

consequences." She had gone to a railway station to meet a daughter, and "having slightly over-heated herself, became unwell that night, and the hydrophobic symptoms of thirst and dislike of water at once set in. These were followed by oppression about the region of the heart, and ultimately by extreme nervous excitement and *delirium*, final collapse" and death. "A blind husband was the object of much anxious consideration in her last moments."\*

Here, as in so many other cases, there was no *diagnostic* sign or symptom of hydrophobia. Thirst is one of the commonest of all indications of deranged health, especially when it is attended by or gives rise to the slightest febrile disturbance. And it has been shown over and over again that in the genuine disease, whether in man or other animals, a dread of water is at least as frequently absent as present, so that it is, therefore, in no wise characteristic.

*To be continued.*

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*The Irish Lunatic Asylum Service.*

In the "Journal of Mental Science" for April, 1876, a short account appeared of the present state of the Irish Lunatic Asylum Service and the action then being taken by Irish Medical Superintendents to obtain a more secure footing under Government, by ranking as Civil Servants. In order to gain this object, it would be necessary that the Executive should become their paymasters, and that their salaries, instead of coming from the rates, should be paid by the Treasury. Once secure of their position as Civil Servants, the rest would follow; their services would reckon, no matter how often changed from one asylum to another; they would no longer hold the anomalous position of men appointed by Government, responsible to central authority but paid by the ratepayers and as Civil Servants they would come under the Superannuation Act of 1859. Above all, they would become more closely connected with the Government, and obtain greater support and assistance in their official duties and in their attempts to further the study of mental disease in Ireland.

It is necessary to repeat these various reasons for the course pursued by Irish Superintendents, in which they have acted

\* "North British Daily Mail," July 5, 1876, under the title, "Sad Case of Alleged Hydrophobia."

alone, without consulting the interests of other Irish asylum officials, have formed a separate association, having for its object their interests only, and have forwarded a separate memorial to the Chief Secretary. By so doing they have brought down on themselves censure from all sides for their extremely Irish ideas of united action, their selfishness, the narrowness of their views, their vanity and stupidity in supposing that Government would pay any attention to so small and so powerless a body of men.

Undoubtedly at first sight all this appears true; they are ready to admit that they have acted alone and for their own interest, have only partially joined the general movement of Irish asylum officials in their petition to obtain more generous terms of superannuation, and may by this means have weakened the public cause.

But a very little consideration will show that their apparently selfish course of action is rather the result of their present position, than of any wish to separate themselves from those associated with them in the working of District Asylums in Ireland.

That Medical Superintendents in Ireland are on quite a distinct footing from the rest of the asylum staff, is a point which those accustomed to the working of English asylums cannot well understand. They are appointed by, and serve under different masters, so that it is impossible that the interests and objects of both can be in common except on the question of superannuation, and here it should be clearly understood that superannuation is not the chief end and object of the present movement amongst Irish Medical Superintendents. Their views embrace a much larger field; a better scale of superannuation would be only one of the advantages obtained. To be made Civil Servants *de facto* by receiving their salaries from the Treasury, and to have the State who appoints them, and not the ratepayers who have no voice in their selection, as their paymaster, are the real objects of the movement. All will agree that the subject is one of vital importance not only to the future of Irish Medical Superintendents, but to that of District Asylums in that country. The present anomalous position cannot last; it must change either for better or worse—either the State must become the paymaster, or the appointment of Medical Superintendents will be handed over to the Local Board of Governors. Before many sessions have passed over, some enthusiastic member will call the attention of Parliament to the injustice of calling upon

the ratepayers to contribute to the salaries of men in whose appointment they have no share—a complaint which cannot fail to meet with the sympathies of all sides of the House; and unless the Government are ready to pay their own servants, there is every fear that the appointment must pass to local selection, a result which all who take an interest in the condition of the insane in Ireland will consider most prejudicial to the wellbeing of District Asylums.

In this movement the remainder of the staff of asylum officials had no object in joining; they are entirely the servants of the Board of Governors, by whom they are appointed, dismissed and paid, the question was settled for them by Lord Mayo's Act, which transferred their appointments from the Lord Lieutenant to Local Boards, so that unless the Government were to undertake the entire management of these institutions, there could be no pretext for demanding to have the entire staff made Civil Servants.

In presenting their memorial to the Chief Secretary, the Superintendents of Irish asylums have counted the cost, and have taken into careful consideration the weakness of their party and the difficulty of men in their position with few friends in Parliament and very little party interest, being able to influence the Government to take any action on their behalf. But though they stand alone, their cause is one which will gain sympathy by being known. They cannot expect to obtain this end at once, but when the question comes on for discussion, the Government will have before them the reasons why Medical Superintendents in Ireland wish to become Civil Servants, will see that by granting the prayer of their memorial, they will have the means of retaining these appointments, which all sides agree should be left in the hands of the Executive, and will at the same time be able to remove a cause of very just complaint from the Irish ratepayers.

It may be urged, on the other hand, that a Government which has already acted in such a generous spirit toward public Asylums throughout the United Kingdom, is unlikely further to subsidise these institutions in Ireland by paying the salaries of the resident physicians; and, secondly, that if such a grant were made to Ireland, the same boon should be given to England and Scotland.

But in answer to this it may be pointed out that without any further grant from the Treasury, the Government have two sources from which to obtain the amount required. 1st. Out of the money set apart for the rate in aid of 4s. per week for each pauper lunatic which every Pauper Asylum receives a sum

might be deducted in lieu of the salary of Medical Superintendents in Ireland. This of course would not in any way benefit the ratepayers, but it would accomplish the desired object by removing any cause of complaint which the taxpayers have in being obliged to pay the salaries of men in whose appointment they have no voice, and by giving to Irish Superintendents the rights of Civil Servants.

2nd. The Government have at their disposal at the present time another source in Ireland in the surplus fund of the Dissatisfied Church, which it is presumed must be utilised for the benefit of the Irish people, either by lessening the burthen of the existing public charities, or by affording means for further advancement in civilisation and knowledge. To what more charitable or greater end could it be converted than for the benefit of the insane poor, and in what way could it be utilised which would give so little cause for party or religious rancour ?

Ireland is without comparison poorer than either England or Scotland. That the Government, therefore, should contribute somewhat more liberally to institutions for the insane in that country could not cause any dissatisfaction in other parts of the United Kingdom, whose local wealth has made their asylums to rank amongst the monuments of England's greatness and liberality.

It must also be remembered that in Ireland the Government takes a much more paternal care of public Asylums than in other countries, the Treasury advance the money for their support in the first instance, Government officials carry out their building, look after their enlargement and repairs, examine their financial accounts, and regulate their staff, and by so doing become to a very great degree responsible for their efficacy. It is therefore only right that the Executive should contribute liberally to raise these institutions, in whose management it takes so great a share, to the standard of the requirements of the modern treatment of the insane.

Irish Medical Superintendents have centred all their hopes on this one object—to become Civil Servants; they can only hope to succeed, standing alone as they do, by united action, by untiring energy, and by the aid and sympathy of their brethren in the sister countries.

A subject of great importance to the specialty in Ireland—viz., the transfer of the management of District Asylums from the control of the Inspectors to the Irish Poor Law Board, has of late received much public attention; a memorial praying the Government to take the matter into consideration having been circulated amongst Corporations and Boards of Guardians,

The question is said to have been previously under the consideration of the late Government, and to have been favourably received by Lord Spencer, when Lord Lieutenant, than whom none took a greater interest in the welfare of the insane. The scheme is as yet so little known, that it is not easy to see the advantages to be gained by so sweeping a measure. It is not to be supposed that public opinion would allow asylums to be reduced to the standard of workhouses in Ireland. No saving could be made in the administration of these institutions, so long as any regard is had to the proper treatment of the insane. Nor is it likely that the Executive would permit the appointment of Boards of Governors to be taken out of their hands. Advantage might be taken of any change to arrange a more equitable distribution of the cost of maintenance of these institutions between landlord and tenant.

But the chief cause of the favour with which the subject has been received, has been a desire to bring all local administration in Ireland under the Poor Law Board. To add to its labours could scarcely be advocated by any one on the ground that its field of responsibility was not already sufficiently large, considering that it comprises the management of 163 unions, the whole dispensary system, almost all the public hospitals (as in Ireland the workhouses have now taken the place of the county infirmaries), and lastly the working of the Sanitary Act is carried out under its control. If to all this were to be added the additional labours and responsibility of the care of the insane, surely the burden would be beyond its capacity. But here the question arises, how far is it intended to transfer the care of the insane to the Local Government Board? Do the advocates of the scheme propose to do away with the lunacy office altogether, and to place all classes of the insane, whether rich or poor, pauper or Chancery patients, under the charge of the Poor Law? That a department instituted for the purpose of watching over the working of the Acts for the relief of pauperism, the cure of the sick poor, and the preservation of the public health should undertake the control of such of the insane who are the owners of large amounts of property, seems an anomalous state of things. To separate the management of District Asylums in Ireland from that of the Private Asylums and the insane at large, would involve the carrying out of two separate systems, one for the poor and one for the rich, with different regulations, necessitating two offices and two sets of officials.