

stereotyped. "They recommend it merely as an appreciable and practicable step in advance."

In regard to pensions, the Committee point out that the Bill proposes to confer the pension at 25 years' service, irrespective of age. They consider that this change should be made as far as women are concerned, but in regard to the male staff they do not consider the case is made out for altering the Act of 1909. We hope to deal with other points of interest on a future occasion.

MEDICAL MATTERS.

HABITUAL DRUNKENNESS AND ITS TREATMENT.

An interesting Blue-book has just been published containing the Report for 1909 of the Inspector under the Inebriates Acts, Mr. R. W. Branthwaite. This report, which is required by Statute concerning institutions certified and licensed under the Inebriates Acts, 1879-1900, is submitted to the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

Mr. Branthwaite points out that every alcohol user belongs to one or another of three categories: he may be found amongst persons (1) who are always strictly moderate in their indulgence; (2) who drink more freely than is consistent with strict moderation, or are occasionally drunken; (3) who are habitually drunken, or being usually sober, are subject to occasional outbursts of uncontrollable drunkenness.

THE STRICTLY MODERATE USER.

The writer states that a brief mention of the strictly moderate section seems necessary, because of its magnitude, in order that a due sense of proportion may be maintained when dealing with other smaller but more important classes. No statistics are available from which any definite information as to proportionate number can be obtained; but from general observation and an extensive knowledge of habitual drunkenness and free drinking in all classes one would be inclined to suggest as a figure for the strictly moderate about 980 per 1,000 of all alcohol users.

THE FREE DRINKER AND OCCASIONAL DRUNKARD.

In the second class are placed the free drinker and occasional drunkard, though the writer points out that it is probable no stability at all can be claimed for any intermediate

section, nearly all constituent units being capable of relegation to the class that precedes or to the one that follows. Its members are either those who indulge in excess carelessly, possessing enough power of self-control to be sober if they will, or those who are showing early symptoms of the development of a constitutional peculiarity that eventually leads to ruin.

The chief characteristic of this (second) class is the presence in all its members of a desire for experiencing the more advanced sensations associated with alcoholic excess; in other words the mere sense of well-being that satisfied the members of the first class is not sufficient for those of the second. The latter endeavour to obtain the general exhilaration and cerebral excitement accompanying the early stages of alcoholic poisoning without proceeding to its later stages. In this, without meaning it, they sometimes fail. Together with this desire for modified intoxication, we have a neglected self-control or a self-control that is losing (but has not lost) its power to govern; the power is still there and is strong enough to maintain sobriety, if exercised to its full capacity. Possession of power to remain sober naturally implies responsibility for insobriety, and therefore carries with it responsibility for any action done in a state of insobriety. For this reason offences by occasional drunkards should be treated with sharp punishment, in order that the necessity for self-control may be emphasised and its exercise encouraged.

THE HABITUAL DRUNKARD.

Although it is clear that a marked correlation exists between the recognised forms of mental defect or disease on the one hand, and habitual drunkenness on the other, the association is not definite enough to justify the commonly heard statement that all inebriates are more or less insane or mentally defective. When inebriates of all social grades are classed together it will be found that the majority are neither one nor the other; indeed, many typical habitual drunkards are extremely capable people during sober intervals. Notwithstanding this, even the most mentally sound inebriates are not normal persons, but the victims of a constitutional peculiarity or fault of some kind, which cannot yet be defined or located, although the evidences of its existence are none the less definite on this account. The peculiarity in question is a potent one, calling for recognition as the true inebriate state, of which drunkenness, disorder and erratic behaviour generally are merely the outward and visible signs. It is the condition we refer to when we speak of "in-

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