

allegations that fresh evidence—with which the Privy Council in its judicial capacity had nothing whatever to do—was forthcoming were made in great part the basis of the application for “special leave” to appeal. The so-called evidence of insanity was insufficient to create even a *prima facie* presumption of irresponsibility. A criminal impulse that carefully adjusted itself to opportunity, selected the instruments of its gratification, and surrounded itself with every possible weapon of defence against detection, whatever else it might be, could not, with any fairness, be described as “irresistible.” The proofs of epileptic insanity smacked strongly of simulation, while instinctive criminalism is not yet, according to English law, an exculpatory plea. On the case as a whole we suspend judgment until his whole mental history from reliable sources is in our possession.

The Irish Question.

In the ranks of the Medical Profession in Ireland, it may be said that “the Irish Question” has for some time been centred upon the new rules of the Privy Council in regard to the abolition of Visiting Physicians to the Irish asylums. The Dublin newspapers have teemed with angry protests against the proposed change. Able letters have not been wanting on the other side defending the radical change which will in the future be effected in the medical staff of Irish lunatic asylums, should the new regulations be finally sanctioned by the Government. In our review of the Fortieth Report of the Inspectors of Lunatics in Ireland in this Journal, January, 1892, we observed that “a great advance in efficiency could doubtless be secured by doing away with the obsolete visiting staff, and replacing it with assistant medical officers. This is a reform which we have thought necessary to suggest many times during the last quarter of a century” (p. 108).

The position of the Visiting Physicians to an Irish public asylum has become a sinecure, and altogether an anachronism in consequence of the conditions having entirely altered since the time the office was first established, and when it was a necessary part of the medical management of an Irish asylum. This change must be recognized by English medical men before they can understand why in the course of time Visiting Physicians have been superseded by

the superintendents of asylums. In England the case is different. Even here, however, a great change has taken place. We are not prepared to say that occasionally an English Visiting Physician is not a distinct advantage. There are exceptions to every rule. It must be remembered that in the rare instances in England in which the office of Visiting Physician is retained, as at the York Retreat, the functions exercised are of a different character from those of the Irish medical visitors. Further, the latter differ as a rule from the former in this, that they have no special psychological training. The whole system as a medical visitation to Irish asylums has been found wanting, and the time has come when it should be swept away.

As will be seen by the Report of the Quarterly Meeting held at Bethlem Hospital, May 19th, 1892, Dr. Conolly Norman brought the subject before the members of the Association, and asked for its support in favour of the new Rule. His Resolution was seconded by Dr. Nicolson (Broadmoor), and is as follows:—"With reference to the order in Council issued by his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, abolishing the office of Visiting Physician to District Asylums in Ireland as future vacancies shall occur, this Association desires to approach his Excellency with an expression of their opinion in favour of the proposed change in the official work of asylum administration in Ireland. The Association believes that this change will be found to act with decided advantage to lunacy work generally in Ireland, as has been the case in other countries where the corresponding office has been abolished."

Dr. Conolly Norman carried the Meeting with him; and we hope that the Lord Lieutenant will be encouraged by the above expression of opinion to remain firm in carrying out the new Rules. We are glad to notice that while the Governors of some of the Irish District Asylums have petitioned the Irish Government not to endorse the proposed rule, other asylums have warmly supported the alteration. Thus the Governors of the Mullingar Asylum have sent the following resolution:—"The Governors hereby express their approval of the new Privy Council rules, and are strongly of opinion that in the event of a vacancy occurring in the office of Visiting Physician, the substitution for that office of an additional resident medical officer would be an advantage in the interest of the patients."