

defect in the mental and moral development of a very large element of our civilized communities, and, however ludicrous the spectacle may be, they demonstrate the need of much educational effort before their recurrence, in one form or other, becomes an impossibility.

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*Laboratory for the Study of Abnormal Classes.*

The effort to establish a laboratory for the study of abnormal classes at Washington has failed, owing to the opposition of the Commissioner of Education.

The proposition was in reality only an extension of work that has been carried on for the last ten years in the Bureau of Education at Washington, resulting in six publications on crime and related subjects of very considerable interest and importance. It would certainly appear to be a matter for regret that the work should not have been extended, especially as the proposition has received very important scientific support throughout the States.

With the usual personal directness which is characteristic of the discussion of such matters in the States, it is urged by the supporters of the laboratory scheme that the present Commissioner of Education has had practically no scientific training, being devoted solely to metaphysics and education; if this is really the case, there need be little astonishment at his exercise of authority, but considerable surprise may be felt that the decision of so important a question should rest so absolutely on the dictum of one man. This is surely another example of autocratic democracy.

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*The Youghal Auxiliary Asylum.*

The progress of the Youghal Asylum is so instructive that we regret we cannot present our readers with a continuous history of its development. Things are recorded, perhaps, in the local newspapers, but it is only now and again, when they attract attention in the outer world, that we have an opportunity of watching from afar a singular piece of annexation as clever

and as complete as anything that England has done in Egypt or France in Cochin-China.

As our readers will remember, this institution was founded as an auxiliary to the Cork District Asylum. It was to be managed on lines too economical to admit of trained nurses or a resident medical officer. Women whose sole qualifications were physical strength and absence of refinement, together with a male person of the same type to act as manager, were suggested as good enough for the purpose of ruling the occupants. The scheme, having proved acceptable through its cheapness (physical force being a drug in the market), was modified so far that a number of nuns and a chaplain were placed in residence, while a visiting physician was appointed. This singular change of front was not accompanied by any change of title. The institution, which would appear now to contain about 400 patients, is still the Youghal Auxiliary Asylum. Judging from the reports of the meeting of the Cork Asylum Committee held on June 14th, the new asylum is quite independent of the old, and, indeed, is unique in its management among the institutions for the insane supported by public money in the United Kingdom. On the date mentioned Dr. Woods, Superintendent of the Cork Asylum, would appear to have been asked some question about a man who had been newly appointed assistant fireman to the Youghal Auxiliary, and to have answered that he himself would induct this man into his duties. Somebody suggested that this seemed reasonable, as the nuns could not perform this particular duty, but after a discussion in which the usual taunts were levelled at the medical superintendent, that officer seems to have been authoritatively informed that "the nuns who are in the institution at Youghal would have complete control over it, with a sub-committee meeting there." Dr. Woods is reported to have said that he felt it necessary to go to Youghal until the rules for the government of the asylum there are in existence. When the rules (made, we suppose, by the committee under the Local Government Act, and evidently in such a manner as to transfer all administrative authority from the medical superintendent to the nuns) were approved by the Lord Lieutenant he need not go, but until he was freed from responsibility he should go there. He was informed during the course of the debate that his duties began and ended with seeing that no patient should go to the asylum at Youghal

except he was a fit and proper subject. We would strongly suggest that the Lord Lieutenant in sanctioning the new rules should remove even this obligation from Dr. Woods' shoulders. To be required to send cases that are suitable for special treatment to an institution to which he shall not have the *entrée* is to be exposed to risk if anything should go wrong, and we fear that this risk is very considerable in spite of Dr. Woods' record—a lifetime given to the devoted study of his business. On the other hand, we cannot wholly approve of the wisdom of the course the Cork Committee is taking. Fire is a dangerous element, more incalculable even than "lunatics," and it might be wise for those who know very little about it to share their responsibilities with those who are familiar with the provision necessary against its vagaries. Meanwhile, the transfer of power from medical to lay or from lay to clerical hands (it can be put either way according as our reader interprets the word "lay") is almost complete.

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*Cruelty in the Ballinasloe Asylum.*

It would appear that at the March meeting of the Ballinasloe Asylum Committee it was reported that an attendant had struck a patient while the latter was confined in a straight waistcoat, and had broken the patient's nose. The acting medical superintendent had suspended the attendant. The Committee, incredible as it may appear, seem to have confined their action in this matter to administering a reprimand to the ferocious and cowardly servant who had been guilty of this crime. That they were thereby condoning as odious a piece of cruelty as ever was committed does not even seem to have occurred to them. When it was reported that the magistrates in Petty Sessions Court had fined the attendant £5 the following conversation occurred at the Committee meeting (*Western News*, April 16th).

Mr. Carr.—If he is kept here after that it will be a disgrace to the institution.

Mr. Millar.—Is he not sufficiently punished?

Father Begley.—Have we the power to punish?

Dr. Mills.—Yes, we can fine or dismiss an attendant.

Father Begley.—This case was brought before us, and we