

the number of lunatics, imbeciles and idiots to be supported and cared for by the State is being largely augmented, and it has become a burning question whether something cannot be done to lessen an evil which imposes upon the community an enormous load of taxation for the maintenance of a large and constantly increasing multitude of those mentally afflicted. Canada, in common with the rest of the civilized world, has of late years shown a decided increase in the percentage of her insane population. Of course it is easy to be led astray by statistics compared without just qualification. The very agencies created for the care of the insane lead to an apparent increase in their number. With well appointed asylums conducted on enlightened lines, aided by Government grants and private charity, hundreds of patients, who might otherwise be uncounted, leave their homes to swell the enumeration of the insane. Still, with all allowance made for this, it is the consensus of opinion that insanity is on the increase in Canada as elsewhere. That such is the case is fully borne out by the census returns, which, though lessened in validity by the fact that the figures they furnish are in great measure dependent on voluntary information, are yet in this case a fair index of the true state of affairs, because any false statements made would be in the line of lessening the number of defectives. From this source we find that while in 1891 there were 13,342 insane persons in a population of 4,719,893, in 1901 there were 16,622 in a population of 5,318,606, being an increase, in ten years, of nearly twenty-five per cent. in the number of lunatics, whereas the increase in the total population was less than thirteen per cent.

The causes of this increase are manifold. The methods of modern life and the modern race for wealth undoubtedly play an important part in it. Our high-pressure civilization does not come to us without attendant woes. With the change and increased comfort in the mode of life of the great bulk of the people, their susceptibilities have been augmented, and their nervous systems have been laid more open to the unkind influences of material and moral forces. But while these and other causes play a part in the production of mental disorder, it is a small one in comparison with that played by heredity. From time immemorial it has been recognized that the great predisposing cause of insanity is hereditary taint, and as time rolls on, and we are able to make more careful inquiry into the influence of hereditary predisposition, the truth of this old-time belief becomes more and more evident. Unfortunately we are not in a position to say exactly what amount of the mental obliquity met with is due to transmitted weakness. The statistics of heredity vary widely, and this variation is chiefly in direct ratio to the