

venereal disease is not satisfactory would be to gravely understate the position." Only the fringe of prevention has been touched by the provision at great public expense, and under skilled guidance, of free treatment at each of the leading hospitals in the city. The diseased person may attend if he chooses and for as long as he chooses. The skill and the money expended do unquestionably result in alleviating a great deal of suffering and may to a small extent limit the spread of the disease. But the failure of the system is manifest: 60 per cent. of the patients cease to attend as soon as the grosser symptoms disappear but long before they are free from infection. In stating this Dr. Hope adds that the system of clinics now in vogue in Liverpool is admittedly as good as any in the kingdom. Clearly, he concludes, it is a waste of public money and public effort to give treatment which fails to have results. The public health object of that treatment is not primarily to benefit the individual but to protect the public, and if, because of non-continuance of treatment, the individual remains a source of danger and of infection, we have rank waste of money and of effort.

A specially appointed sub-committee of the Liverpool City Council has prepared for submission to Parliament a series of proposals which have already received the unanimous approval of the municipal authorities and the local medical profession. The aim of the clauses is to secure continuity of treatment till freedom from infection is reached in the case of every person infected with venereal disease. Such an aim involves compulsory removal to and detention in hospital in certain cases and the provision of suitable hospital accommodation for the purpose. Dr. Hope tells us that measures closely in line with these proposals have already been adopted with success in some of the British Dominions and also in the United States of America.

MEDICINE AND THE LAW.

Will-making by the Insane.

A PROBATE action arising out of the will of Joseph Priddle, who died in Camberwell House, Camberwell, was tried recently by Mr. Justice Horridge, two daughters of the deceased claiming probate of a will made by him when a certified inmate of that institution. Three sons asked that the will should be set aside on the ground of the testator's incapacity through insanity and that letters of administration should be granted. The husband of one of the daughters, at that time engaged to her, had taken part in the making of the will, and had employed a solicitor who had taken every precaution, including the obtaining from Dr. F. H. Edwards, medical superintendent of the asylum, of a written certificate that the testator "has been and is now in a condition to express his testamentary desires in a reasonable fashion," that he, Dr. Edwards, had scrutinised the will, and that "there is no reason from a medical standpoint, having in view my special knowledge of the case, why this will should not be quite valid." Mr. Justice Horridge drew attention to the cases of *Sivewright v. Sivewright* (1920, S.C., H.L., 63) and *Banks v. Goodfellow* (1870, L.R., 5 Q.B. 549). In the former Lord Haldane laid down that "the question is simply whether he understands what he is about," and went on to say that in the case of a testator suffering from a delusion which might have affected him in making the will, in order to invalidate it "the delusion must be shown to have been an actual and impelling influence." Mr. Justice Horridge, in pronouncing in favour of the will of Mr. Priddle, under which, as he had already observed, "the daughters received the lion's share of the testator's property," pointed out that the testator clearly suffered from delusions, but that the question was whether he was suffering from a delusion when the will was made. There was no expressed antagonism towards his sons. The evidence of Dr. Edwards showed that there was testamentary capacity. Dr. Edwards did not examine the testator as to any

antipathy towards his sons, but there was no evidence of any. In comment attention may be called to the question of antipathy referred to. It had, of course, not been brought to Dr. Edwards's attention that there might be any such feeling. But it is a point which medical men in the same position may well bear in mind. The persons responsible for the certifying of any person as insane may be near relatives whose action he regards with resentment. They may have acted perfectly rightly and in the interest of the person certified, and it would be an undeserved hardship if they should suffer from animosity on his part which may be the result of an insane delusion as to their action.

Hospital Finance and National Insurance.

Lord Burnham's recent sympathetic and practical speech in the House of Lords on hospital finance and the obligations of the Government was fully reported in THE LANCET of July 30th (p. 257). One of his strongest points was undoubtedly made with reference to obtaining by legislation or otherwise contribution to the voluntary hospitals from the surplus funds of the Approved Societies. The hospitals have hitherto had no desire to extract obligatory subscriptions from the societies or from any other source. They came into being as the provision of the benevolent for the needy. Modern developments in medical and social science have, however, brought about totally different conditions. The Insurance Acts have placed the services of the general practitioner within the reach of thousands who rarely or never sought his aid; the hospitals are expected to supplement the work of the general practitioner, and are willing to coöperate with him to secure the desired end, the promotion of the health of the people. They cannot, however, do an increased amount of work upon incomes which have not increased but diminished. It appears to be consistent with good sense and common justice that the representatives of those who benefit by the work done should contribute to pay for it. It is not consistent with justice that those who rightly send their patients to be treated should be paid for their services, and that the hospitals who undertake the resulting obligation to treat should be driven into bankruptcy by so doing. The necessary legislation should be forthcoming.

Drugs to Induce Miscarriage.

A woman named Halle, 33 years of age, was sentenced recently at the Central Criminal Court to five months' imprisonment in the second division for administering to herself drugs in order to procure miscarriage. She had been denounced to the police by an anonymous letter. In passing sentence Mr. Justice Avory pointed out that in such cases the offence was the same whether an instrument was used or drugs taken, and that for a woman to procure abortion on herself was a serious crime. He might have added to this public warning that given in THE LANCET of Jan. 21st, 1899, p. 182, that no drug capable of being used by quacks in compounding their concoctions will be effective to procure miscarriage unless taken in quantities that will endanger life or seriously endanger health. This was published at the time of THE LANCET's campaign against the sinister trade of quack abortionists,¹ which succeeded in banishing their advertisements from the pages of reputable newspapers.

Æsthetic Surgery.

A fine of £20 with £10 10s. costs was imposed by Mr. D'Eyncourt at Marylebone police court recently upon C. H. Willie, against whom the Medical Defence Union had obtained a summons for falsely using the title of doctor, implying that he was registered under the Medical Acts. The defendant described himself on a name-plate as "Dr. Willie, specialist," and carried on business as a "practitioner in plastic or æsthetic surgery," professing to remove marks of old age, scars,

¹ THE LANCET, 1898, vol. ii., pp. 1570, 1651, 1723, 1807; 1899, vol. i., pp. 182, 327, 717, 855, 908, 1739; vol. ii., pp. 111, 174.

and other blemishes from the faces of his customers. It was stated in his defence that he had gained experience in America and Paris, and that he "had held" a licence for face treatment from the L.C.C. A qualification mentioned was an honorary degree from the Oriental University, Washington. In fining him the magistrate observed that it was not for him to judge as to the success of the defendant's methods, which seemed to him to be highly dangerous.

Control and Drunkenness.

A question was asked recently in the House of Commons by Colonel Sir Arthur Holbrook, M.P., as to whether statistics were available showing the comparison in the number of convictions for drunkenness in controlled and uncontrolled areas; and whether the percentage of such convictions was lower, for example, in uncontrolled Herefordshire, than in controlled Worcestershire, and in uncontrolled West Suffolk than in controlled East Suffolk. The Home Secretary's answer was to the effect that all available statistics would be found in the annual volumes of Licensing Statistics, of which the volume for 1920 is now obtainable. Accurate comparison would, however, be difficult for many reasons, including the fact that the scheduled areas do not necessarily correspond with the areas for which figures are shown. This seems equivalent to a negative reply, but after all, whatever might be shown by the figures asked for, they would be unlikely to convert the more stalwart advocates of decontrol or of continued control respectively to the views of their opponents. After all, either side may be right, but figures alone, without full particulars of social and industrial conditions, prove very little in such a case. At present it is open to the advocates of continued control to say that it has been used in certain districts because they require it, and that Herefordshire and West Suffolk are to be congratulated not because they have not been controlled but because they have not needed it. On the other hand, the figures for Worcestershire and for East Suffolk, after a year or two without control, may some day supply an answer to one side or the other such as it has never had at its command before, and may prove either that control is an effective weapon for promoting temperance, or that it is of negligible importance to that end. The case for or against control may also be better established than by statistics of convictions.

PARIS.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

School Instruction in Venereal Disease.

THE Council of the Department of the Seine is considering a suggestion referred to it by the Société de Médecine Publique et de Génie Sanitaire in regard to introducing into the school syllabus some instruction in venereal diseases and their consequences. It appears necessary to the Société to warn youths and girls against the dangers of venereal diseases before leaving school, when they should be told that abstinence from non-conjugal sexual connexion is the best of prophylaxis as well as a moral duty. The Société also emphasised the necessity of pointing out to adults and more especially to soldiers the safety that derives from the use of specific ointments, recommending only those of which the formula has been officially tested and proved.

Prophylaxis Against Influenza.

Mr. R. Dujarric de la Rivière made a communication on the prophylaxis of influenza at a recent meeting of the Société de Médecine Publique et de Génie Sanitaire. He accepted the initial cause of influenza to be a filtrable virus, the complications being due to bacterial secondary infections. Prophylaxis should concentrate on general measures directed against the transmission of the virus and on special measures of protection against the complications. The public should realise the necessity of

temperance in alcoholic consumption for every individual living in an epidemic area. The danger should be indicated of excessive use of antiseptic gargles and nasal washes in causing inflammation, mucous irritation, and so diminishing resistance to infection, as well as the value of frequent washing of face and hands and of disinfecting dwellings. Cats and dogs had been shown to transmit the virus, and in an epizootic of horses hæmoculture had revealed an organism similar to Pfeiffer's bacillus, associated with pneumococcus and streptococcus. The blood serum of convalescent horses had shown definite therapeutic action when injected into patients suffering from influenza. The author insisted on the need of isolating suspects as well as well-recognised cases during any local out-break and treating them in fever hospitals or in special blocks of general hospitals. Doctors and nurses should wear overalls and masks when on duty. Nurses should wash their hands with surgical care when going off duty, and doctors should do the same on leaving the wards. Mr. Dujarric de la Rivière went on to give instances showing that convalescing patients are not likely to contaminate other people. He recommended polyvalent vaccine against complications. Immigrants should be refused admission from any country suffering from an epidemic of influenza, and he regretted that no international conventions had yet insisted on quarantine regulations. In the event of an epidemic a regular mobilisation system should be arranged, this mobilisation comprising extempore hospitals of hutments and tents, the requisition of cars to transport patients, and prohibition of public gatherings. In non-epidemic times the public should be instructed in schools, through the distribution of pamphlets and by special cinema films at frequent intervals.

Periodic Medical Examination of School Children.

The Conseil Municipal de Paris has decided to ask its school medical officers to undertake a general medical examination of Paris school children every two months, and to record the condition of the mouth and teeth on a special sanitary card. When necessary, the children will be sent to dental surgeries selected for the purpose by the authorities.

August 13th.

BUDAPEST.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

The Relation of Alcoholism to Crime.

At a meeting of the Society of Medical Practitioners, Dr. Geró, medical expert attached to the law courts, reported that of 94 individuals charged with homicide or attempted homicide, examined by himself, there were six malingerers and four persons who were wrongly supposed to be the subject of mental defects. Of the remaining 84 criminals only 14 were females. The following conditions of health were noted: one case of pregnancy, with mental derangement, one of morphiomania, one of hysteria, nine cases of delusions of persecution, seven of various states of mental disorder, eight of hysteria or epilepsy, 13 of various diseases either supposed or known to have an effect on the brain, 10 of mental defect, and 34 of alcoholism. Dr. Geró emphasised the fact that alcoholics formed more than a third of the total number of persons charged with homicide. He added that an examination of the antecedents of criminals grouped under other headings would show that many of the epileptics and mental defective subjects were the children of alcoholic parents. He also pointed out that acts of extreme violence might be committed not only by habitual inebriates but also by persons in a state of occasional alcoholic intoxication, in illustration of which he quoted cases.

Pellagra in Hungary.

In a recent report of the public health service of the south-eastern part of Hungary is noted the