must be treated like any other disease, and that therefore to deal with it successfully we must counteract it in its earliest stages. Under the influence of the same ideas asylums for the safe-keeping of lunatics are being transformed into hospitals, whose main object must be by early treatment to prevent mental diseases from becoming chronic and inveterate. In this way insanity must go on relatively increasing—relatively, that is, to the widening knowledge of doctors as to the premonitory symptoms of mental disease, and the vital necessity for taking them in time, and relatively also to the improvement of asylums and the consequent lessening of the horror which they formerly inspired, thus inducing the friends of patients to have recourse to timely treatment.

Again, the fact that our asylums are maintained by the General Government, which, as I have already pointed out, causes a general tendency to convert our asylums into receptacles for the flotsam and jetsam of society, leads further to an increase of our returns from the way in which it stimulates mean and selfish relatives to endeavour to thrust the care of many who are merely expensive and troublesome at home upon the hands of the State. It is becoming alarmingly easy in this country to convince persons of influence that payments for their insane relatives ought not to be rigorously exacted from the people. It is surprising what a difference this one consideration makes, not indeed in the numbers of the insane, but in the number of persons who, being in the debatable land of mental deficiency, are discovered to be fit subjects for an asylum; but who, if they had to be inevitably paid for, might safely be kept at home. It may be also that the unusual proportion of idiot and imbecile children admitted is due to the commercial and pastoral depression which has prevailed so long. In prosperous times people are not so anxious to get rid of their imbecile and helpless relatives, for abundance of work makes it easier to find some kind of employment for such persons.

There is yet another class of cases with regard to which popular feeling is being largely modified by our widening conceptions of nervous disease and social duty. Drunkards are now regarded as not merely vicious and criminal, but as the victims of disease and hereditary neuroses. The lunacy returns of New Zealand are greatly increased by the admission into our asylums of persons in various stages of alcoholic poisoning. Many and many a so-called lunatic is cured for the time being by careful feeding and judicious purgation in a week, and our recoveries are high in consequence. How most wisely to deal with these people is just at present one of our most perplexing and urgent problems.

The practice of sending these cases to the asylum is open to grave objections on two main grounds. First, it is the most expensive way of dealing with them, for, besides the cost of the two medical certificates, they needlessly cumber our most expensive institutions, and divert them from their proper functions; second, a needless stigma is affixed for life to the man who has been officially declared a lunatic, and the prospects of his children, especially of his daughters, are ruined thereby.

I believe the time has come when the social organizations of temperance, backed by the influences of morality and religion, should be supplemented by systematic action on the part of the State. The dictum of a distinguished bishop, that he would rather see England free than England sober, marks the highest reach of the tide of individualism, that is now visibly receding all over the world. This fetich of the "liberty of the subject" has been permitted long enough to stultify all our State dealings with drunkenness. Our magistrates go on gravely, year after year, sending drunkards to gaol just long enough to let them get sober, careless of the fact that in all our large towns there are persons against whom as many as fifty or sixty previous convictions have been recorded.

I believe that the time has come when the State, instead of dealing with drunkards in this indiscriminate and irrational manner, should, in its turn, like the medical profession, and even the general public, reflect the most enlightened ideas on this subject. What it has to deal with is a progressive enfeeblement of will and accompanying cerebral degeneration, caused by excess in the use of alcohol. No hard-and-fast line can be drawn between the man who is still capable of reformation by the effort of concentrating his attention on the consequences of his conduct, and the man who has gone so far on the down gradient that his own will is powerless to arrest his descent, and must therefore be supplemented by compulsion. The difference between the two classes is one of degree only. There is no sudden irrevocable plunge before which persuasion and moral influences can alone be permitted, and after which State compulsion must be applied. The truth is that the limit of freedom in regard to this vice is like the debatable margin between day and night. Who shall say when the one begins and the other ends, or shall forbid us to despair of the sun and have recourse to gas-light, with its inevitable evils and discomforts, until the exact point of transition has been determined? The State must boldly resolve to do rough justice here as elsewhere, by placing in one class those whose self-control has not hopelessly gone, and it must proceed tentatively by the method of experiment to discover them. They are a large class, from whom it must be remembered that our gaols, our hospitals, and asylums are being steadily recruited, and under the present practice must continue to be so. Yet at this stage many of them can be plucked like brands from the burning. They know as well as the most earnest preacher that there is only one end to their course. The evil is that their brains are so saturated and sodden with poison that they have lost all sense of moral perspective, and all argument and persuasion are useless. There is but one rational method of dealing with them, and the fetich of the liberty of the subject stops the way. They must be deprived of freedom and removed from their usual surroundings for a sufficient time to let their systems get rid of the poison, and made to work until the will has had a chance to recover its tone.

To fix in a practical way the definition of this first class of drunkards is the great difficulty. Mere accidental or casual drunkenness, not the outcome of long-continued indulgence, must be eliminated under observation after sentence, so that a rough separation may be effected of all those whose sodden systems and weakened wills require simply imprisonment and compulsory work, say, for one month at least. In their case actual disease has not yet supervened, and punishment is still rational as giving force to failing motive.