

**The alleged increase of lunacy : a farther note / by C. Lockhart Robertson, M.D.**

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THE  
ALLEGED INCREASE OF LUNACY

A FARTHER NOTE

BY

C. LOCKHART ROBERTSON, M.D.,

*Lord Chancellor's Visitor.*

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"We have not found any reasons supporting the opinion generally entertained that the community are more subject than formerly to attacks of Insanity."—*Fifteenth Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy to the Lord Chancellor, 1861.*

"Il ne me paraît possible déterminer exactement jusqu'à quel point de chiffre des cas d'aliénation mentale a augmenté depuis une trentaine d'années ; mais il est au moins permis d'affirmer, d'après ce qui se passe dans la plupart des départements, que cette augmentation est dans tous les cas beaucoup moins considérable qu'on le pense généralement."—*De l'Augmentation Progressive du Chiffre des Aliénés. M. le Dr. Lunier, Inspecteur Général du Service des Aliénés.*

At the *Second Quarterly Meeting of the Medico-Psychological Association* (January 28th, 1869), I read a paper on THE ALLEGED INCREASE OF LUNACY.\* I there observed that the alleged increase of lunacy is a frequent theme of discussion in the public press, as also a subject of anxious enquiry in society, and that there is hardly a Board-room of any county asylum in which the question is not raised with the practical

\* The Alleged Increase of Lunacy : being a paper read at the Second Quarterly Meeting of the Medico-Psychological Association, held at the Royal Medico-Chirurgical Society, January 28th, 1869, by C. Lockhart-Robertson, M.D., Cantab., F.R.C.P. ; Ex-President of the Medico-Psychological Association ; Medical Superintendent of the Sussex Lunatic Asylum, Hayward's Heath ; Membre Associé Etranger de la Société Médico-Psychologique de Paris, etc., etc.—*Journal of Mental Science, April, 1869.*



intent of determining the amount of provision to be made for the care and treatment of the insane poor, and I added that, in order to satisfy such enquiries on the part of the Visitors of the Hayward's Heath Asylum, I had recently endeavoured to see if our existing statistical records afford any means of solving this pressing question, *IS LUNACY ON THE INCREASE IN OUR GENERATION?* Moreover, considering the opportunity of the second quarterly meeting of the Medico-Psychological Association, for scientific discussion, might fitly be used for the farther sifting of this important State question, I then submitted to its critical examination the figures and results with which my enquiry into the alleged increase of lunacy had furnished me. These results, which were worked out in a series of carefully compiled tables, I would now briefly sum up.

*1.—Total Numbers of the Insane.*

1. The grand total of the Insane registered in England and Wales during the last 25 years has increased nearly 100 per cent. In 1844 1 in 800 of the population was a registered lunatic; in 1868 this proportion increased to 1 in 432.

2. The statistics of lunacy in France show a similar increase. In 1851, 1 in 796 of the population was a registered lunatic; in 1861 this proportion increased to 1 in 444.

This question at once meets us at the threshold of the inquiry into the ALLEGED INCREASE OF LUNACY,—Is it probable, even possible, that during the last quarter of a century, when the length of man's life has been increased by our softened manners and greater knowledge of sanitary laws, this one fell disease of insanity has actually doubled the number of its victims?

Against this terrible possibility, which I entirely dispute, I laid before the Medico-Psychological Association the following considerations :—

1. Previous to the report of the metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy in 1844, no statistical record existed of the numbers of the insane in England and Wales. The returns made in that report are, moreover, characterised by the Commissioners as “plainly insufficient for general deductions.” Again, in their report for 1847, the newly-



appointed Commissioners in Lunacy also observe on the returns of that year of the total number of the insane at 23,000, that "they are notoriously imperfect, falling far short of the actual amount."

2. The *Lunacy Regulation Act* of 1853, by requiring a quarterly return by the medical officers of unions of the pauper lunatics not in asylums, added further accuracy to the registration of the total number of the insane, and hence further swelled their numbers.

3. The Act of 1861, rendering pauper lunatics chargeable upon the common fund of the union (instead of on their parish) led to a further increase in the number of lunatics and idiots sent to the county asylums, the fear of burthening their parish rates no longer influencing the action of the guardians in this respect. This provision specially led to the increase of the number of idiots in the county asylums.

4. We must distinctly note the influence of the opening of the county asylums on lunacy statistics. Before the passing of the Lunacy Act, 1845, the insane poor were in most counties in England an out-cast multitude, detained no man knew how, treated by the lay speculators in lunacy, to whom they were farmed out, in the most niggardly and wretched manner, and oftentimes more neglected still by their relatives at home.\* The opening of the county asylums erected under that Act formed a new era in the history of lunacy, and it cannot be wondered that the greater care thus bestowed upon the insane should lead to a larger knowledge of their numbers as well as of their condition.

In France, likewise, where the existing lunacy arrangements are based on the law of 1838, which compels the several departments to provide asylum accommodation for the care and treatment of their insane poor, the same great increase in the proportion of the insane to the population marks the earlier years of the operation of their new lunacy laws, and admits of similar explanation.

I may here adduce another statistical illustration of the apparent increase of insanity, consequent on the recent provision of adequate asylum accommodation. In Dr. Paley's

\* In illustration of this assertion I would refer to the numerous facts detailed in the *Report of the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy to the Lord Chancellor*, 1844. Those who have not access to this report may consult the speech on the *Regulation of Lunatic Asylums*, delivered by Lord Ashley, in the House of Commons, June 6th, 1845, and which is reprinted in a volume recently published, "Speeches of the Earl of Shaftesbury, K.G., upon subjects having relation chiefly to the claims and interests of the labouring classes, with a Preface." London: Chapman and Hall, 1868. (For a notice of this volume, see *Journal of Mental Science*, January, 1869. Part IV., Psychological News, "Lord Shaftesbury's Speeches.")



*Report of the Inspector of Asylums for the Insane in Victoria, 1870, presented to both Houses of Parliament, by His Excellency's Command, I find the following table:—*

*Table showing the Proportion of Insane to the Population in Victoria.*

In the decennial period from 1859 to 1869 the proportion of insane persons under care in the public asylums of Victoria has increased from 1 in 940 in the former to 1 in 416 in the latter year, as shown in the following table:—

Year.	Population.	Total Number of Lunatics on 31st December.	Proportion to Population.
1859	530,262	564	1 in 940
1860	537,847	596	" 902
1861	541,800	702	" 771
1862	555,744	750	" 740
1863	574,331	856	" 670
1864	605,501	1,001	" 604
1865	626,539	1,052	" 595
1866	643,912	1,189	" 541
1867	659,887	1,280	" 515
1868	684,316	1,556	" 439
1869	710,317	1,705	" 416

I presume no advocate of the doctrine of the increase of insanity would argue from this table that the lunacy of Victoria had doubled itself in the decennium 1859-69.

I may here add what Dr. McCullough recently stated to me, that he had observed the increase of insanity, consequent on the opening of the asylum at Abergavenny, to be distinctly greater in the districts adjoining the Asylum than in the more outlying parts of the united counties.

## *II.—Numbers of the Insane in Asylums.*

Passing from the total numbers of the insane registered to those confined in asylums, I showed the following facts:—

1.—The total number of the lunatics and idiots in the asylums of England and Wales increased in the decennium 1858-68 from 22,000 to 32,000, or, taking the ratio to the



population, they were in the proportion of 1 in 865 to 1 in 653.

2.—When this increase in the asylum population during the decennium 1858-68 is further analysed it is found to be confined entirely to the section of pauper lunatics maintained at the public charge; indeed, the numbers of the private patients in asylums show an actual decrease during the decennium, if any allowance at all be made for the yearly accumulation in asylums of chronic and incurable cases. Thus in 1858 the number of private patients in asylums was 4,612, as against 5,244 in 1868, which numbers, taken on the average to the population, give 1 in 4,164 in 1858 and 1 in 4,065 in 1868.

3.—The pauper lunatics increased in the decennium 1858-68 from 17,572 to 27,361, or while in 1857 they were in the ratio of 1 in 1,093 of the population, they increased in 1867 to 1 in 779 of the population.

4.—Further analysis, however, of this result shows the important fact that this increase in the number of pauper lunatics was in a *yearly decreasing ratio*. This is given in the following table, which is table IX. of my paper :—

*Table showing the ratio of increase per cent. in the Asylum population of England and Wales in quinquennial periods.*

YEARS.	Ratio of increase per cent. in the asylum population.
1844—49	5·64 per cent.
1849—54	6·09 „
1854—59	3·41 „
1859—64	4·83 „
1864—68	3·82 „

A similar result is shown in the French Asylum Statistics from 1836-61. The ratio of increase in the first quinquennial period 1836-41 was 5·04; in the last 1856-61 it fell to 3·14. Table X. of my paper gave these figures thus :—



*Table showing the ratio of increase per cent. in the Asylum population of France in quinquennial periods.*

YEARS.	Ratio of increase per cent.
1836-41.	5.04.
1841-46.	5.94.
1846-51.	3.87.
1856-61.	3.14.

5. Testing the question of the alleged increase of lunacy by the *admissions into the English asylums* during the decennium 1858-68, table VIII. of my paper showed an actual increase of 1,091 admissions in 1867 as contrasted with the admissions of 1857, and that the ratio of admissions to the population varied from 1 in 2,369 in 1857 to 1 in 2,090 in 1867. This increase I showed to be solely in the numbers of the pauper patients.\* There was an actual decrease in the admissions into the metropolitan licensed houses. Moreover, I showed that the yearly increase in the asylum admissions of pauper lunatics was in a YEARLY DECREASING RATIO, and that the carefully prepared statistics of the French Empire from 1835 to 1860 furnished a similar result.

The whole question of the *alleged increase of lunacy* is to be solved by the ratio of the asylum admissions. I repeat, it is the occurring cases of mental disease, not the number of lunatics in a country, which must determine the rate of increase of the disease. I thus attach the greatest importance to the facts furnished by table XI. of my paper, and which I here reproduce:—

\* "I would, however, remind you that Table VIII. showed an actual increase in the number of admissions into asylums in 1867 of 1,091 as contrasted with the admissions of 1857. This increase is solely in the number of pauper patients, and is dependent on the causes to which I have already, in the first part of this paper, referred, as influencing the more accurate registration of the insane poor in recent years. Every medical superintendent knows how increasing the practice is of filling up the wards of the county asylums with imbeciles and idiots from the union houses."—*The Alleged Increase of Lunacy.*



*Table showing the ratio per cent. in the Increase of the Admissions into the Asylums of England and Wales in the decennium, 1858—68.*

YEARS.	Ratio of increase per cent. in the admissions into asylums.
1858—9 . . .	11·7 per cent. increase.
1859—60 . . .	1·5 „ increase.
1860—61 . . .	3·7 „ decrease.
1861—62 . . .	1·6 „ decrease.
1862—63 . . .	2·4 „ increase.
<i>Average annual increase in the five } years, 1858—63 . . .</i>	1·2 „ increase.
1863—64 . . .	9·4 „ increase.
1864—65 . . .	10·4 „ increase.
1865—66 . . .	3·6 „ decrease.
1866—67 . . .	5·2 „ increase.
<i>Average annual increase in the four } years, 1863—67 . . .</i>	5·3 „ increase.
<i>Average annual increase in the nine } years, 1858—67 . . .</i>	3·0 „ increase.

The large annual increase of admissions in 1863-4 and 1864-5 is doubtless connected with the operation of the provision of the Irremovable Poor Act of 1861, which placed the cost of the maintenance of pauper lunatics on the common fund of the union, and removed the inducement in individual parishes to retain their insane poor at home, with a view of saving the local rates.

In France, as I showed, a similar result has been observed. The percentage of increase in the admissions has, in late years, gradually fallen. The ratio of increase in the admissions on the five quinquennial periods from 1835 to 1860 is thus stated:—



	PER CENT.
From 1st to 2nd period the ratio of the admissions increased	7.94
From 2nd to 3rd period	3.38
From 3rd to 4th period	3.83
From 4th to 5th period	2. 0

On these figures the author of the official French Lunacy Statistics thus observes :—

“Ainsi la proportion d’accroissement, après s’être élevée à 7.94 p. 100 vers 1838, date de la loi relative au traitement des aliénés indigents, est successivement descendue à 3.83 et à 2 p. 100. On trouve dans cette diminution graduelle la preuve bien manifeste que l’accroissement si considérable des admissions est un fait tout à fait temporaire, et qui tient, en grande partie, à l’action bien faisante de la loi précitée. Pour satisfaire aux prescriptions de cette loi, qui a obligé chaque département à faire traiter ses aliénés indigents, les asiles ont été agrandis, multipliés, améliorés *et le nombre des admis s’y est naturellement accru.*”

The publication of this paper in the *Journal of Mental Science* (April, 1869) attracted some notice in the press,\* and led to the further discussion of the question, and the object I have in this present “Note” is to put together the results of these discussions, so as further to ventilate the yet unsolved problem—IS LUNACY ON THE INCREASE IN OUR GENERATION? The papers to which I would here refer are the following :—

\* Thus the following extracts from the *British Medical Journal* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*, may tend to show the interest taken by the press in the solution of this important question of the alleged increase in lunacy :—

THE ALLEGED INCREASE OF LUNACY.—Dr. Lockhart Robertson, in a paper read lately before the Medico-Psychological Association, states that in 1844 there were 20,611 lunatics in England and Wales, or 1 in 802 of the population. In 1868 this number had risen to 50,118, or 1 in 432 of the population. The statistics of lunacy in France showed a similar increase in the total number of the insane, having risen from 1 in 796 of the population to 1 in 444 between 1851 and 1861. Dr. Robertson argued that this apparent increase was simply the result of more accurate registration of the insane, and the consequence of the opening of the county asylums; and that all recent lunacy legislation tended directly to increase their recorded numbers. In examining the question at issue statistically, Dr. Robertson confined his observations chiefly to the numbers of the insane in asylums, and showed that the yearly increase observed had been in a decreasing ratio, passing in quinquennial periods, since 1844, from an annual rate of increase of 5.6 per cent. to one of 3.8 per cent. in 1867. He showed that the same result followed in France; and he argued that this increase only represented the difference between the yearly admissions and the discharges and deaths. Among the private lunatics there is a decrease during the decennium 1857-67, despite the



1. The Increase of Lunacy.—*The North British Review*, Art. V., No. XCIX., March, 1869.
2. On the Alleged Increase in Lunacy, by Frederick MacCabe, M.D., Medical Superintendent Waterford District Asylum.—*Journal of Mental Science*, October, 1869.
3. De l'Augmentation Progressive du chiffre des Aliénés et de ses Causes, par M. le Dr. L. Lunier, Inspecteur Général du service des aliénés. (Mémoire lu à l'Académie Impériale de Médecine, le 23 Mars, 1869).—*Annales Médico-Psychologiques*, January, 1870.
4. On Insanity.—*The Quarterly Journal of Science*, No. XXVI., April, 1870.
5. The Growth of Lunacy.—*The British and Foreign Medico-Chirurgical Review*, No. XC., April, 1870.
6. The Reports of the West Riding, the Cambridgeshire, and of the Wilts County Asylums, for 1868 and 69.

I.—*The Increase of Lunacy. The North British Review*, No. XCIX., March, 1869.

This article appeared simultaneously with my paper on the subject. The writer (generally said to be Dr. Mitchell, one of the Scotch Commissioners in Lunacy) in every way supports and illustrates my arguments against the alleged increase of

increasing population of the country. The proportion of pauper lunatics to the population also remained nearly stationary, being '016 in 1857, and '019 in 1867. Tested by the admissions into the asylums during the same period (1857-67), the rate of increase is also in a yearly decreasing ratio, falling from 11.7 per cent. to an annual average of 3 per cent. From these facts, which were enforced by many elaborate statistical tables, Dr. Robertson deduced that the alleged increase of lunacy is a fallacy, and not borne out by the experience of the last decennium, 1857-67.—*British Medical Journal*, February 6, 1869.

IS LUNACY INCREASING?—Statistics show that the number of known lunatics in this country now is, relatively to the population, nearly double what it was in 1844. Similar results appear on the face of registration statistics in France. Dr. Lockhart Robertson, however, a competent authority, has, in an elaborate paper read before the Medico-Psychological Association, endeavoured to prove that this apparent increase is only the result of more accurate registration and the opening of county asylums. He shows that the yearly rate of increase observed has been in a decreasing ratio, passing in quinquennial periods since 1844 from an annual rate of increase of 5.6 per cent. to one of 3.8 per cent. in 1867. He argues that this increase represents only the difference between the yearly admissions and the discharges and deaths. In the private lunatics there is a decrease, and the pauper lunatics have been stationary during the years 1857-67, despite the increasing population of the country. Taking the admissions only into asylums during the same period there is a yearly decreasing ratio, falling from 11.7 per cent. to an annual average of 3 per cent.—*Pall Mall Gazette*, February 6, 1869.



insanity. The following extract places the whole question in a very clear light:—

So much, then, for the fact of the increase and its general occurrence; what are we told as to its nature and causes? Does this great annual growth of the number of persons found under treatment in asylums imply that there is a great and constantly progressing increase of the liability to insanity among the people of civilised Europe? At first sight it certainly appears to do this, and we have a ready explanation in the damaging effects of the racing, bustle, and competition of modern life, which send so many of the weaker among us to the wall. It will be comforting, however, if we find, on a closer examination of the figures, that they give no evidence of any marked increase in the production of insanity; and we think that this is a comfort we may safely take.

But before looking at what the Blue-books and Yellow-books reveal to us on this point, it is necessary to state that the increase of the numbers of lunatics in asylums is far beyond what would be due to any increase of the population, great as that has been; and that strength appears thus to be given to the theory of a growing proclivity to insanity. Take the English numbers, and selecting the years 1857 and 1867, when the estimated population of England and Wales rose from 19,256,516 to 21,429,508, we find that for the first year lunatics in asylums were 1 in 902, and for the second year 1 in 671 of the general population. This statement shows a vast increase in the amount of insanity *thought to require asylum treatment*; but it does not follow that there must be a greater frequency in the occurrence of the disease, in order to explain the greater amount of it, so provided for, at a particular time. That this is not the explanation of the increase which is taking place will be rendered more than probable if we examine the number of those who enter the asylums from year to year—a number which may be regarded as a fair expression of the rate of production. The result of such an examination will show that the annual number of admissions does not vary much. Such a number of years, however, must be dealt with as will not involve any great change in the general population within the period; for it is clear that if the admissions of early years are compared with those of later or remote ones, there will probably be an increase due simply to a greater population. Take the five years from 1859 to 1863, and we find the admissions into the English asylums to be as follows:—

In 1859 . . .	there were 9104 admissions.
„ 1860 . . .	„ 9243 „
„ 1861 . . .	„ 8955 „
„ 1862 . . .	„ 8803 „
„ 1863 . . .	„ 8588 „

There is certainly no evidence within this period of a progressive



advance in the number for whom admission is sought ; but if the total admissions during the five years are contrasted with the total admissions during the preceding five, then there is, as there ought to be, a considerable increase, being in round numbers from 38,000 to 44,000. So also, going further back for a period of five years, we find a rise from 36,000 to 38,000. More than one-half of this increase in the admissions may be regarded as a reasonable result of the increase of the population. The very sensible effect which the growth of the population may be expected to have on the number of admissions will be apparent when it is stated that the population rose from 17,150,018 to 21,429,508 during the twenty years before 1867, being an increase of about one-fourth.

The steadiness, however, of the numbers admitted into asylums from year to year, during this period, between 1859 and 1863, may possibly have been accidental. But we find that the same thing occurs during other short periods of consecutive years. Thus, for instance, the four years which follow the quinquennium already referred to, show that—

In 1864 . . .	there were 9,367 admissions.
„ 1865 . . .	„ 10,341 „
„ 1866 . . .	„ 9,970 „
„ 1867 . . .	„ 10,488 „

So also in Scotland, with the exception of the last two years, a like steadiness is displayed in the production of insanity, judged of by the number of those for whom admission into asylums is sought. Thus—

In 1858 . . .	there were 1448 admissions.
„ 1859 . . .	„ 1422 „
„ 1860 . . .	„ 1444 „
„ 1861 . . .	„ 1496 „
„ 1862 . . .	„ 1374 „
„ 1863 . . .	„ 1388 „
„ 1864 . . .	„ 1421 „
„ 1865 . . .	„ 1472 „
„ 1866 . . .	„ 1567 „
„ 1867 . . .	„ 1711 „

The increase during the last two of these years in the number of those admitted into the asylums of Scotland is decided, and is probably referable to the operation of causes of a temporary nature, such, for instance, as may arise from the opening of the district asylums. At present we are only concerned to point out that these figures, *as a whole*, give no evidence of a progressive increase of admissions from year to year, corresponding to the progressive increase of the number resident. It will be enough to give one illustration of what is meant by this, though it would be easy to give many from the figures relating either to England, Scotland, or France. We select the five years 1859



to 1863, during which, as the years went on, the admissions, so far from increasing, became less. Thus during

1859	there were	9104	admissions into the English asylums,	} 869
			and at the end of the year an increase,	
			in the number of patients resident, of	
1860	"	9243	" " "	1124
1861	"	8955	" " "	1354
1862	"	8803	" " "	1139
1863	"	8588	" " "	1047

The very considerable yearly increase of the number of patients who are in the asylums of England is not shown by these figures to be related to an increased production of lunacy, if that may be estimated by the number of those who are admitted into asylums. On the contrary, the yearly increase of the numbers resident did not rise and fall with the admissions, but maintained a progress which, if not wholly independent, was clearly so to a great extent.

The official documents at the head of this article appear, then, to furnish materials for the following conclusions: that there is an enormous increase of the numbers of the insane *in asylums*; that this increase is steadily progressive, and gives no indication of a tendency to pause; that the demand for admission into asylums is greater than it was; that the increase of the population accounts for much of this, but not for the whole; and that the part so unaccounted for is not such as to indicate any marked growth in the people's liability to insanity.

II.—*On the Alleged Increase in Lunacy.* By FREDERICK MACCABE, M.D., L.K. and Q.C.P., Medical Superintendent, Waterford District Asylum. *Journal of Mental Science*, October, 1869.

Dr. MacCabe argues from the statistics of the county of Waterford that in Ireland insanity is distinctly on the increase. With regard to the Irish lunacy statistics, he observes:—

The statistics referring to the amount of insanity in Ireland differ in some respects from the returns which refer to the state of insanity in England. In the first place, the population of England is shown by every successive census to be increasing—the population of Ireland betrays a steadily progressive decrease. Next, in estimating the numbers of the insane in England, Dr. Robertson, and other students of statistical returns, have had to deal with an *unknown quantity*, represented by the numbers of the insane at large and unregistered. For some time past, at intervals of a few years, the Inspectors of Irish Asylums have procured through the Irish Constabulary tolerably accurate returns of the number of persons in all parts of Ireland who



were known to be idiotic, imbecile, demented, epileptic, or reputed harmlessly insane—in short, they have been placed in possession of the numbers of that class of persons who constitute this unknown quantity in English calculations.

And with regard to the county of Waterford, he says:—

If the returns from one District, such as I have given, can be held to afford an indication of the general state of the country (and I believe they may be so taken) I think it will be difficult to resist the conclusion that between 1851 and 1861 there was a large increase in the numbers of the insane. In 1851, with a population of, in round numbers, 164,000, we have 238 insane; and this return, be it observed, includes no unknown quantity, such as Dr. Robertson has been obliged to take into account in his estimates respecting England. In 1861, with a population of 134,000, we have 386 insane. Here with a decrease of 30,000 in the population, we have an increase of 148 insane. These figures are very significant. I have taken one county of Ireland with which I am specially well acquainted, and if the reader will compare my results with the figures furnished by the general census of Ireland for 1851 and 1861, he will perceive that the same conclusions may be arrived at for the whole kingdom, as I have reached by a more minute enquiry into the returns of one of its constituent parts.

It is gratifying to be able to add that in 1868 (the number of the population being, however, unknown) this increase appears to have subsided—the number of the insane in this District has fallen to 377, and it is evident to me that the great increase last year in the number of admissions into the asylum and in the workhouses represents simply the transfer of so many insane from the lists of the Constabulary to those institutions. Instead of being at large, some who have exhibited acute symptoms have been sent to the District Asylum (a proceeding now rendered easy by the operation of the Act 30 & 31 Vict., c. 118); others have found refuge in the workhouses. This process of transfer from the Constabulary returns has been steadily increasing for many years according as new asylums have been opened, and old ones enlarged—thus in 1861 the Constabulary returns for the whole of Ireland included 8,991 insane, &c. In 1868 they had fallen to 6,554.

To sum up: I conclude, from the foregoing statistics, that in the District I have selected for observation, insanity has largely increased from 1851 to 1861.

I am of opinion that the alleged increase of lunacy is a well established fact so far as regards Ireland from 1851 to 1861.

Even according to Dr. MacCabe the alleged increase is in a decreasing ratio, having in 1868 subsided. Moreover, Dr. MacCabe's figures fail in not furnishing us with the relative



annual number of admissions, *i.e.*, of the occurring cases of insanity, the only legitimate test of its alleged increase.

III.—*De l'Augmentation Progressive du Chiffre des Aliénés et de ses Causes.* Par M. LE DR. L. LUNIER, Inspecteur Général du Service des Aliénés. (Mémoire lu à l'Académie Impériale de Médecine le 23 Mars, 1869.)—*Annales Médico-Psychologiques*, January, 1870.

I consider this a very important contribution to the solving of the problem of the alleged increase of insanity, and in reading Mons. Lunier's able paper I must say I felt greatly pleased to find how entirely the results of his researches accord with my own.

M. Lunier follows very nearly the same line of argument which I took in my paper. He first treats of the total increase of the numbers of the insane registered in France. He gives a table (1.), showing the increase of the total number of the insane in France from 1835 to 1869. In 1835 their proportion was 1 to 2016 of the population; up to 1869 it gradually increased to 1 in 412. As M. Lunier says, if we were guided by a superficial examination of this table the result would be that insanity in France had increased from 1835 to 1869 in the proportion of 496 to 2,428, or in other words that the disease had quintupled itself in these years.

M. Lunier divides these numbers into their two elements, *viz.*, the insane in private dwellings, and 2nd, those in asylums. He points out how the large annual increase in the former has resulted in France from more careful statistics, and from the large number of cretins now classed with the insane. He also shows how in every country in Europe, in England, in Scotland, in Belgium, in the United States, in Sweden, a similar apparent increase has followed the more careful lunacy statistics of the last twenty-five years.

M. Lunier then passes to the consideration of the increase of the *insane in asylums*. His second table gives full detail of the numbers of the insane in asylums in France from 1835 to 1869. From this important table M. Lunier draws the following deductions:—

“1. The number of the insane in French asylums have increased since 1835 from 10,539 to 38,545. They have thus nearly quadrupled.

“2. The relative number, otherwise the proportion of the



insane in asylums to the population, has risen from 316 to 1003 to the 10,000. The proportion has thus been tripled in the period.

“3. There is a continued yearly increase in the asylum population. This has gradually risen from the rate of 400 a year, which it was previous to the law of 1838, to a yearly increase of 600 and 1,300, but since 1862 there has been a *manifest yearly decrease*, and the yearly increase has fallen to between 800 and 900.

“4. This *yearly decrease in the ratio of increase in the asylum population* may be thus shown:—

YEARS.	ANNUAL INCREASE IN THE FRENCH ASYLUM POPULATION.
1841-46	5.94 per cent.
1846-51	3.71 „
1856-61	3.14 „
1868	2.57 „

M. Lunier next passes in review the admissions into the French asylums since 1838, and observes that while the annual rate of increase in 1836 was 8.73 per cent., it fell in 1860-64 to 1.97. He is of opinion that the apparent increase of insanity in France, the result of increased asylum admissions, is decreasing both absolutely and relatively. The causes which still tend to maintain it are, he says, not an increase in the disease, but the progressive confidence shown by the nation in the management of the asylums, and the slow removal of the prejudices which formerly induced families to hide their insane relations at home. Another cause is the greater number sent by the Administration to asylums, and especially in the districts where new asylums are being opened, and in the immediate vicinity of these asylums. M. Lunier thus concludes this section of his paper:—

“Je n’ai pas besoin d’ajouter, Messieurs, que ces deux causes d’augmentation du chiffre des admissions—*mais nullement du nombre des aliénés*—disparaîtront par la force même des choses, ou tout au moins n’accroîtront bientôt plus que dans une proportion insignifiante le chiffre total des entrées.”

#### IV.—*The Quarterly Journal of Science.*

In the number for April, 1870, there is an article by Dr. Martin Duncan, F.R.S., *on Insanity*, very ably and carefully



written. I say this, although I much doubt Dr. Duncan's general conclusion, that the introduction of *the village and cottage system foreshadowed by the insane colony of Gheel* into England, would reduce the present accumulation of our chronic lunatics, and at the same time prevent the alleged increase of insanity, on the existence of which Dr. Duncan insists.

I quote Dr. Duncan's remarks on the yearly increase of insanity, as a farther contribution to the question now before us :—

There appears to be a reasonable foundation, then, that there is a decided increase in the lunacy of the pauper class, and that it is slight among the non-pauper class.

This assertion has been most ably and temperately contradicted by one of the late presidents of the Medico-Psychological Association, and in 1861 by the Commissioners in Lunacy. They then wrote the following sentence, which very properly heads Dr. C. Lockhart Robertson's essay on the subject :—"We have not found any reasons supporting the opinion generally entertained that the community are more subject than formerly to attacks of insanity."\* In 1869, Dr. L. Robertson wrote, "that the alleged increase of lunacy is a popular fallacy, unsupported by recent statistics." He quotes the words of the President's address, read July 31, 1867 :—"During this period (1847-1867) the total number of pauper lunatics and idiots has increased from 17,952 to 42,943. While in 1847 one in every 880 of the whole population was a pauper lunatic, this proportion is now, in 1867, one in 494. I do not attribute these numbers to any actual increase in insanity, but rather to the fact of the more accurate returns which are now made of the pauper lunacy of the country, and also in some degree to a number of persons in the lower middle-class successfully contriving to evade the restrictions of the poor law, in order to procure for their insane relatives treatment in the county lunatic asylums. This opinion of the absence of any positive increase in the lunacy of the country is further supported by the relative proportion of private patients to the population in the same period."

Popular fallacies and general impressions are very obnoxious to the dogmatic under any circumstances, and they become exasperating when they receive support from the most recent and official statistics. The following table from the Commissioners' Report for 1868, published July, 1869, gives support to the "popular fallacy," if figures are of the least value, and unless the Commissioners wish to throw dust in our eyes.

\* Report, 1861,



Year.	Population.	Total Number of Lunatics, January 1.	Proportion to Population.
1859 . .	19,686,701	36,762	1 to 536
1860 . .	19,902,713	38,058	1 „ 523
1861 . .	20,119,314	39,647	1 „ 507
1862 . .	20,336,467	41,129	1 „ 494
1863 . .	20,554,137	43,118	1 „ 477
1864 . .	20,772,308	44,795	1 „ 464
1865 . .	20,990,946	45,950	1 „ 457
1866 . .	21,210,020	47,648	1 „ 445
1867 . .	21,429,508	49,086	1 „ 437
1868 . .	21,049,377	51,000	1 „ 424
1869 . .	21,869,607	53,177	1 „ 411

The gradual and progressive increase is, according to this Table, most evident; and if the Table of the increase of private and pauper patients in asylums already noticed is examined, the same remarkable support to “popular fallacy” is given. The increase of the number of admissions is evident. Unless there is an increase in the lunacy of the general population, and especially in the pauper class, these statistics must be misleading and erroneous. It may be asked when did the inaccuracy of the returns culminate, and when did the operations of certain Acts of Parliament particularly influence the singularly and equably progressive percentage noticed above. The operations of the Act of 1843 may have suddenly swollen the returns up to 1859, but it certainly did not do so afterwards. The Act of 1861, writes Dr. L. Robertson, “rendering pauper lunatics chargeable upon the common fund of the Union, instead of on their parish, led to a further increase in the number of lunatics and idiots sent to the county asylums.” But, on comparing the proportion of the lunatics to the general population in the years 1862, 1863, and 1864, when this increase of admissions to asylums would have taken place, there is no proof of any great access to the number of known lunatics, and simply because they were all allowed for in the returns of the Commissioners before the passing of the Act. Since 1862, the statistics of the insane published by the Commissioners have not been subject to any disturbing causes; they are not calculated to mislead in the manner suggested, and we are bound to accept the fact that there is a steady increase in the lunacy of the population of England, Wales, and Ireland, especially amongst the pauper class, and to admit that for once popular fallacy is supported by recent statistics.

#### V.—*The British and Foreign Medico-Chirurgical Review.*

An article in the number for April, 1870, signed J. T. Arlidge—*The Growth of Lunacy*—while treating generally of



the wide question of the care and treatment of the insane, has the following sensible remarks on the problem before us, THE ALLEGED INCREASE OF INSANITY:—

There has been much sensational writing respecting the increase of lunacy, and the public mind is strongly impressed with it as a painful and perplexing fact; but the circumstance of mere accumulation has been greatly overlooked by popular writers. On the other hand, ingenious attempts have been made by recourse to statistics—so facile whether in the cause of truth or of error—to demonstrate that, regard had to the growth of the population, and to the results of accumulation, no positive augmented production of insanity has taken place, but that on the contrary, we are not now so mad a people as we were some years ago.

This comfortable conclusion, however, does not derive support from the inquiries of the English Commissioners; although, indeed, it is not so far from the truth as that of the alarmists. To quote the "Report" on this matter, the Commissioners remark:—"The ratio of admissions of certified insane patients to the population appears to have been 1 to 2115 in 1859, and 1 to 1931 in 1868; and the average annual increase of the admissions appears to have been about 2·04 per cent., the average yearly increase of the population being estimated at about 1·11 per cent." (p. 7.)

This fact indisputably points to an absolutely increased production of lunacy in the community; a positive growth, distinct from augmentation, resulting from accumulation. At the same time accumulation is chiefly chargeable with the large relative increase, as above quoted, of 45 per cent. among lunatics in the course of the past ten years.

#### VI.—*The Reports of the West Riding, the Cambridgeshire, and of the Wilts County Asylums.*

My friend, Dr. Crichton Browne, is a decided advocate of the theory that insanity is on the increase. In his report for 1868 to the Visitors of the West Riding Asylum, he writes:—

In the presence of facts such as these just recorded, it is impossible for us to acquiesce in the soothing doctrine now being disseminated, that the alleged increase of lunacy is only a popular fallacy, and that it is an accumulation, and not a propagation, with which we have to deal. The comparative antiquity of this establishment affords unusual facilities for testing this matter, and unfortunately all investigations into it conduct to the same conclusion—that an actual as well as an apparent augmentation in the numbers of our insane poor is rapidly in progress; and that the augmentation now taking place is chiefly of the former description.



Dr. Browne says that his experience combats my theory, that it is the standard of sanity which is raised, and that patients now fill the wards of our county asylums who 20 years ago would have been detained in the workhouses. He states his experience to be distinctly to the contrary, and he is led to believe "that the popular definition of insanity is becoming more and more restricted, while those of bordering states, such as eccentricity, mental weakness 'lowness,' and stupidity, for which asylum treatment is not deemed requisite, are becoming proportionately enlarged."

The other argument used by me, that the modern system of treatment tends to the apparent increase of insanity by the lengthening of the lives of the chronic-insane is thus met by Dr. Browne's adverse figures:—

But another explanation is offered of the alleged increase of insanity, with the view of proving that it is apparent and not real; and this is that a prolongation of lunatic life has resulted from the modern humane system, and that a larger number of lunatics are now living at the same time than was formerly the case. Supposing this to be true, it must be obvious that the annual increment to be ascribed to such a cause must soon exhaust itself, and cease to exist, whenever the highest possible average extension of lunatic life is reached. The humane system of treatment, and the improved sanitary regulations in Asylums, have now been in operation for many years, so that their influence could scarcely be supposed to account for an increase in the numbers of the insane taking place at present. Such influence, however, has no genuine existence. An examination of the books of this asylum indicates that no prolongation of lunatic life has taken place in this district during the last forty years. It is found,—1st. That the average death rate of the last ten years, from 1858 to 1868, has been equal to what it was from 1818 to 1828; so that no accumulation of lunatics can be attributed to a reduced mortality. 2nd. That the average rate of recovery, from 1858 to 1868, has been only slightly lower than it was from 1818 to 1828; so that no accumulation of lunatics can be attributed to a diminished return of discharges. And 3rd. That the average duration of the mental disease, in those patients who have died or have been discharged, from 1858 to 1868, has been considerably shorter than it was from 1818 to 1828; so that no accumulation can be attributed to a prolongation of the duration of the disease. Whatever, therefore, may have been the effects of the modern humane system, they have certainly not included any material accumulation of lunatics, and a consequently aggravated burden upon the rate-payers.

As against Dr. Crichton Browne, I would quote the opinion of one of the most distinguished members of the Medico-



Psychological Association, Dr. Thurnam. To his Report for the year 1869 he has appended a thoughtful supplementary *Report on Insanity in Wiltshire*, which must be studied by any one examining the problem now before us. Dr. Thurnam thus supports my arguments against the alleged increase of insanity in the concluding paragraph of this Report :—

It is quite possible, notwithstanding the large amount of existing insanity in Wiltshire, that on a fair comparison of the occurring cases, this county might compare favourably with others in which the accumulation of pauper insanity is less. And so, likewise, the supposed increased liability to insanity in England at the present time, as compared with the earlier part of the century, may to a great extent, or even altogether, be imaginary, when the increase in the general population is considered. No doubt the numbers brought together in asylums have very much increased. In the Wilts County Asylum, within fifteen years, the numbers have been raised from 289 in 1855, to 457 at the beginning of 1870. These numbers are sometimes thought to imply a fearful rapidity in the increase of insanity. But, on turning to the annual admissions, which roughly correspond with the occurring cases, it is seen that these are on the whole very uniform, and even show a slight decrease. For the entire fifteen years the admissions have averaged 115, but during the last five years have amounted only to 110 *per annum*. In 1869 they were 108. So long as the recoveries (or discharges) and deaths are less numerous than the admissions, the numbers in the asylum must progressively increase. During four of the last five years the deaths have been below the average ; which, while speaking well for the sanitary arrangements, fully explains the augmentation in the actual numbers under care. Part, however, of the increase must be referred to the facilities afforded by recent legislation to the admission of patients, many of whom are sent labouring under slight and transient forms of mental disorder, such as in former days would never have been removed from their homes. Some are brought who ought to be cared for elsewhere, in Workhouses, or even in Prisons. Not a few superannuated and paralytic old people, when they become troublesome in the wards of the workhouse, are at once removed to the asylum. In other instances men are brought who should be regarded as offenders against the laws, and punished accordingly. It is an abuse of an asylum to send to it a man who, maddened by drink, assaults his wife or child, or commits some other vagary or act of violence. It may not be easy in every case to discriminate the excitement of intoxication, acting on a violent temper and coarse nature, from mania ; but a day or two would generally suffice to decide the question. The journey to the asylum and the warm bath on arrival often suffice to dispel the excitement ; and it is obvious that, in place of a residence in our comfortable wards, there are cases in which a month's discipline at the treadmill would in every respect be the more appropriate treatment.



As bearing on this question I may refer to the following *Remarks on the Number, Position, and Prospects of the Insane* in the county of Cambridge, made by Dr. Bacon in his Report for 1868 of the Cambridge County Asylum.

At the opening of this Asylum it contained but 118 patients. There are in it to-day 243, chargeable to this county—a long gap to bridge over in nine years. In 1860 there were 286 lunatics and idiots belonging to the county, and now there are 405.

At first sight these figures may seem rather alarming, and calculated to excite some anxiety as to the future increase, but I think upon closer consideration the matter may be looked at without such misgivings. It can, indeed, hardly be viewed otherwise than with satisfaction, when the benefits conferred on a peculiarly suffering class are taken into account; but one may be glad to know the limit of the burden to be borne by the community, and I think some such prospect is now attainable. Under the present system great numbers of chronic lunatics, imbeciles, and idiots have been collected in asylums, and in most counties, probably, this class has been nearly provided for. By this process the numbers of every asylum have been largely added to in a few years, but after a certain period, the further increase represents the normal requirements of the district. This increase varies a good deal in different localities, but is found, as a rule, to a greater extent in the large towns and centres of active life, though influenced by a variety of circumstances. Now this county has some peculiarities, not without their influence on the rate of insanity. Thus, its position and natural formation limit its resources in a great measure, and, therefore, its population: it is essentially agricultural, and must remain so, having neither coal, iron, nor manufactures. We might, therefore, suppose that the population would be maintained at about the average rate, but the contrary has been the case, and it has undergone a *decrease*. From the beginning of this century, when the population of Cambridgeshire stood as 89,346, up to 1851, when it had reached 185,405, there had been an uninterrupted increase, but in 1861 there was a decrease of nearly 10,000 since the previous census. This diminution was general in all the unions of the county, but (excluding Cambridge, which is influenced by the fluctuations of the University) greatest in those of Wisbech, Newmarket, North Witchford, and Ely. During this decenniad the births preserved their normal excess over the deaths, and, in the absence of any special cause, this result may, perhaps, have been partly due to an exodus of the labourers, many of them having migrated to other parts, attracted by higher wages. Such a migration would not be confined in its effects to a mere diminution of numbers, but would, by depriving many afflicted persons of their protectors, have a tendency to fill the poorhouses and asylums, as well as raise the ratio of the helpless to the population. This is the



natural result, and has been observed in many places—in Ireland, for instance, and in certain parts of Scotland. Be the cause, however, what it may, the fact remains, and it indicates a certain decline in prosperity, a loss in strength, and an increase in poverty—conditions all favorable to the development and increase of insanity. The equable life of the humble labourer does not, then, apparently, exempt him from the penalties that attend a more ambitious career, and this is seen in the high position of some of the agricultural counties in the rate of insanity. Thus Cambridgeshire stands 13th in the catalogue of 54\* divisions of England, 1 in every 421 of its population being insane, and having as its superiors in misfortune Wilts, Hereford, Berks, Oxford, Leicester, Bucks, Dorset, Herts, &c. This shows, too, the close relation of poverty to the rate of insanity, for in those counties in which there are most insane, in them the pauperism is greatest. Thus in Wilts, 1 in every 12 of the population is a pauper, and 1 in 327 insane; and in other counties I have enumerated the pauperism varies from 1 in 12 to 1 in 18, while in Westmoreland and Cumberland, not over civilized examples, the pauperism is 1 in 28 and 24 respectively, and the insanity 1 in 517 and 543. Comparisons between individual counties can never be made very exact, because local circumstances have an unknown weight, but considerations such as the above may serve to show how the native insanity of a county is influenced by its material prosperity.

I thus submit the problem of THE ALLEGED INCREASE OF LUNACY to the further study and investigation of the members of the Medico-Psychological Association. Although I cannot, of course, in the face of the recent opposing evidence which I have very fully quoted, regard the question as entirely solved, I still adhere to the proposition, the demonstration of which I made the subject of my previous paper, *viz.*, THAT THE ALLEGED INCREASE OF LUNACY IS A POPULAR FALLACY, UNSUPPORTED BY RECENT STATISTICS.

The tendency to insanity in a class is expressed by the proportion that become insane;† it is the proportion the asylum admissions bear to the population—not the total numbers of the insane in asylums—which must guide our decision as to the alleged increase of the disease. Now, according to the latest official statistics (Twenty-third Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy, 1869), and which have been so often quoted (see Dr. Duncan above, &c., &c.) as demonstrating the increase of lunacy, the average annual increase of the asylum

\* Yorkshire being divided into three parts.

† See Thurnam, *Statistics of Insanity*, p. 171. *Farr. Statistical Journal*, 1841, iv. 20.



admissions on the decennium 1859-68 is stated to have been 2·04 per cent. As the average yearly increase of the population is, according to the same authority, 1·11, it results that the total annual increase of the admissions is under 1 per cent., viz., ·93, and this increase, moreover, is, as I have already shown, a yearly decreasing ratio, both in England and in France.

This increase, such as it is, and it is admittedly only of the pauper class, I explain by the two simple causes of the removal to asylums under recent legislation of the idiots, and demented cases formerly detained in workhouses; and, 2ndly, by the insane of the middle classes, more year by year finding their way into the county asylums as nominal paupers.

The experience of every medical superintendent must confirm the existence of both these conditions.

Insanity, writes Dr. Thurnam, without doubt, sooner or later, reduces many of its victims to pauperism, and its ratio among those who retain their places among the upper and middle classes is much less than might be anticipated. On the other hand, it is certain that the returns of pauper lunatics and idiots in workhouses and with their friends are considerably swollen by cases not properly classed as insane. It is the custom, in many Poor Law Unions, in making up these returns, to include in them all who have once been treated for mental disorder or have been confined in asylums, notwithstanding that symptoms of insanity no longer exist, and that the individuals are known merely as paupers who were once insane, and are receiving relief in consequence of age, infirmity, or disease. The extent to which the numbers are thus enhanced, though varying according to the judgment and fancy of the returning officers, can be by no means insignificant.

On the other side, the argument raised by Dr. Richardson, and supported by others, that "insanity is an upshot of mental inactivity," and "that our uneducated cloddish populations are its chief breeders," if not required to solve the problem of that alleged increase of insanity, which I hold has happily not yet overtaken society, may nevertheless serve to warn us of a future source of danger to the national standard of mental health. Dr. Thurnam, in his report on the Insanity of Wiltshire, thus refers to this point:—

Dr. Bacon, of the Cambridge Asylum, has recently pointed out "the close relationship of poverty to the rate of insanity," and states



that in those counties in which there are the most insane, pauperism is also greatest. Here again Wiltshire maintains a bad eminence, having a larger proportion of pauperism than any other county; the ratio being as high as one in every twelve of the population. According to the last report of the Poor Law Board, the following was the relative amount of pauperism in six agricultural counties, chiefly in the South West of England, on January 1st, 1868 :—

Wilts	.	.	.	.	.	1 in 12
Dorset	.	.	.	.	.	1 in 13
Oxford	.	.	.	.	.	1 in 14
Gloucestershire	.	.	.	.	.	1 in 15
Berks	.	.	.	.	.	1 in 16
Hereford	.	.	.	.	.	1 in 16

But in the northern and manufacturing counties the ratio of pauperism was little more than one-half of the above, viz. :—

Durham	.	.	.	.	.	1 in 23
Stafford	.	.	.	.	.	1 in 23
Lancaster	.	.	.	.	.	1 in 25
York, N.R.	.	.	.	.	.	1 in 25
York, W.R.	.	.	.	.	.	1 in 26
Chester	.	.	.	.	.	1 in 27
Derby	.	.	.	.	.	1 in 33

It would result from the whole of these comparisons that the position of the farm labourer by no means exempts him from that liability to insanity which is sometimes regarded as the especial penalty of a more ambitious career. We may, indeed, almost conclude, with an able and original investigator, that, on a large scale, "insanity is an upshot of mental inactivity," and that our "uneducated, cloddish populations" are its chief breeders.

\* \* \* \* \*

The statistics of the accumulation of wealth may be beyond our appreciation, and they may present nothing disproportionate or excessive; but if the emigration of the best and boldest of the peasantry of any given district be a cause of pauperism, and, indirectly, of an accumulation of cases of insanity, it becomes an important economic question how far such tendency to emigration may be diminished. The Wise King points out that to withhold more than is right and fitting tends to poverty. So it may perhaps be now. It at least occurs whether the low wages, lower probably in Wiltshire and Dorsetshire than in any other county,\* might not be advantageously increased with

\* The average wages of the agricultural labourer in Wiltshire is 9s. per week; shepherds, 10s.; and carters, 11s.; there are a few extras in harvest time, &c. The condition of the Wiltshire labourer and that of the "Dorsetshire hind" are nearly the same. Both, there can be little doubt, are "under-fed." See the interesting paper in "Good Words" for February, 1870, p. 94,—*"Our Working People, and How they Live."*

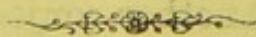


the possible effect of reducing the poor-rates, and so obviating some of those evils, of which Wiltshire seems to have a large share.

Another point, to which, in now concluding these disjointed "*Notes on the Alleged Increase of Lunacy*," I would call the attention of the members of the Medico-Psychological Association, is an enquiry into the relative proportion the existing forms of insanity bear to the results of twenty-five years ago. If lunacy be on the increase, it should be shown in which of its varieties the increase occurs. Is, again, general paralysis of the insane on the increase in England as it is in France? Is idiocy being more checked in its development by our better knowledge of the laws of health? I quote here (to end) M. Lunier's words on this point:—

"I exclude from this hopeful view of the yearly decrease rather than increase of mental disease, the insanity resulting from alcoholic abuse, and still more that form termed general paralysis of the insane, which I am tempted to call the disease of this century, and which appears to increase not only in the large towns, but also, for many years past, in the smaller centres of population with most alarming rapidity. Fortunately this extension of mental disease is to some extent counterbalanced by the diminution in France in the cases of cretinism and idiocy."

45, *Lincoln's Inn Fields*, December, 1870.





## APPENDIX.

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I reprint here the following article which appeared in June, 1869, in the *Saturday Review*, on the ALLEGED INCREASE OF LUNACY, in farther illustration of the interest taken by the Press in the discussion of this social problem :—

*Alleged Increase of Lunacy.*—We often hear people assuming that lunacy is more common than it used to be, and speculating upon the causes of the supposed increase. Sometimes it is ascribed to education, sometimes to religion, and more frequently to the railways or the telegraph. The conception of proper treatment for lunatics is modern, and provision for giving practical effect to it belongs to the present century ; and perhaps Providence has ordained that the number of subjects for treatment should increase in order to prevent so much good philanthropy from being wasted. It is probably correct to say that the middle and upper classes of Englishmen are more temperate than they were a century ago, and it would be disappointing to conclude that those who used only to get drunk now go mad. We are told that politics and statesmanship do not produce many lunatics, neither does law, literature, nor the fine arts. We know that clergymen sometimes make their hearers mad, but we do not know that they go mad themselves. The army and navy send few patients to asylums ; and, on the whole, it is concluded that intense devotion to business is the chief cause of madness. The speed at which we live is said to be too high, and if a man comes up to business by express train in the morning, receives and answers telegrams all day, and returns home by express train in the evening, it is supposed that his brain must be in a process of deterioration. Another conjecture is that people have too much pleasure, or too much variety in life, and that the best preservative of a sound mind was the dullness of a country town of the last century.

That statement, that lunacy is increasing, would be highly important if true, but we have some reason to think it is not true. It is matter of common knowledge that lunatics have been very much looked up during the last twenty or thirty years, and it may be that the supposed increase in their num-



bers is merely the result of greater accuracy in registration. A considerable degree of accuracy has now been attained, and inaccuracy, even if it exists, does not affect the present question, because the belief in the supposed increase of lunacy, unless it is mere vague conjecture, must be founded upon such statistics as can be procured; and these statistics, as we shall proceed to show, do not support this belief, but disprove it. In short, it is a popular delusion to suppose that the spread of intelligence and progress in the arts of life renders this generation more liable than its predecessors to brain disease. This subject was discussed at a recent meeting of the Medico-Psychological Association, and a paper read before that meeting by Dr. Lockhart Robertson, exhibited the results of examination of the returns, upon which alone a trustworthy opinion can be formed. This paper admitted that a general belief in the increase of lunacy existed, and had some apparent justification. The grand total of the insane of all classes, detained in asylums, in workhouses, and in private dwellings was, in 1844, 20,611, and in 1868, 50,118. Thus, in twenty-five years, the number of registered lunatics has more than doubled. And if we compare the number of lunatics with the total population of the country, we shall find that in 1844 the ratio was 1 in 802, while in 1868 it was 1 in 432. The statistics of France exhibit a similar result. The total number of the insane in that country increased, from 1 in 796 in 1851, to 1 in 444 in 1861. It is remarkable that the proportion of registered lunatics to population in England and France should be almost exactly the same, being in the former country 1 in 432, and in the latter 1 in 444. In explanation of the apparent increase of lunacy in England, it is to be observed that, previously to 1844, no statistical record existed of the number of insane in England. The returns made in that year were considered by the Commissioners in Lunacy "plainly insufficient for general deductions." Again, the returns for 1847 were stated by the Commissioners to be "notoriously imperfect, falling far short of the actual amount." As regards pauper lunatics, there was until recently no official system of registration. County asylums have only been established since 1845, and the greater care bestowed on the insane poor since that time has produced a more accurate knowledge of their numbers, as well as of their condition. But, as regards private patients in asylums, belonging to the middle and upper classes, an accurate regis-



tration has been enforced for a longer time, and the number of these patients in proportion to population has not increased. In 1858 the number was 4,612, and the proportion was 1 in 4,164; in 1868 the number was 5,244, and the proportion was 1 in 4,065. These figures ought to make an end of all theories which ascribe the supposed increase of mental disease to particular habits or tendencies of our age. It cannot be education, nor business, nor politics, nor awakening sermons, nor express trains, nor telegrams, because the classes of society which enjoy or suffer these things do not, in fact, go mad more frequently than they used to do. The increase of lunacy has taken place, if it has taken place at all, among the poorer classes, who live now nearly as they lived a hundred years ago. But the increase among these classes has been apparent and not real. If Mr. Gladstone's Irish Church Bill passes as he has brought it in, there is likely to be an apparent increase in the number of pauper lunatics in Ireland, but we do not suppose there will be a real increase. And the apparent increase of pauper lunatics in England is an increase in a decreasing ratio. Thus, in the period 1844-9 the increase in the number of inmates of asylums in England—which increase, as we have seen, belonged to the pauper element—was in the ratio of 5.64 per cent. But in the period of 1864-8 the ratio of increase was 3.82 per cent. In France also the increase in the number of inmates of asylums has been, on a comparison of the same periods, in nearly the same decreasing ratio. Thus, as Dr. Robertson says, "if mental disease be on the increase, it is at least satisfactory to find that the annual increase, both in England and in France, is in a decreasing ratio." A similar conclusion may be obtained by examining the numbers of admissions to asylums both in England and France. The result of the French returns is clearly stated by an official writer, quoted by Dr. Lockhart Robertson:—

Ainsi la proportion d'accroissement, après s'être élevée à 7.94 p. 100 vers 1838, date de la loi relative au traitement des aliénés indigents, est successivement descendue à 3.83 et à 2 p. 100. On trouve dans cette diminution graduelle la preuve bien manifeste que l'accroissement si considérable des admissions est un fait tout à fait temporaire, et qui tient, en grande partie, à l'action bienfaisante de la loi précitée. Pour satisfaire aux prescriptions de cette loi, qui a obligé chaque département à faire traiter ses aliénés indigents, les asiles ont été agrandis, multipliés, améliorés, et le nombre des admis s'y est naturellement accru.



The number of admissions to English asylums was largely affected by the passing of the Act of Parliament of 1861, rendering pauper lunatics chargeable upon the common fund of the union, instead of upon their parishes. The fear of burdening the parish rates now ceased to influence the action of parochial authorities, and accordingly we find that in the years 1863-5 there was an increase of nearly 10 per cent. in the admissions to asylums. But in late years the rate of increase has been considerably reduced. It must be remembered, too, that this increase of admission is a mere transfer from workhouses and private dwellings to asylums. The management of pauper lunatic asylums is most creditable to the humanity and scientific skill of their medical superintendents, and the experience gained in them has contributed to the amelioration of the treatment of the insane of the upper and middle classes. These satisfactory results cannot of course be obtained without paying for them, and the cry which is going up for a diminution of the burden of county rates, may possibly produce some interference with the views enlightened philanthropy entertains as to the proper mode of treating pauper lunatics. It seems probable that financial boards will be constituted in counties, and that ratepayers will have a choice in deciding questions which have hitherto been settled by a committee of magistrates. We doubt whether the representative vestryman is likely to act in harmony with the medical superintendent of a pauper lunatic asylum. It is a mistake to assume that expenditure upon these asylums is not true economy; but it is a mistake which uninstructed minds are likely to fall into. But whatever conflicts may be in store for medical officers of lunatic asylums in England, we foresee that in Ireland, under Mr. Gladstone's Bill, they will find a paradise. They are to be invited to help to spend the surplus property of the disendowed Church, and we venture to believe that they will be found equal to the occasion. The pauper lunatic asylums of Ireland are likely to become models of complete arrangement and scientific management, and although we do not suppose that people will pretend madness to gain admission to them, we do suppose that pauperism will be assumed in order to obtain gratuitous maintenance and medical treatment for persons who ought to pay for it. In any asylum in England now, the condition of a pauper lunatic is incomparably preferable to that of the most wealthy lunatics in any asylum of the last century. Indeed, the most wealthy lunatics were



frequently the worst treated. Perhaps lunatics and idiots who remained in their own homes were treated better than those who were placed in asylums. The feelings of humanity would assert themselves in uninstructed bosoms, and it was only a pretended science that applied systematic cruelty to that portion of mankind which most deserved the pity of its fellows. There has been no more remarkable change of ideas than that which has almost banished from lunatic asylums the whole apparatus of restraint. It would be melancholy to think that, along with so great improvement in the treatment of mental disease, there is a tendency in advancing civilization to multiply the subjects of it. But Dr. Robertson has shown that this opinion, although not destitute of apparent foundation, is erroneous.

