On the Alleged Increase in Lunacy. By FREDERICK MACCABE, M.D., L.K. and Q.C.P., Physician Superintendent, Waterford District Asylum.

DR. LOCKHART ROBERTSON, in the April number of the "Journal of Mental Science," raises the very interesting question whether the increase of late years in the registered number of the Insane in England and Wales represents an increase, real, or apparent only, in the amount of insanity amongst the population at large. After a laborious collection and study of the statistics relating to insanity, Dr. Robertson arrives at the conclusion that the increase is apparent rather than real —in other words, that the number of registered lunatics has largely increased, but that the amount of insanity amongst the population at large evidences a decline, particularly of late years. As a contribution to the study of this question, I venture to offer a few statistics referring to the insane population in the District of the County and City of Waterford.

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. A third ground of distinction between the returns from the two countries is furnished by the vastly different social position of the inhabitants. Within the memory of the present generation the social aspect of England has undergone important changes. The large increase in the manufacturing industry of England, the prodigious growth of cities and towns, which, in manu-

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facturing regions, and in large centres of population, have been steadily absorbing the rural districts around them: the extension of railways—the rapid acquisition of wealth by the middle classes, and the improved position of the great artisan class:—all these causes combined have led many persons to suspect that the excessive energy called forth by the exhaustive rapidity of modern life may have had something to do with the alleged increase in the ratio in the insane; and, by some, was advanced as a sufficient explanation of the generally entertained opinion that such increase was real, and represented the moral cost at which material prosperity had been purchased.

The condition of Ireland (with the exception of the manufacturing districts in the North) presents a striking and melancholy contrast to this picture. In the Capital and in most of the large towns, the population is rapidly decreasing, —*pari passu* with this decrease the wealth of the middle class steadily diminishes. Dickens, in one of his works, gives a vivid description of a once-fashionable quarter of London gradually declining from its position, and its houses becoming invaded and eventually monopolised by the class of lodging-house keepers. But, in this instance, the great novelist only sketched one of the minor consequences of the tide of prosperity having set to westward; the wealthy classes were migrating to a more fashionable region. In the Irish towns, on the other hand, the most careless observer must feel that the tide of prosperity has ebbed:—the wealthy classes have not migrated, they have sunk to a lower level. In the agricultural districts the steady current of emigration has carried away those who were physically the best, the strongest, the most energetic, and adventurous of the population.

I have selected the District included in the County and City of Waterford, as presenting in its returns the condition of an agricultural district with a moderate urban population, undisturbed since 1851 in the quiet monotony of its uneventful existence. It is a fair picture of an average Irish agricultural district, the population of the city of Waterford qualifying a character that might otherwise be described as exclusively agricultural. I have taken the period between 1851 and 1868, as I am desirous of excluding the disturbing influence of the famine years (1846 and 1847) during which the number of the insane was, as might be expected, exceptionally high.

I may remind the reader that the population of Ireland, according to the census of 1851, amounted to 6,552,385. In

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that year the lunatics of all classes in Ireland numbered 15,098, being in the proportion of 1 in 433 of the population. Ten years later, in 1861, the population numbered 5,764,543, a decrease of 12·20 per cent. The number of the insane then amounted to 15,947, or 1 in 361 of the population.

Now to take the District included in the County and County of the City of Waterford. It comprises an area of 721 square miles, or 461,553 acres, of which, in round numbers, 325,000 are arable, 105,000 uncultivated, 23,000 in plantations, 1,500 in towns, and nearly 6,000 under water. I may add that the population of this District in 1831 amounted to 177,054—its asylum was built in 1834 to accommodate 100 patients; it was opened in 1835, and in 1839 it contained the number of patients for which it had been designed.

The population in 1831 numbered 177,054; in 1861 it numbered 134,336, a decrease of 42,000. The asylum at present contains 210 beds, of which 170 are occupied.

In 1851 the population of the District amounted to 164,051. The numbers of the insane in the District were: In the Asylum 121; in workhouses, gaols, &c., 61; at large, unregistered, but returned by the Constabulary, 56. Total insane of the District, 238. Ratio to the population, 1 in 689.

In 1861 the population of the District amounted to 134,336. The numbers of the insane in the District were: In the asylum, 135; in workhouses, gaols, &c., 69; at large, unregistered, but returned by the Constabulary, 182. Total insane of the District, 386. Ratio to the population, 1 in 348.

In 1868 the population had, I believe, declined from the figures given in the census of 1861, but the exact numbers cannot be known until the next decennial return (for 1870). In 1868 the numbers of the insane in the District were: In the Asylum, 167; in workhouses, &c., 90; at large, unregistered, but returned by the Constabulary, 120. Total insane of the District, 377. Ratio to the population (as returned in 1861), 1 in 358.

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

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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 to far as regards Ireland from 1851 to 1861.

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