

"The immediate adoption by the Health Ministry of measures to enable and encourage local authorities to supply or aid the supply of homes intended for uncertifiable mental cases and free from connection with lunacy would prove an enormous boom, not only to doctors and patients, but also to patients' friends and to the community at large, including especially those classes of ex-Service men whose nerves have been temporarily unhinged and shaken through the intense severity of the conflict in which they have recently been engaged. If all such patients, civilian or military, were intercepted on the downward track, the gain to the nation would be incalculable, not to speak of the gain to the overburdened taxpayer arising from an eventual material reduction in our ever-increasing and unproductive asylum expenditure."—*Daily Telegraph*, November 29th, 1920.

THE LATE DR. C. A. MERCIER.

THE testamentary dispositions of Dr. C. A. Mercier, who died on September 1st, 1919, contain an offer, when the sum has accumulated, of £20,000 in the first place to the University of London for the endowment of a professional chair of Rational Logic and Scientific Method. Dr. Mercier's scheme is as follows:

"The purpose of this foundation is that students may be taught, not what Aristotle or anyone else thought about reasoning, but how to think clearly and reason correctly; and to form opinions on rational grounds, the better to provide that the teaching shall be of this character, and shall not degenerate into the teaching of rigid formulæ and worn-out superstitions, I make the following conditions:

"The professor is to be chosen for his ability to think and reason and to teach, and not for his acquaintance with books on logic, or with the opinions of logicians or philosophers. Acquaintance with the Greek and German tongues is not to be an actual disqualification for the professorship, but in case the merits of the candidates appear in other respects approximately equal, preference is to be given first to him who knows neither Greek nor German; next, to him who knows Greek but not German; next to him who knows German but not Greek; and last of all, to a candidate who knows both Greek and German.

"The professor is not to devote more than one-twelfth of his course of instruction to the logic of Aristotle and the schools, nor more than one-twenty-fourth to the logic of Hegel and other Germans. He is to proceed upon the principle that the only way to acquire an art is by practising it under a competent instructor. Didactic inculcation is useless by itself. He is, therefore, to exercise his pupils in thinking, reasoning, and scientific method as applied to other studies that the students are pursuing concurrently, and to other topics of living interest.

"Epistemology and the rational grounds of opinion are to be taught. The students are to be practised in the arts of defining, classifying, and the detection of fallacies and inconsistencies.

"The principle of causation is to be taught as a process occurring in Nature and applicable to material things, and not as a notion in the minds of philosophers.

"Subject to these requirements, a wide discretion is to be allowed to the lecturer."

CORRESPONDENCE.

To the Editors of the JOURNAL OF MENTAL SCIENCE.

SIRS,—I have read your Editorial comments upon my criticism elsewhere of the causes of the appalling death-rate among the patients in the asylums of this country, as published in the Report of the Board of Control, dated 1919, and which I attribute in the main to inadequacy and meagreness of the food, and therefore to insufficient vitamins.