

does not require very special circumstances for its inauguration. Up to the present in English-speaking countries, with, of course, the remarkable exception of Scotland, the domestic care of the insane has attracted little attention. It is quite possible, however, that before long the increasing tax imposed by the maintenance of the insane may, through the operation of economic considerations, bring the question to the front even in rich countries. It is remarkable enough that although many of the most eminent alienists of France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Holland, Russia, and Scandinavia contributed to the proceedings, the only papers from the United Kingdom were those of Mr. Spence and Dr. Macpherson, dealing with Scotch statistics; and we are informed the English-speaking persons attending the Congress barely reached a Greek plural, if we omit the Chinese Ambassador at Brussels, who was present at all the meetings and followed the work with much interest, but, save as regards the too brief English portion, with the aid of an interpreter.

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*The Treatment of Incipient and Unconfirmed Insanity.*

The possibility of early legislation on this subject, and its inherent importance, must be our excuse for again reverting to it, with no intention of anticipating the discussion on the papers of Drs. Ernest White and Outterson Wood, at the May Meeting.

These papers have brought out so strongly the evils of the present condition of treatment consequent on the incapacity of many who undertake it, that the fear naturally arises whether the Lord Chancellor may not delay the passing of the clause until some plan has been formed for safeguarding its action.

Delay, however, would be greatly to be deplored, and a little consideration will show that the operation of the clause, even as it stands, would go far to remedy the abuses now existing.

The danger of prosecution, under Clause 315 of the existing Act, is without doubt a great deterrent to all persons of standing or reputation from undertaking the treatment of any cases in which mental disturbance is present. The result is

that much of such treatment goes to those who have little to lose by prosecution. The persons well qualified are debarred, whilst the unqualified are encouraged.

The notification to the Commissioners in Lunacy, provided for in the Lord Chancellor's clause, would go far to remedy and reverse this state of things. The possibility of inquiry would make the friends of patients more careful as to the qualifications of those to whom they committed the care of their friends. On the other hand, the persons who really possess experience and qualification for the work would be encouraged, and this would tend to exclude those who are unqualified.

To safeguard the working of the clause, therefore, some qualification of the persons undertaking such treatment should be necessary, but this will require consideration and experience.

The Commissioners in Lunacy in the working of the clause would no doubt soon arrive at conclusions which would enable them to frame regulations in regard to the qualifications necessary for the efficient care of the incipient insane, and to exclude those who were manifestly incompetent.

The suggestion may therefore be made, to enable the clause to be at once passed as law, that a section should be added enjoining the Commissioners in Lunacy to frame recommendations to the Lord Chancellor in regard to the qualifications required of those undertaking the care of unconfirmed mental cases.

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*Care of the Chronic Insane in Ireland.*

A short time ago (March 20th) a meeting was held in Dublin of a society called the Irish Workhouse Association. We are not in a position to say whether the proceedings have been very fully reported or not. We should hope not; and we must observe that this seems very probable since we find that one reverend gentleman remarked, evidently in a spirit of *scœva indignatio*, that the Christian treatment of the poor was not an "urgent" question, that term being reserved for something connected with the licensing trade or the labour interests. We observe, however, in the proceedings as reported, that curious kind of incoherence that so often perplexes the foreigner