as would subject the editors of newspapers in this country to be cited to appear before the court, and probably punished either by fine or imprisonment. A man might be abused in the American press—and such attacks were constantly made—who might be a most honourable man, and highly esteemed by all who knew him. Therefore, if the comments made by the American press were copied into the journals of this country, they were apt to mislead their readers very much, and ought to be received with due caution. In this country, if a medical man connected with or having charge of a public institution was charged with malpractice and extreme misconduct in carrying out his official duties, it was tolerably fair to presume that there was some basis for the charges made, because, if such were not the case, the proprietor of the newspaper could be quickly proceeded against under the law of libel. Recently, an injustice such as he had alluded to had occurred in America, the subject of the attack being Dr. Nicholls, the Superintendent of the Government Asylum for the Insane at Washington, and an old friend of his (the speaker's). Dr. Nicholls had been the subject of a political persecution in the shape of a secret committee of inquiry of the Congress. Some of the incidents of that inquiry leaked out during its progress, and were published in the "New York World," and from thence quoted in the columns of some of the journals* published in this country. Now, if those charges had been to some extent proved, yet the mode of proceeding adopted would have been altogether unjust to their American brother; but, when he told them upon the authority of Dr. Marion Sims, with whom he had had an opportunity of conversing upon this matter, that the investigation had resulted in the full acquittal of Dr. Nicholls, the committee finding that the charges made against him were entirely unfounded, he thought they would agree with him, that this was a case in point, which demonstrated the necessity of English journals being extremely cautious before quoting and circulating charges made against professional gentlemen practising in America (hear, hear). He felt certain that their American brother would in this matter, so far as he had been in any way unjustly accused, have the entire sympathy of the members of the Association with him (hear, and applause).

Intemperance and Insanity.

The causes that have produced the insanity in the 310 persons admitted are of great interest, socially and medically. We have a difficulty at the outset in finding out any cause of the disease in some cases, and in others to settle which is the real cause out of a number of events that all may have tended to produce the malady. When a man with a strong

† Erratum; for "some of the journals," read "a journal."

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family tendency towards insanity, who has drunk hard previously, is thrown out of employment, and has not therefore sufficient food, and then becomes insane, it is very difficult to tabulate the exact cause of his disease. It is necessary, therefore, to divide the causes into predisposing and exciting, or remote and near; and then, for the sake of a systematic division, into physical and mental. The causes of insanity often influence its whole course and symptoms, so that a particular cause produces a special form of the disease. It is of much importance, therefore, that the Physicians to an institution like ours should be able to find out the causes of the disease as accurately as possible; and I am most anxious in the case of the rate-supported patients, who are usually brought to us by the Assistant Inspectors of Poor, that relatives who know something about the patients should also come along with them. The necessity for this will be apparent, when I say, that in 53, or 17 per cent. of the admissions last year, no sort of information on this point could be obtained at all.

Glancing over the summary of assigned causes (Table XI.), it is at once seen that intemperance stands out as by far the most frequent. It alone caused 48 of the 257, or about 20 per cent. of those in which the cause was known; and along with other allied excesses for which the patients had been themselves responsible it accounts for 72, or 28 per cent. of the cases. Much is properly said about the prevention of disease now-a-days. Most unquestionably the sum-total of the mental disease in our city might have been lessened by that amount, if the laws of nature had been better obeyed. Fifty of the cases thus resulting from drinking and excesses being paupers, each costing £27 a year to the public rates, over £1,300 will have been paid for one year's production of lunacy from very preventible causes; and, of course, this takes no account of the cost of the old incurable cases already in the Asylum from the same cause. I have no doubt that both the number of cases and the cost will seem small to some persons, and will seem large to others who have not had their attention directed to it. I am quite sure that intemperance was the remote cause of the disease in more of the cases; but even allowing for these, we cannot put this down as accounting in any way for more than one in four of all cases of insanity. Medical statistics seem definite on this point.

The forms of mental disease caused by intemperance are

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of two types—one being of a more transient and curable nature, the other incurable, and being accompanied by organic diseases of the brain. Of the former class we had about thirty cases, of the latter about twenty. It is interesting to compare the prevalence of those types of disease here with other places. Such coal and iron mining counties as Durham and Glamorgan produce the most marked and fatal of all the brain diseases caused by excesses (General Paralysis) in twice the proportion (16 and 13 per cent.) we do (7 per cent.) ; while, on the other hand, we stand at twice the amount of the agricultural counties (3·6 per cent.) on this head.

When the number of pauper patients whose disease was caused by intemperate habits is compared with that of the private patients from the same cause, I find that there were about 3 per cent. more of the latter than the former. A better social position, more means of rational amusement, a better education, and the stronger public opinion of their class, do not seem to have saved any larger proportion of the better classes than of the poorer. In this respect our statistics for this year are in accordance with those of former years.

In assigning intemperance as the cause of insanity in a number of cases, two things must not be forgotten. The first is, that the taking to stimulants may not be a cause at all, but merely a symptom of the brain disorder, and, as a matter of fact, it is often one of the early symptoms in many cases ; the second thing to be kept in mind is, that there are many cases in which it is the real cause of the mental disorder, but the mental balance had always been so unstable, and the brain working so easily overset, that a very little alcohol indeed will bring on an attack of insanity in these persons, just as in those same people a fright or a little over-excitement will upset their sanity. This is the class of persons who, in my experience, get upset by religious revivals. The resisting and recuperative power that is really an essential part of a healthy nervous system, whereby the effects of not too long continued over-eating or over-drinking, over-feeling or over-work, are at once recovered from, is wanting in these people. Nature provides that short excesses don't do much harm to healthy people. It is a poor sort of boiler that bursts whenever the exact pressure needed for its daily work is exceeded.

And, before I leave this subject, I may mention, that I

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have not reckoned in any way the mere drink-craving, or the inability to resist it, as constituting insanity. I believe this may or may not be a real insanity in different cases, but it was from developed and unmistakeable mental alienation that my patients suffered.

Taking all the cases in which any direct cause for the disease was assigned or known, 63 per cent. were physical causes, such as intemperance, injuries to the head, epileptic fits, starvation, or childbirth, &c.; while 37 per cent. were mental, such as grief, domestic or business anxieties, disappointments, religious excitement or fright. A comparison of our statistics here in regard to this point with those of other districts of the country exhibit very curious differences. Most people fancy that such mental causes as I have mentioned are far more frequent producers of insanity than mere physical conditions, and will be surprised at the frequency of the latter in our table of causes; but when I examined the reports of the Asylums for such mining and manufacturing counties as Durham, Glamorgan, and Stafford for five years, I find that physical causes are put down as producing the insanity in four cases for every one that is put down to mental causes. Mental causes, in short, only operate there with half the frequency they do with us. The reports of the Asylums for such agricultural counties as Wilts, Worcester, Somerset, and Salop, for the same period, show that in them the physical stand to the mental as three to one; and in the town populations of Newcastle, Liverpool, Birmingham, and Bristol, as two to one. Those are still below our statistics in regard to the frequency of mental causes; but the difference is explained, I find, by the fact, that this is a mixed Asylum for all classes, while all the Asylums for the counties and towns I have mentioned take in only pauper patients. When the causes of the insanity in our eighty-eight private patients are compared with those of the 222 paupers, the difference is most striking, and entirely bears out the general law already indicated. Of those eighty-eight private patients, mental causes produced the disease in about as many as physical, while in the paupers they were only as one to three. These facts tend strongly to show, that the higher in the social scale we go, the more strongly do purely mental and moral shocks act in upsetting a healthy mental balance, and that those causes operate more powerfully on the lower classes of a town population than on an agricultural. They also point to the fact, that our

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workers in coal, iron, and the potteries, expose themselves, above all other people, to the physical causes which produce insanity.—*Report of Royal Edinburgh Asylum for* 1875.

An Imposing Female.

Among the patients who come here in a year, there are always many with the saddest of histories, and usually a few whose doings before admission were of a very striking character. In one case, a woman who, up to about a twelvemonth of her admission, had lived a quiet but honest and uneventful life, had then struck out a highly sensational course for herself. By a series of the most extraordinary misrepresentations and cleverly carried out impostures, she raised large sums of money on no security whatever, and spent them as recklessly; imposed on jewellers, so that they trusted her with goods worth many hundreds of pounds; furnished grand houses entirely at the expense of trusting upholsterers; introduced herself by sheer impudence to one great nobleman after another, and then introduced her dupes, who, on the faith of those distinguished social connections, at once disgorged more money. To one person she was a great literary character; to another, of royal descent; to another, she had immense expectations; to another, she was a stern religionist. At last all this lying, cheating, scheming, and imposture developed into marked insanity and brain disease, of which she soon died; and it was seen that all these people had been the dupes of a lunatic, whose very boldness, cunning, and mendacity, had been the direct result of her insanity.—*Report of Royal Edinburgh Asylum for* 1875.

Good Effects on the Poorer Classes of the Insane of Frequent Visits by Relatives.

We are in this peculiar and almost unique position in Scotland, that while our number of yearly admissions increase, our numbers left at the end of the year have diminished for the past three years. There are several causes for this. Our recoveries are very numerous, and a large number of unrecovered but quiet cases are removed, at my advice, by their friends. Our proximity to town, and the extraordinarily ready access provided by the tramways, are circumstances which most people, and among them many high authorities in lunacy matters, would consider great disadvantages. Their effect is to bring the relatives of our poorer patients out to the Asylum to visit them to an extent quite

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