

that such superficial assertions should be made, and that thus fallacies, which have been again and again exposed, should be widely circulated and more or less credited in consequence. The writer touches upon the advantages arising out of not appointing men to be medical superintendents who have been already trained in asylums as assistant medical officers. The case of Dr. Conolly is adduced in support of this opinion. We do not think this is really to the point. Conolly states distinctly that he acquired his ideas of non-restraint from the Lincoln Asylum before he went to Hanwell, and carried them out on a larger scale than previously. But were it otherwise, we do not consider that the argument has any force at the present day, when there are a vastly greater number of assistant medical officers thoroughly suitable for promotion than was the case in the days of Conolly. There are exceptions to every rule, and we admit that in some instances good has been done by the treatment of the insane being undertaken by those who have "brought a fresh mind to the work." All we say is, that other things equal, the preference should be given to those who have previously had experience in the treatment of lunatics.—EDS.

LUNACY STATISTICS.

To the Editor of "THE TIMES."

SIR,—In your issue of the 16th inst., commenting on the recent report of the Commissioners in Lunacy, it is stated to be "unquestionably true" that insanity is upon the increase. Allow me to say that this popular notion *has* been called in question. Moreover, it is "unquestionably true" that the official statistics of lunacy do not support this opinion. They simply show that a larger number of cases are cared for and treated now than formerly—say in 1859. The confusion arises from failing to distinguish between the *existing* and the *occurring* cases of lunacy, in proportion to the population. It is, of course, open to anyone to allow himself to be guided by his own impressions in regard to the increase of mental disorders, but he cannot quote statistics in proof of this position. The Commissioners in Lunacy have themselves stated that their statistical tables do not warrant any such inference.

The same source of fallacy vitiates the conclusion that more women than men become insane. In your article a reason is advanced in order to explain this supposed greater liability of the female sex. It is unnecessary to seek for a reason to explain that which does not exist. The fact that at the beginning of the year the male lunatics were one to every 370 of the male population, while the female lunatics were one to every 326 of the female population, is absolutely worthless as proving the relative liability of women to insanity. There are other points in your article which tempt me to offer adverse criticism, and on which the great body of alienists in this country hold opposite opinions, but I prefer to restrict my remarks to the fallacy which has led to conclusions which, whether correct or not, derive no support from the statistics in the Blue Books of the Lunacy Commissioners.

I am, etc.,
D. HACK TUKE, M.D.

63, Welbeck Street, Cavendish Square, W.
August 25th.

ASSISTANT MEDICAL OFFICERS OF IRISH ASYLUMS.

The following letter was received by the General Secretary in reply to one addressed to His Excellency, the Viceroy of Ireland, enclosing the resolution in support of the claims to preferment of the Assistant Medical Officers of Irish Asylums, passed at a recent meeting of the Medico-Psychological Association:—