

increase. In the Milroy Lectures, 1894, Dr. John Berry Haycraft showed, in a very interesting manner, that, in a chart compiled from the Registrar-General's Reports (Great Britain), the curves representing the prevalence of the neuroses and insanities are almost the exact reverse of those showing the fluctuations of the zymotic and infectious diseases. While the growth and development of hygienic and preventive medicine are slowly overcoming the virulence and spread of the zymotic diseases, the insanities and neuroses are on the increase, owing, as explained by Mercier, to the increase of their factors, viz., heredity, on the one hand, and, on the other, the increase in the complexity and severity of the stresses of social and civilized life. In the discussion on "The Prevention of Insanity," at the late meeting of the British Medical Association, the general feeling seemed to be that the time is not yet ripe for legislation on the subject, but that the way must be slowly prepared by the education of public opinion. The president of the section of Psychology expresses himself as being "convinced that the only way to really diminish and stamp out insanity is by so educating public opinion that those who have been insane or are threatened with insanity shall, in the face of such public opinion, abstain from bringing into the world children who must certainly contain in them the potentiality of insanity, who will some of them develop it if others escape, and so will hand on the heritage from generation to generation, till the race dies out."

OUR INTERFERENCE WITH NATURAL SELECTION.

As a race, it cannot be denied that in these latter days we are deliberately interfering to a very appreciable extent with the processes of natural selection. How many rickety, syphilitic, scrofulous, tubercular, and imbecile children are kept alive through the agency of our hospitals, and raised by excessive care and pampering through a sickly and unhappy childhood ! Such objects are exultingly pointed out as triumphs of the healing art ; they struggle on past puberty, marry early, generally seeming to prefer consorts a little worse than themselves, and, since they seem to retain the power of reproduction with great pertinacity, frequently have large families, who partake of the vicious physical and mental qualities of both parents. In this connection I cannot do better than again quote from Haycraft, who puts the case very strongly : "I do not see how we can shirk the fact," he says, "that preventive medicine and civilization, between them, have already deteriorated in a very marked degree the healthy vigor of our race. If things continue in their present course, it is fair to assume that in a hundred years or so the wretched products of our race—embodiments of every constitutional disorder transmitted by ancestry from whose ranks the diseased have not been weeded out, before the child-bearing period was over, by those natural agencies hitherto free to