

jurors summoned in the City and County of Dublin, and they propose to make a further report upon any suggestions they may receive on this subject.

JOHN CAMPBELL, *Chairman*.

W. NEILSON HANCOCK, *Secretary*.

VI.—*On the Statistics of Insanity, Past and Present*. By William J. Corbet, Esq.

[Read Tuesday, 21st April, 1874]

AT this particular juncture in our social existence, when mental culture—the development of the intellectual faculties of mankind—claims pre-eminent consideration on all sides, and fills with anxiety the minds of the profoundest thinkers, the foremost statesmen, and the most disinterested philanthropists of the age; when primary, intermediary, and university education are the watchwords of the sentinels who keep guard over the rights and privileges of the people, it cannot be uninteresting briefly to consider what is the mental condition of the masses who are to be affected by such beneficent intentions; whether, in fact, the familiar phrase “*mens sana in corpore sano*,” which embraces so much—expressing as it does, when applied to individuals, the “*summum bonum*,” the perfection of physical and intellectual well-being, can at this moment be fitly used to express the condition of the mass of mortality signified by the noun of multitude—“public.”

In selecting for consideration so momentous, yet so little understood a theme—from the contemplation of which the mind shrinks with a natural aversion to dwell upon a subject at once so painful and so inscrutable—I have set before myself a task that should be left to far abler hands; but a daily experience of matters connected with the care of the insane, extending now to a period of over a quarter of a century, has emboldened me to raise my humble voice in this room, where the voices of so many of the wisest, and ablest, and most philanthropic of Ireland’s sons have so often been lifted up in the advocacy of great social reforms. I propose, therefore, to take a dip into the ocean, or rather “the gulf stream,” of the statistics of insanity, which flows steadily along, “apparently” gathering breadth, depth, and strength annually as it flows.

Of the subject in a psychological sense, it is not my intention in any way to treat. That branch of the question should be left to those to whom it properly belongs, and of whom this country boasts not a few, who, from their distinguished attainments, and their great and prolonged experience in the study of mental science and in the treatment of mental disease, know, it cannot be doubted, as much as probably can be known on a subject so full of mystery; and are as highly qualified to discuss its theories, if indeed there are any such defined or established theories, as are their professional brethren of any other country in the world. Disclaiming, therefore, what would be a great assumption on my part, I shall confine myself exclusively to statistical facts.

Is insanity on the increase? Most writers on the subject treat this question as a moot point, and I am, therefore, though feeling strongly, diffident about expressing an opinion upon it. In the authorities I have consulted, the term "apparent increase" is continually applied when referring to the increase of numbers recorded. I shall consequently adopt the phrase, leaving others to determine whether the following facts and figures indicate a positive increase of mental derangement amongst the masses, or the mere development of a previously existing state of things, under which an amount of disease, unknown to the statistician, unthought of by the social reformer, and unestimated by the statesman, was concealed from view in the byways and unexplored recesses of our social system.

Under the generic term insanity, I include every form of mental unsoundness, from acute mania to simple imbecility; and I shall now proceed to lay before you the figures from which some idea may be formed of the extent to which this mysterious malady prevails, contrasting its present prevalence with, I may truly say, the comparative immunity of the past, and tracing its apparent progressive increase through a long series of years—an apparent increase unchecked by any exceptional circumstances whatever, whether of plenty or famine in the land, neither stimulated to any appreciable extent by the existence of internecine tumult and its inevitable attendants misery and retrogression, nor restricted by the benign presence of Peace, and her handmaidens Prosperity and Progress; nay, strange as it may sound, undiminished even by the reduction of the population at large.

I may here mention the fact, probably known already to many, that so few in numbers were the insane believed to be in the middle of the last century, that Dean Swift, when providing by will for the establishment of his celebrated hospital, seems to have entertained doubts whether a sufficient number of candidates could be found to occupy the beds provided by his benevolence within its wards.

The first available information, however, as to the extent of insanity in Ireland, is to be found in the report of a select committee of the House of Commons, in 1817, the Right Hon. William Vesey Fitzgerald, chairman, and which gives an aggregate of 1145 known cases. From the evidence taken by the committee, and the appendices attached to their report, they appear to have gone very fully into the subject, and to have obtained all the information available at the time; such, however, was principally of a negative character, for a return made up from abstracts of reports from the treasurers of the several counties and cities in Ireland, furnished in compliance with a circular letter addressed to them in December, 1816, by the Right Hon. Mr., afterwards Sir Robert, Peel, who was then Chief Secretary for Ireland, calling upon them to report what establishments existed for the reception of pauper lunatics, with the nature and extent of such establishments, etc., discloses the fact that twenty-one counties had no provision whatever for their insane poor. Nine other counties had a few cells connected with Houses of Industry (which were the precursors of the present Poor-Law System of Workhouses), the accommodation being of the most wretched des-

cription, and the dietary consisting principally of potatoes and sour milk. There were only two regularly constituted public asylums in Ireland—namely, the Cork Asylum, instituted in 1788, for 250 patients, and the Richmond Asylum, opened in 1815, for 150; to which may be added the Hardwicke Cells, and House of Industry, Dublin, accommodating 190; and Swift's Hospital, receiving 150, of whom 100 were paupers.

Thus the whole accommodation for the insane in Ireland, such as it was, scarcely reached 800 beds; the population being 6,450,141.

Having examined a number of intelligent and well informed witnesses (to the evidence given by some of whom I shall presently refer), the Committee reported to the House of Commons on the 25th June, 1817. The following is an extract from that report:—“Your committee are of opinion that, in addition to the asylum which has been founded in Dublin, and that which has been so successfully established in Cork, there should be four or five district asylums, capable of containing each from 120 to 150 lunatics.” At this period, therefore, after minute inquiry, it appeared to the committee that the lunatic poor in Ireland would be amply accommodated if 1,500 beds were made available for their reception. It is important to bear this fact in mind, when, further on, we come to consider the extent to which the asylum system has since expanded.

The report of the Committee was acted upon; and in the course of a few years there were ten district asylums in working condition, with 1,609 patients in them; and an annual expenditure for maintenance of £29,854 10s. 7d.\*

The requirements of the insane were, however, still unsatisfied, and further provision was urgently called for. A select committee of the House of Lords was appointed, and reported in 1843, recommending a large extension of asylum accommodation, which recommendation was carried into effect by the erection of several new asylums and the enlargement of existing ones.

I cannot find that any complete return of the insane in Ireland was attempted to be made until 1844. In that year the Inspectors-General of Prisons published a table in their report to Parliament, from which it appears that the total number of lunatics then in Ireland was 10,931; of whom, 4,714 were registered, that is to say, confined in asylums, poor-houses, and gaols, and entered on the books of these institutions, and 6,217 were unregistered or at large, living with their friends or supported by the charity of individuals. In ten years, namely, in the beginning of 1855, the numbers rose to 13,478; of whom 6,248 were registered, and 7,230 unregistered; and in 1856 a further increase of 400 is noted. Passing over the next three years, in which no complete enumeration appears to have been made, we find the figures have reached 16,701 in 1860, 7,710 registered and 8,991 unregistered. It is now curious to note that for a period of several years no further increase, so far as the Parliamentary reports show, appears to have occurred, the total numbers remaining at or about the same; for in 1869 they stand at 16,661,

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\* Sixteenth Report on Prisons, p. 58.

as against 16,701 in 1860, as above stated. It is, however, to be observed that the registered classes had annually increased with great regularity, until in 1869 they reached 10,082, as against 7,710 in 1860. In 1870, a considerable increase is recorded—the total numbers being 17,193; 10,257 registered and 6,936 unregistered. But a still greater accession of numbers appears in the returns of 1871—the registered classes amounting to 10,767; unregistered, to 7,560; total, 18,327. A slight diminution takes place in 1872, when the numbers returned were 10,958 registered and 7,219 unregistered, or a decrease on the whole of 150 persons. This diminution is partly accounted for by a slightly increased mortality in asylums in 1872, exceeding that of the previous year by 77 deaths. A like cause, operating on the unregistered insane to the same extent, would nearly make up the difference.

We have now brought the numbers obtained by the same means, from the same sources, and furnished by the same class of enumerators, from 10,931 in 1844, when the population was 8,276,627, to 18,177 in 1872, when it had fallen to 5,372,199. In the former year the proportion of insane to the sane was 1 in 757; in the latter 1 in 296. About the registered insane, 4,714 in 1844 and 10,958 in 1872, no question of incorrect returns can by any possibility be raised. In confinement under daily observation, their names inscribed on the muster roll of the institutions in which they were detained, their existence was a living, visible fact, concerning which no mistake was possible. Let us now enquire the means by which the returns of the unregistered insane were obtained, in order that we may see what reliance can be placed upon them.

It is stated in the Parliamentary Reports that these returns are furnished by the R. I. Constabulary; and the observation is made that, “from the extensive distribution of that efficient force throughout the country, combined with the careful manner in which the returns have been prepared, the information may be relied upon as accurate.” In the justice of this remark, all will, I think, concur; it may, therefore, be conceded that the periodical enumeration of insane persons not resident in any institution has been as full and complete as it was possible to make it.

According to these figures, therefore, there has been within the last thirty years, with a population diminished by 2,904,437, an *apparent* increase of 6,244, registered, and 1,002 unregistered insane persons in Ireland.

In the blue book on Lunatic Asylums, published in 1845, the expenditure on the erection of asylums up to that date, is stated at £209,085; and the then annual cost of maintenance, as given in the same volume, was £35,989 10s. 1d., the daily average number of lunatics provided for being 2,586, and the asylums eleven in number.

From the last published returns presented to Parliament, it appears that £1,067,317 14s. 5d. was issued up to the 31st March, 1873, for building asylums in Ireland, and £2,766,611 18s. 4d. for the support and maintenance of patients in them, and that the annual current expenditure under the latter head, in public asylums, amounts to £179,890 13s. 3d. Adding the support of lunatics and idiots in

poorhouses, at an estimated cost of £11 per head per annum, a total of £212,000 a year, in round numbers, is expended for the benefit of the insane poor in Ireland; so that, *pari passu* with the "apparent" increase in numbers, a very substantial increase in the cost of providing accommodation for them, and in supporting and maintaining them, has taken place.

#### CAUSES OF THE APPARENT INCREASE OF THE INSANE.

In a report on the "Relation of Education to Insanity," by Doctor Edward Jarvis of Dorchester, Massachusetts, included in the report of the United States Commissioner of Education for 1871, the following passages appear. "The successive reports, upon whatever source or means of information procured, all tend to show an increasing number of the insane. In the United States, Great Britain, Ireland, and other civilized nations, so far as known, there has been a great increase of provision for the insane within forty years, and a very rapid increase within twenty years. Hospitals have been built seemingly sufficient to accommodate all the lunatics within their respective states, counties, or districts. These have been filled, and then crowded and pressed to admit still more. They have been successively enlarged, and then other institutions created, and filled and crowded as the earlier houses were." Doctor Jarvis has thus described with singular accuracy what has been taking place here; but he is of opinion that the increase "is not so much of new cases of insanity as the development of the persons insane—not so much a manifestation of increased lunacy, as an increase of the world's knowledge of its presence among them." I would be very glad to be able to agree with him on this point; but I cannot do so for reasons that will appear further on. Dr. Jarvis goes on to say, speaking of the great provision made for the treatment and cure of insanity; "The more these means of healing were prepared, the wider the knowledge of their worth spread among the people, and the more the number of the insane seemed to be increased;" but he adds, "however we may qualify this apparent increase of lunatics by this explanation of increased interest in them, and of the means of cure, within the last fifty years, there has unquestionably been a very great real increase of the malady in the progress of the world from the savage to the civilized state." He does not assert that these two great facts, "the development of mental disorder, and the growth of human culture stand as cause and effect;" but he admits that they have "marched side by side"—a truism which can scarcely be questioned, when it is remembered that, as mentioned by some of the most eminent writers on the subject, insanity is almost unknown amongst savage or barbarous nations.

Has the *real increase*, to which the writer I have quoted refers, then reached its limit, or is it still progressing? The recent parliamentary reports of the English, Scotch, and Irish lunacy departments afford ample evidence that the maximum has not yet been attained; the recommendations to enlarge existing asylums or erect new ones, being of frequent occurrence.

The following tabular statements, taken as they stand from those reports, would seem to indicate that an increase of some sort is annually taking place, and that it is influenced apparently by some natural law, the source of which has not yet been discovered.

The twenty-first Report on Irish Lunatic Asylums states .

The extraordinary augmentation of numbers will be best understood from the following figures :—

Year.	Registered Insane.	Unregistered Insane.	Total.	Population at large.
1846 ..	6,180	6,217	12,397	8,175,124
1871 ...	10,767	7,560	18,327	5,402,759
	4,587	1,343	5,930	2,772,365
	Increase of Insane.			Diminution of Population.

It is a feature calling for consideration, that this increase has been continuous and of regular growth. Taking the last decennial period, and confining ourselves to the registered insane only, as we had not the advantage of an annual return of lunatics at large for the whole term, the following is the result :—

	Number of Registered Insane.	Increase.
1862 .	7,862	—
1863 ...	8,272	410
1864 ...	8,417	145
1865 ...	8,845	428
1866 ...	8,962	117
1867 ...	9,086	124
1868 ...	9,454	368
1869 .	10,082	628
1870 .	10,257	175
1871	10,767	510

Increase of Registered Lunatics in 10 years, 2,905

It might perhaps be thought that the extension of asylum accommodation, which was taking place annually during these years, while it operated as a matter of course in increasing the number of registered insane, tended at the same time to diminish the number of lunatics at large, such, however, does not appear to have been the case, for, taking the last five years of the decennial period above referred to, and during which we obtained returns of the unregistered insane (with the exception of the year 1868, and for which we make use of the returns of the previous year as practically applicable to our purpose), we find the gross numbers to have been as follows :—

	Total Number of Registered and Unregistered Insane in Ireland.	Increase.
1867 ...	15,650	—
1868 .	16,018	368
1869 .	16,661	643
1870 .	17,193	532
1871 ...	18,327	1,134
		2,677

Thus, while the inmates of the various institutions had an accession to their numbers of 1,681 in the above brief term, so far from any reduction taking place in the number at large, they actually appear to have increased by 996 persons.

From the Twenty-seventh Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy in England. Numbers of all Lunatics, Idiots, and Persons of Unsound Mind on the 1st January in each of the years 1859-1873, inclusive.

On 1st January.	Grand Total.	Annual Increase.
1859	36,762	—
1860	38,058	1,296
1861	39,047	1,589
1862	41,129	1,482
1863	43,118	1,989
1864	44,795	1,677
1865	45,950	1,155
1866	47,648	1,698
1867	49,086	1,438
1868	51,000	1,914
1869	53,177	2,177
1870	54,713	1,536
1871	56,755	2,042
1872	58,640	1,885
1873	60,296	1,656

The following table, from the same, places the "apparent" increase in another light. The Ratio per 1,000 of the total number of Lunatics, Idiots, and Persons of Unsound Mind, to the population, in each year from 1859-1873, both inclusive.

Year	Population.	Total number of lunatics, idiots, &c., on 1st January.	Ratio per 1,000 to the Population.
1859	19,686,701	36,762	1.86
1860	19,902,713	38,058	1.91
1861	20,119,314	39,647	1.97
1862	20,336,467	41,129	2.02
1863	20,554,137	43,118	2.09
1864	20,772,308	44,795	2.15
1865	20,990,946	45,950	2.18
1866	21,210,020	47,648	2.24
1867	21,429,508	49,086	2.29
1868	21,649,377	51,000	2.35
1869	21,869,607	53,177	2.43
1870	22,090,163	54,713	2.47
1871	22,712,266	56,755	2.49
1872	23,074,600	58,640	2.54
1873	23,356,414	60,296	2.58

From Fifteenth Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy for Scotland.

The following table shows the distribution of the Insane at 1st January, 1858, and at 1st January of each of the ten years, 1863-1872, excluding the inmates of idiot-schools, who are not certified as lunatics —

	1858	1863	1864	1865	1866	1867	1868	1869	1870	1871	1872
In Royal and District Asylums, }	2,380	2,822	2,919	3,125	3,207	3,519	3,874	4,041	4,461	4,524	4,579
„ Private Asylums, . }	745	927	872	788	812	672	501	557	303	338	358
„ Parochial Asylums and Lunatic Wards of Poorhouses, }	839	878	910	925	1,008	998	1,007	1,024	1,127	1,174	1,176
„ Lunatic Department of Central Prison, }	26	30	32	36	46	45	45	50	49	51	51
„ Private Dwellings,* }	1,804	1,700	1,658	1,630	1,589	1,573	1,549	1,535	1,518	1,519	1,554
TOTAL,	5,794	6,357	6,391	6,504	6,662	6,807	6,976	7,207	7,458	7,606	7,718

\* Under official cognizance.

Since the 1st of January, 1858, the number of lunatics officially known to the Board has increased from 5,794 to 7,718. In the manner of distribution the following changes have taken place —

	Increase.	Decrease.
In Royal and District Asylums,	2,199	—
„ Private Asylums,	—	387
„ Parochial Asylums, and Lunatic Wards of Poorhouses, .	337	—
„ Lunatic Department of Central Prison,	25	—
„ Private Dwellings, . . .	—	250
	<hr/> 2,561	<hr/> 637

These figures show that of the increase of 2,561, which has taken place in the number of patients in public and parochial asylums, 387 arise from the decrease in private asylums, and 250 from the decrease in private dwellings, leaving an increase of 1,924 ascribable to the growth of lunacy, or at any rate to the increased number of lunatics in asylums. It thus appears that of the accommodation which has been provided in public asylums since 1858, the room required for 1,924 patients is occupied by the increase since that year. The cost incurred for the accommodation of this number, calculated at the average rate of £150 a head, amounts to £288,600.

These official records have the stamp of authority, and speak for themselves. They reveal as a plain, palpable, incontrovertible fact, that in England, Scotland, and Ireland, concurrently, there has been going on annually a most unmistakable “apparent” increase of insanity; and the observations I have quoted from an American writer of authority, indicate, I think, that, by whatever speculative reasoning the development of insanity among the masses may be attempted to be explained, at all events the development is general and progressive, and quite as “apparent” in the United States as in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

How is this apparent increase to be accounted for? As stated already, I do not propose to allude to the subject of insanity in a psychological sense; but for the purpose of endeavouring to account for the “apparent” increase, it is necessary to refer incidentally to the probable cause or causes thereof.

The causes of mental disorder are classed under two main general heads — physical and moral, which are, however, divided into numerous subheads; upwards of ninety of the former and eighty of the latter by some writers, who have given them very hard Greek or Latin, or a mixture of both, names. I know that many of the most eminent and experienced physicians regard this minute subdivision with little favor, holding that the mysteries of mental disease, with all its impalpable forms and “combinations of disjointed things” cannot be classified, arranged, nomenclatured and ticketed, like the visible, tangible, specimens of a zoological, conchological, or geological museum — or be diagnosed and treated like any of the ordinary “ills that flesh is heir to.” One of the greatest writers on mental disease, Dr. Connolly, has stated, with the characteristic candour of a great mind, that “the pride of medical science is disconcerted by the reflection that mere medicine has had but a small part in the cure of many patients who leave an asylum well.”

We are not, however, going to consider minutely the assigned



causes of insanity or the curative effects of medical treatment, but the causes of the apparent increase in the numbers of the insane :— these I shall place under three heads ;

First—The great care taken of lunatics of late years.

Second—Hereditary transmission, a cause intimately connected with the preceding one.

Third—The abuse of spirituous liquors.

As to the first, everything that human ingenuity and tenderness can devise is directed to secure the comfort and well-being of the insane person. Byron, in his "Lament of Tasso," has described the

" . . . vast lazar house of many woes,  
Where laughter is not mirth, nor thought the mind,  
Nor words a language, nor even men mankind ;  
Where cries reply to curses, shrieks to blows,  
And each is tortured in his separate hell."

But it has no counterpart in our days ; for the modern asylums are models of order, neatness, and propriety

In *Wynter's Curiosities of Civilization*, when contrasting the treatment of the insane in past times with that which is adopted at present, he says : "Supposed to be degraded to the level of beasts, as wild beasts they were treated Like them, they were shut up in dens, littered with straw, exhibited for money, and made to growl and roar for the diversion of the spectators who paid their fee. No wonder (he adds) that Bedlam should have become a word of fear ; no wonder that in popular estimation the bad odour of centuries should still cling to its walls, and that the stranger, tempted by curiosity to pass beneath the shadow of its dome, should enter with sickening trepidation. But now, instead of the howling mad-house his imagination may have painted it, he sees prim galleries filled with orderly persons. Scenes of cheerfulness and content meet the eye of the visitor as he is conducted along well lit corridors, from which the bars and gratings of old have vanished. He stops, surprised and delighted, to look at the engravings of Landseer's pictures on the walls, or to the busts upon the brackets. He beholds tranquil persons walking around him, or watches them feeding the birds which abound in the aviaries fitted up in the depths of the ample windows." And this description of the modern asylum applies equally to all countries with which I am acquainted One of the most perfect asylums I have seen, in its construction and arrangements, is at Christiania, in Norway. France and Belgium are celebrated for the completeness of their asylum systems, and the public asylums in Ireland are equal in efficiency.

When the condition and treatment of the insane at present is compared with that which prevailed fifty years ago, it is not difficult to understand the change as a cause of increase. Formerly an attack of the malady was virtually a death sentence, especially in the case of the poor. The Right Hon. Denis Brown, one of the witnesses examined before the Committee of 1817, draws the following picture. "There is nothing so shocking as madness in the cabin of the peasant When the man is out labouring in the fields for his bread, and the care of the woman of the house is scarcely sufficient for the

attendance on the children, when a strong young man or woman gets the complaint, the only way they have to manage is by making a hole in the floor of the cabin, not high enough to stand up in, with a crib over it to prevent his getting up. The hole is about five feet deep, and they give the wretched being his food there, and there he dies." Such is an authoritative description of the mode of treating a poor lunatic; for whom there was no institution or place of refuge available in those days, such treatment not being the result of any unkindness of intention, for the Irish peasant is proverbial for natural affection, but arising from the necessities of the case and sheer inability to do better.

Let us now take a glance at the treatment adopted towards those who were provided with such accommodation in public institutions as the time afforded. We find in the evidence of another important witness, Thomas Rice, Esq. that the accommodation afforded to the insane in one of these places of which he had personal knowledge was "such as we should not appropriate for our dog kennels." He instances the deaths that occurred in consequence—and thus describes the system of treatment: "The usual mode of restraint was by putting their hands under their knees, fastening them with manacles, fastening bolts about their ankles, and passing a chain over all, and then fastening them to a bed." He adds, "In this state, I can assure the Committee from my own knowledge they have continued for years." After detailing various phases of the maltreatment practised, he says: "The keeper of the lunatics claimed an exclusive dominion over the females confided to his charge, and which he exercised in the most abominable manner."

Lest the foregoing might be thought an exceptional instance, and not an example of the general system which prevailed, let us turn to a different source for information. The following passage occurs in the Parliamentary Report of the then Inspectors-General of Prisons for the year 1823. "I inspected this department (a place for lunatics kept in the old county gaol, Roscommon) and think the lunatics are treated with kindness and as little coercion as their circumstances will admit." What the nature of the kind treatment was, is expressed in the following words of his report. "Food, straw, and fire are allowed, but no blankets or dress, as they destroy them for want of sufficient keepers and other restraints, which would be provided in a regular lunatic asylum;" but, he adds, "I think the old gaol blankets might be issued for "this purpose."

Subjected to such treatment, whether in institutions or at home, it was out of the nature of things that the insane poor could accumulate—they died and there was an end of them. It is to be deplored that no special returns were then made regarding them, for the mortality consequent on such a system must have been immense as compared with the present, when kindness, care, good food, good clothing, and comfortable lodging—everything in short that "can minister to a mind diseased," or tend to preserve and prolong life—is amply provided for this most afflicted class of humanity.

The hereditary nature of insanity is admitted on all hands, but as a simple statement of fact is more expressive than the most learned

disquisition, I shall quote one or two instances from the authorities. In the Eighth Parliamentary Report on Lunatic Asylums, the following occurs. "In the course of the year just elapsed, we have observed some instances strongly illustrative of the hereditary transmission of lunacy, and the extent to which it runs in families—so many as four relatives in the degree of parent and child having been confined in an asylum together—a fact fraught with serious consideration, and even involving the prospective position of the unborn themselves. Two, and even three, members of the same immediate family labouring under the symptoms of insanity, is to our knowledge a matter of common occurrence;" and in the report from which I am quoting, it is further stated that in one particular asylum "now in existence for over a century, we find, since its foundation, the same stock to have been continuously represented by its insane members."

In the Thirteenth Report it is stated, that "Hereditary predisposition would appear to exercise an equal influence over either sex. Out of 2,324 authenticated cases before us, this predisposition existed in 561—292 men and 269 women."

In the Fourteenth Report, whilst instancing some remarkable cases, it is observed that "hereditary or family predisposition to mental derangement, is now so fully authenticated, that we need scarcely refer to the frequency of its influence." I could multiply references on the subject, but it may be sufficient to state that in the statistical tables given in the appendices to these reports, hereditary predisposition stands first by nearly two to one amongst the assigned causes of mental disease.

Amongst the lower animals, any particular species, any marked type, physical peculiarity, or special instinct, is easily preserved and propagated. The kind increases, multiplies, and flourishes in proportion to the care taken and expense incurred in its culture, where under a system of neglect and indifference it would have died out or been reduced to a minimum.

Anyone who has visited the great agricultural shows held throughout the kingdom and seen the splendid oxen, sheep, grain, roots and vegetables there displayed; or anyone who has had the pleasure of being present at the floral exhibitions of horticultural societies, and beheld the marvellous plants and flowers collected together from every quarter of the globe, the infinite variety of beauty, form, and colour there developed, cannot fail to have realized what can be done by skill, patience, and outlay, in the reproduction and multiplication of animal and vegetable life, or in the preservation of their distinctive peculiarities. I am afraid we must conclude that *insania-culture* forms no exception to the rule. The cost of maintaining and cherishing the insane poor in Ireland is, as I have shown, £212,000 annually, add for 650 private cases, at £100 a-year each, £65,000; total, £277,000; quadruple that for England, £1,100,000; take off a third for Scotland, £183,000; and we have in round numbers, over £1,500,000 spent upon the care of the insane in the United Kingdom annually. That the results justify the cost, so far as the alleviation of human suffering, and the protection of the mentally afflicted from innumerable evils, no one can gainsay; but that the results justify

the cost in regard to the limitation of the disease, is a question demanding the gravest consideration.

It appears from the blue books, that 10,455 individuals were discharged from lunatic asylums in the United Kingdom in 1872, leaving a residuum of 86,191 persons in the various institutions at the end of the year—5,975 of the discharged are returned as recovered. A considerable number of these persons were married, and of the single that many subsequently entered into the matrimonial state cannot be doubted, though we have no means of ascertaining the fact.

Considering, then, that the hereditary transmission of insanity must be regarded as an axiom, that heretofore the disease so often terminated in death and now it so often results in real or supposed recovery, can it be possible that these magnificent hospitals for the insane, erected by a generous and humane public from the highest and most beneficent motives that can influence a people, maintained at so great a cost, and conducted in a manner that excites the admiration of those who visit them, so far from having a preventive effect, operate in the contrary direction, and are, after all, centres from which this terrible malady is diffused throughout the land? I do not assert that it is so; I only state the facts which circumstances have brought in a special manner under my notice, leaving it to persons of experience and penetration, who are accustomed to grasp and deal with subjects of social importance affecting the public weal, to inquire and investigate if they consider the statements I have made worthy of their attention; but, so far as my humble judgment enables me to form an opinion, the natural inference is inevitable.

A few words on the influence of intemperance as a cause of the apparent increase of insanity, and I shall have done.

As stated already, amongst the assigned causes producing insanity, hereditary predisposition stands first. The next most prolific contributory is "intemperance and irregularity of living." Every one has some time or other seen the effects of over-indulgence in strong drinks upon the victims of intemperance. The bodily appearance of the confirmed toper is as unmistakable as the mental condition is deplorable. It would be waste of time to enter into proof that the constant and excessive use of stimulating beverages acts directly on the nervous system, in such a way as to deteriorate or altogether destroy the physical and mental powers. It is enough, therefore, to observe that what operates injuriously upon the man operates in the same way upon the million; that what acts perniciously on individuals affects proportionately the masses at large.

The annual average home consumption of wine and spirits, as given in Thom up to 1865, is set down at 5,555,764 gallons, for the last triennial period, to say nothing of the enormous quantities of beer, ale, and porter consumed. In 1873, a sum of £4,090,944 was received as duty on spirits and malt alone in Ireland. These figures indicate an excessive consumption of stimulants by the public; and the natural consequence follows of increased insanity from that exciting cause. Out of the whole number of cases, 10 per cent. is the proportion stated to arise from intemperance.

At the present moment in the United States, a fierce social conflict is raging amongst the people on this subject, the women of America, to their honour be it spoken, having resolutely determined to put limits to the vice of drunkenness—they have succeeded to the extent of causing numbers of liquor stores to be closed, and the movement is, I believe, progressing. It is therefore probable that, as we have to thank the Americans for originating many great mechanical inventions tending to the advancement of human industry, and which have proved so beneficial to this country and to the world at large, we shall have to thank them for showing us the way to a great social reform in the limitation or reduction to a minimum of the odious traffic in spirituous liquors. That government can be expected to make a voluntary sacrifice of revenues, exceeding in Ireland, the sum of £4,000,000 annually, by prohibiting distillation, is out of the question; nor is it likely that the nation would submit to an enforced sobriety; but this branch of the subject should be treated separately.

As a cause of insanity, intemperance is, at least to a certain extent, preventable. But the question of the apparent increase from hereditary transmission, consequent on the preservation and prolongation of the lives of the insane, and the restoration to the ranks of society of so many of their numbers, is pregnant with difficulty; and constitutes a problem, the solution of which is calculated to tax the highest qualities of the philosopher and the statesman.

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## VII.—*Proceedings of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland.*

### TWENTY-SEVENTH SESSION.—FOURTH MEETING.

[Tuesday, 21st April, 1874.]

The Society met at the Leinster Lecture Hall, 35, Molesworth-street,

John Lentaigne, Esq., C.B., Vice-President, in the chair.

Mr. W. J. Corbet read a paper on "The Statistics of Insanity, past and present."

The ballot having been examined, the following gentlemen were elected as Members of the Society:—Messrs. Thomas Breen, Professor Kavanagh, Archibald J. Nicolls, Esq., Barrister-at-Law, and Daniel Thomas Tracey.

### FIFTH MEETING.

[Tuesday, 26th May, 1874.]

The Society met at the Leinster Hall, 35 Molesworth-street  
Jonathan Pim, Esq., Vice-President, in the chair.

One of the Secretaries read the Report of Committee of the Council: