splendid head; the second, an exceptionally ugly Swiss, with a head 'that left a good deal to be desired;' the third, an average mortal of ordinary appearance. Among the inmates of the asylum was a poor deaf-mute of the name of Meystre, blind from his birth, but highly impressionable, and quick to distinguish between shapes that conformed to his ideal of the beautiful and those that did not. The feeling of a deformed or mutilated man, for instance, would sometimes draw from him signs of compassion and sympathy; at others, strange grimaces and mocking laughter. On being told to examine the three visitors, Meystre showed great admiration for the Swede; but, on passing to the Swiss, he seemed greatly amused, indulged in his usual mocking laughter, and by his gestures made it understood that he thought the man had no back to his head, which he seemed to consider an excellent joke. The result of the third examination was negative. It produced no sign either of satisfaction or displeasure.

These facts seem to show, and in Professor Soret's opinion prove beyond a doubt, that, so far as the 'human form divine' is concerned, the blind possess the same ideal of beauty as those who see, and that this ideal is innate; and he is anxious that those who have charge of the sightless should make every effort to cultivate their aesthetic taste; that by means of cardboard models in relief, and other expedients, they should be familiarized with the highest types of human beauty, which occupy so large a place in all literatures. By this widening of their conceptions, they would be enabled to understand allusions and descriptions in poetry and elsewhere, which at present they must find utterly incomprehensible. The better to accomplish this object, Professor Soret has drawn up a complete programme; and seeing how hard life is for the blind, and from how many pleasures they are debarred, we may heartily applaud this effort to ameliorate their sufferings by opening to them new horizons, and wish it every success.

PUBLIC HEALTH IMPROVEMENT IN ENGLAND.

THE death-rate in England and Wales in 1885 again fell, says the *Lancet*, to 19.0 per 1000 of the estimated population, and excepting only the year 1881, when it was 18.9, was lower than in any previous year since civil registration came into operation in 1837. The registrar-general's quarterly return, relating to the last three months of 1885, calls attention to the fact that the death-rate in each of the five years 1881–85 was considerably lower than the rate recorded in any year prior to 1881. The mean rate in the first half of the current decennium (1881–90) did not exceed 19.3 per 1000, showing a further decline from 20.8, the mean rate in the preceding five years 1876–80; whereas, in the preceding forty years of civil registration, the mean annual death-rate was 22.3, and the lowest rate in any quinquennium was 21.4 in 1841–45. This marked reduction in the English death-rate has now been maintained for ten years, and has been much greater in the second than in the first half of that period. It cannot, in the interest of further health progress, be too constantly borne in mind that the commencement of this period of reduced death-rate was coincident with the coming into full operation of the public health acts of 1872 and 1875.

The effect of this reduced death-rate upon the numbers and longevity of the English people is phenomenal. The registrar-general points out that the reduction in the last five years implies that "more than 281,000 persons in England and Wales survived that period, whose deaths would have been recorded had the mean rate of mortality been equal to that prevailing in the ten years 1871–80," in the latter half of which period the improvement in the public health had already set in. With regard to the increased longevity of the population, Mr. Noel Humphreys, in a paper read before the Statistical society in 1883, showed that the effect of a reduction in the mean death-rate from 22.5 in 1838–54, to 20.8 in 1876–80, would be to add two years to the mean duration of life of every male, and three years and a half to that of every female born.

PROFESSOR GRABER has made an extensive series of experiments on the degree and localization of the sense of smell in insects, etc., from among the results of which the following will be found of interest (*Journ. roy. micr. soc.*). Odors are perceived by many invertebrates, such as mollusks, insects, etc., with extreme rapidity, sometimes in one-third of a second, and even through an intervening layer of water a half-millimetre in thickness. This sensitiveness is very much greater than was exhibited by the vertebrates experimented upon (reptiles, birds). Insects deprived of their antennae are still able to smell, but in varying degrees in different insects and for different odors, some fine odors being apparently perceptible only through the antennae. Perception of smell through the stigmata or respiratory organs is not rapid nor important, though such has often been maintained. In some cases the palpi of the mouth-organs are more sensitive than the antennae, and therefore the latter cannot be considered as being alone the organs of smell.