

highly vitalized brain, richly endowed by hereditary transmission and equipped by the best educational processes, that is able to compete in the great struggle for existence. The submerged masses could not at once adapt themselves to such conditions, and the harvest of incapables who fall to the rear in the struggle must necessarily be large. We try to explain the large increase in our insanity returns by our larger humanity and the ampler provision made for their care, but the mighty upheaval in our social and industrial conditions must be credited with a large and ever-increasing proportion of it.

MENTAL DECLINE.

How long is this condition of things to go on? Are we to go on in the future still further exploiting the mysteries of science and adding discovery to discovery and invention to invention with an ever-increasing complexity of conditions, or is there a limit to brain expansion which cannot be overstepped with impunity? Is it possible that we may have already overstimulated the physiological process of brain activity, and that, suffering from brain exhaustion, we shall gradually undergo a process of mental decay?

From the Elizabethan period downward the pages of English literature have been adorned by the names of men who have made a profound impression on the age in which they lived in moulding the character and habits of the people. The last of these great men died the other day in the person of John Ruskin, who inscribed his name in imperishable gold on the pages of English literature.

Looking over the field of literature to-day it is sad to reflect that these men have left no successors, and, what is worse, there is no demand for them. At no age in the world's history was there ever such a surfeit of literature as to-day—in fact, in every sense it is an age of literary dissipation. At least 90 per cent. of it is fiction, and a good deal of it of a low and impure order at that. Nowadays men have no time for reading except for recreation or business demands. They scan the morning newspaper for the war news, the stock exchange reports, or the latest horse-race or prize-fight. The gambling spirit is dominant everywhere and is not confined to one sex. There is no time for deep reading or profound thinking. The mad struggle is after wealth. Literary barrenness is the consequence, and the tendency is everywhere to superficial thinking with a little knowledge of everything. There are no great living poets, philosophers or divines whom the masses are looking to for guidance. They are not forthcoming because there is no demand for them. The mind of the age is focussed on one great paramount idea—the acquisition of wealth.