. It is not often that a reformer commands instant attention.

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*Juvenile Offenders.*

The Summary Jurisdiction Act, 1899, effects several salutary changes in the law as to the treatment of juvenile offenders. By the first section of the Act the first schedule to the Summary Jurisdiction Act, 1879 (which sets forth the indictable offences which can be disposed of summarily under that Act), is extended by the inclusion of two additional offences: (1) obtaining money, &c., by false pretences (Larceny Act, 1861, sect. 16); (2) setting fire maliciously to any wood, heath, &c. (Malicious Damages Act, sect. 16). It will, therefore, now be competent for courts of summary jurisdiction to dispose, with the consent of the accused, of any charge against an adult of obtaining by false pretences, where the amount of the money obtained does not exceed 40s. Where the accused is an adult pleading guilty, or a young person who consents to be dealt with summarily, the court can deal with the case, whatever may be the amount of money, &c., obtained. In order to prevent any misunderstanding as to what is necessary to constitute "false pretences," the Act provides that where a court of summary jurisdiction proposes to deal summarily with a

charge of obtaining by false pretences, the court shall, after the charge has been reduced to writing and read to the person charged, "state in effect that a false pretence means a false representation by words, writing, or conduct that some fact exists or existed, and that a promise as to future conduct not intended to be kept is not by itself a false pretence, and may add any such further explanation as the court may deem suitable to the circumstances." By the second section of the new Act, section 11 of the Summary Jurisdiction Act, 1879, which gives power to deal summarily with young persons by consent, is extended to all indictable offences other than homicide. Sir Matthew Ridley trusts that this provision will remove some of the difficulties felt by justices in dealing with youthful offenders. The number of such offenders committed for trial will no doubt be materially reduced ; and whenever a boy under fourteen consents to be dealt with by a court of summary jurisdiction, and is convicted of any indictable offence (other than homicide), the court will now have the option of ordering a birching—a means of punishment hitherto available only in the case of larceny and certain other specified offences. Several juvenile offenders have, in London, already received practical object lessons on the new *régime* that has come into force.

This is a further recognition by the English Legislature of the fact so long familiar to American medico-legal experts, and which, it should be added, the *Union Internationale de Droit Pénal* has done so much to impress upon the mind of the Old World, that the best way to avoid manufacturing criminals is to keep first offenders as far as possible out of prison.

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*Legal Aspects of Increase in Lunacy.*

It seems impossible to resist the conclusion, in view of the latest report of the Commissioners in Lunacy, that the burden of insanity in the United Kingdom is increasing out of all proportion to the increase of the population. When first the scare of increasing lunacy was raised it was met, as was natural and, in some sense, proper, by much expert and official incredulity. Cases were better classified than hitherto ; chronic cases were counted again and again, and so on. These views