Clarke had on at least one occasion made the necessary certificate. The lamentable element in the affair is that it was preventable and ought to have been prevented, for Kirby had repeatedly threatened Dr. Clarke. When will people learn that a lunatic with delusions of persecution is always a danger to the community, and ought never to be allowed at large; and that a lunatic with delusions of persecution directed against a specified individual is as dangerous to that individual as a mad dog loose upon his premises, and ought not to be allowed at large for an hour?

The English Commission in Lunacy.

The inadequacy of the Lunacy Commission to cope with the amount of work and responsibility heaped on it has been so often dwelt on in this JOURNAL, that our readers must long since have placed this topic in the same category as the smoke of London, the narrowness of the Strand, the red tape of Government offices, and the many other anachronistic abuses which the conservatism resulting from mediæval modes of education permits us to endure.

An apology is almost necessary for reviving this antique grievance, and recapitulating the time-worn arguments against it. It is, for instance, almost incredible that three physicians can be thought capable of inspecting upwards of a hundred thousand lunatics, of deciding that they are all proper objects for detention in asylums, that they are not ill-treated, and the thousand and one other matters relating to the medical care of the insane.

The first Lunacy Commission, appointed in the early years of George III, consisted, it is well to remember, of five Fellows of the College of Physicians, the scope of their duties comprising a seven-mile circuit of London with a total population of half a million or so. A century and a quarter later we find that three physicians are considered sufficient to look after the welfare and interests of upwards of a hundred thousand lunatics scattered throughout England and Wales. Either the first Commission was excessively over-manned, or the present one is totally inadequate.

The scanty supply of medical Commissioners at this late

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period is, however, to be accounted for. In the early Georgian period, although the popular idea of insanity remained very much that of evil possession, the educated view regarded it as disease; and it was not difficult to impress this on the kindly landlords who comprised the legislative body. In the Victorian period the legal profession has managed to obtain an altogether disproportionate share in the legislature, with the result that the country has been harshly law-ridden. The result of this in lunacy legislation has been that the lunatic, from being regarded as a sick person, has come to be treated as a criminal. Hence it is that while three physicians are thought sufficient to attend to the medical needs of the enormous insane community, more than double that number of lawyers are required to see that they are properly imprisoned, or in legal phrase—incarcerated.

The legal preponderance in the Commission is without doubt principally responsible for the excessive amount of red tape that goes far to paralyse asylum physicians, and tends to reduce them to mere form fillers and report writers. The same tendency has led to the medical staffs of asylums remaining so limited, and the general arrangements for detention so extensive.

Increase of the Commission has been objected to on the ground that it would only lead to more talk and more tape; but the medical element could be increased without enlarging our Commission; it is, indeed, desirable that the increase of the medical element should be at the expense of the non-medical.

In every country but England immeasurable astonishment is felt at the fact that the interests of a hundred thousand sick persons are entrusted to a commission in which only about one member in four is medical. The original Georgian Commission, if it erred, erred on the right side in being exclusively medical, but the undoubted error is now very greatly the other way.

It cannot be pretended at the present time that the best interests of the insane would not be served by considerably more medicine and a great deal less law.

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