

established a special society in this province—The Ontario Society for the Prevention of Insanity—the sooner will prevention take tangible form and the sooner will educational instruction take hold.

In the place of honor in the October issue of *The Bulletin of the Ontario Hospitals for the Insane* appears an article entitled—“Why Should Anyone Become Insane?”

The insane persons of Ontario number 6,803—one in every 367 of the population. In 1890 there were 4,210, the increase in the two decades being largely due to the desuetude of “asylum” and the ever-growing belief that these institutions are hospitals in the best sense and neither “asylums,” places of refuge nor houses of detention. The misapplied word “asylum” has served its day just as surely as “lunatic” has been shoved over into limbo.

Setting aside all question of expense to the Province in caring for these unfortunate patients, and considering only the question of prevention of insanity as paramount, the writer of the article, we are sure, must have the best and most accurate ground for making the statement that fifty per cent. of the patients are so from avoidable causes. Then, clearly, there is a great field for prevention.

Syphilis was the cause and the antecedent of 32 male cases of paresis, an incurable form of insanity, admitted to the Toronto Provincial Hospital for the Insane during the year ending the 30th of September, 1911. Syphilis as a disease to be prevented would come under the purview of the health officer. Gonorrhoea, too, in its train brings many disasters to innocent lives, but the people, especially the moralists, would scarcely consent to having these two diseases classed with other communicable diseases.

Alcohol and other poisons, physical diseases, worry and other mental bad habits, as well as heredity to a limited extent, are factors in the cause of insanity about which the people need educating.

How this education is to be brought about would be one of the early problems for an organization to determine. The passing of the knowledge from person to person, by teachers, the pulpit, the medical profession, the press, combined, would, in time, prove effective. The press would no doubt be the best means, as medical items are enticing morsels to most readers; and there is evidence in other countries, if not yet in Canada, that the way is being paved whereby the public press will be the great medium for the dissemination of knowledge of preventive medicine in all its various aspects. Of necessity this will mean the medical editor on the staff of the leading exponents of thought in the country.