from a private well, apparently free from any risk of contamination. All recovered except the housemaid, who went to her home in a distant village, and communicated the disease to her parents and sisters, the housemaid and her father dying. Several other families on the estate were next attacked, and Hennig's brother-in-law, a butcher, having attended the funeral of one of the children, was attacked on his return, and the village where he lived was decimated. Here the sanitary conditions were atrocious. This man, Sklowe, ran the blood and washings of his slaughter-house into a pit dug in the ground, and threw the offal into his cesspit, both of which, as well as a ditch receiving the soakage or overflow from other privies, were in close proximity to the village pump. The same story was repeated over and over again: persons who contracted the disease in one village carrying it to another, where the water-supply, becoming infected, created a focus of disease, while soiled clothing, vegetables "freshened" by polluted water, and like agencies co-operated, until an epidemic was set up throughout the district that persisted for a twelvemonth. It was probably by these last-named vehicles that the members of the household at Krangen received the infection, their own water-supply being unobjectionable.

INTEMPERANCE AND PUBLIC HEALTH.

By E. W. HOPE, M.D.,

Medical Officer of Health, Liverpool.

INTEMPERANCE as a direct cause of death showed a slightly higher figure in 1897 than in the preceding year. Inquests were held on the bodies of 210 persons, viz., 43 men and 34 women whose deaths were caused by excessive drinking, 81 men and 33 women whose deaths were accelerated by excessive drinking, and 9 men and 10 women who were fatally injured by accident whilst in a state of intoxication. In seven inquests in which death was found to be the result of violence, the person committing the deed or the person killed was drunk at the time, and in three both the person who inflicted the injuries and the injured person were drunk at the time. Besides which alcoholism is certified as the cause of death of 17 persons, viz., 10 men and 7 women. Jurors are disposed to lay as little stress as possible upon a contributory cause of death which reflects upon the deceased. Taking the figures as they stand, it will be seen that as a direct cause of death, excessive indulgence in drink has, during the past year, destroyed more lives than some of the more formidable forms of zymotic disease. Deaths attributed to it are more numerous than from scarlet fever, or from all the other forms of fever, namely, typhus fever, typhoid fever, and simple continued fever, combined. It may be said that zymotic disease owes its importance to its potentialities, that the introduction of one case may give rise to an epidemic, whilst on the other hand it may be urged that the exit of a few score habitual drunkards is not a matter for lament.

It is true that zymotic sickness does owe much of its importance to its communicable nature, but it is not less true that the mischief resulting from excess in drink is even farther reaching, and far more insidious. If the consequences were limited to the individual habitual drunkards, the gravity of the circumstance would be comparatively

trifling; but no one who has ever been in the back streets can be ignorant that this is not the case, no one who has ever seen a morning newspaper will think that it is the case. Proof is clear that the poverty and the sickness and the mortality which owe their cause to excessive indulgence in drink are not fully indicated by inquests. It is probable that funds for the more prolonged orgies are found from the 'earnings' of little children 'trading' in the streets. Two of the areas of excessive disease and mortality dealt with by the Insanitary Property Committee during 1897 were over-supplied with public-houses.

Whilst thoughtful persons will not refrain from fixing their attention upon the aspects of the question which affect the public health, it is right to turn to the view which is presented in the report of the Head Constable. There it will be found that the decrease in the arrests for drunkenness during the past few years has been phenomenal. In 1889 the number of such cases was upwards of 16,000; in the last three years the average has been but a trifle over 5,000. These gratifying figures indicate that amongst large sections of the working community the temperate use of alcohol is extending. The great improvement in the general environment of the working classes, the clearing away of insanitary property, the opening up and lighting of streets, the facilities to visit parks, to engage in or look on at outdoor amusements on holidays, as well as the many efforts of individual and concerted philanthropy, have all contributed to improvement.

The temperate use which has commended itself to this class has not yet filtered down amongst the lowest section of the labouring classes. The figures already quoted forbid any such conclusion, whilst there is no evidence whatever to prove that excessive drunkenness in the homes of dwellers in the more squalid regions has materially diminished. The Head Constable, alluding to the trifling increase in arrests for drunkenness in 1897 over the preceding year, ascribes it 'in part at least to the greater prosperity during the year of the lowest section of the working classes.' In other words, the greater prosperity during the year of the lowest section of the working classes has not proved beneficial to them.—*A. R.*, 1897.

EXHIBITION OF NURSING.—An exhibition of nursing, as regards organization, apparatus, etc., will be held in Berlin from May 20th to June 18th.

NOTIFICATION OF PHTHISIS.—By the Public Health Act, 1898, notification of phthisis is compulsory in South Australia. The measures enacted in that Act against tuberculosis are far ahead of anything in force in this country.

PLUMBERS' REGISTRATION.—The conference convened in December last, after three meetings, agreed "without prejudice" to a draft Bill for the Registration of Plumbers, and thereupon passed a resolution to the effect that it was not desirable to proceed with the Bill. Truly the cart was before the horse on this occasion.

PAYMENT OF NOTIFICATION FEES.—A question as to the limit of time in which such fees can be claimed has been raised by a correspondent in the *Lancet* (April 15th). The point is an interesting one, but we refer to it here to express the view that it is desirable that the fees should be paid by the local authority at the end of each quarter, without calling on practitioners to send in accounts. Such is and has always been our own practice, and we have found the system to work most satisfactorily.