

first seen as in a photograph, that is, in different degrees of black and white. In the evolution of the colour sense those waves which differ most physically, namely, red and violet, were first recognised as different, the remainder of the spectrum appearing grey. Homer's colour vision was of this class, which represents the degree just preceding total colour-blindness. I have recorded a case of this kind of a man who was colour-blind with one eye, and who was therefore able to tell me exactly how objects appeared with this eye. He said that the spectrum appeared nearly all grey, but with a tinge of red at one end and a tinge of violet at the other; he could see very much better with the colour-blind eye than with the other.

As the colour sense developed it was not necessary that the rays of light should be so far apart before a difference was seen, and so the neutral band gradually diminished in size until the two colours met in the centre of the spectrum. Then a third colour, green, was developed at the central point, there being three points of difference seen instead of two. Then a fourth colour, yellow, was developed, its position appearing at the next point of difference, that is midway between the red and the green. The next colour to be developed was blue, and then orange. In some individuals evolution has proceeded further, and a seventh colour is seen in the spectrum.

These facts show that psycho-physical colour-blindness is an example of a previous state in the development of the colour-perceiving centre.

Read at the Annual Meeting of the Medico-Psychological Association, Cork, 1901.

The Superannuation Question: its Effect on Asylum Officials, with Suggestions for Further Legislation on the Matter. By EDWARD D. O'NEILL, M.R.C.P.I., Medical Superintendent, Limerick District Lunatic Asylum.

IN approaching the subject-matter of this paper I am fully conscious of its importance and the difficulties to be contended with in dealing with such a vexed question, the far-reaching effect of which must of a necessity materially influence the

financial position on retirement of thousands of asylum officials of all grades. In adopting the question of superannuation I do not think I could have selected a better or more useful one for the purpose of calling attention to the provisions of the Acts of Parliament which determine the retiring allowances in this country, and the similiar Acts operating in England and Scotland, and, at the same time, eliciting an opinion as to how our common interests could be best served in getting rid of the permissive clauses common to all the Acts.

The importance of this matter, and, I am sorry to say, the apathy shown in connection with it generally, must be my excuse for bringing forward such a dry, and perhaps unattractive subject. What I propose to do briefly in this paper is to take off the christening clothes, expose it to public opinion as an international grievance, affecting nearly ten thousand asylum officials, and then re-introduce it to parliamentary notice as an old friend with a new face, waiting to be re-dressed.

No doubt many of the old members of our Association and other officials of all grades are nearing the evening of their official lives, and are contemplating retirement from active duty after many years of arduous work and responsibility, in the hope of receiving a commensurate retiring allowance. Do the Acts already dealing with the question enable us to look forward, as other public officials are entitled to do, to getting any definite or adequate retiring allowance? or can any one definitely state that he is assured of being granted two thirds retiring allowance by his Committee? A reply in the negative must be given to both questions.

One day this severance from duty will apply to us all, and is this vague uncertainty to stare us in the face? Indubitably no, if we make a supreme effort; and I think the time is now opportune to make a stand, and vigorously press this superannuation question on the notice of the Government until we place it on a sound foundation with a legislative hall-mark on it, denoting its sterling value, without any alloy of uncertainty or disappointment.

Having said so much on the general aspect of the case, I desire now to draw special attention to a few of the chief reasons that should operate in obtaining for asylum officials redress from the hardships inflicted on them by the Acts which deal with the subject—constant contact with the insane, long

hours of duty, liability to attacks by patients, slow promotion, small salaries. In addition to the above, which apply to all asylum officials, the Medical Officers' duties are countless and endless, they are responsible for every one and everything connected with an asylum—the mental and physical condition, the moral needs, occupations, and amusements of the patients, the supervision of the staff, the fiscal and general administration. In fact, the strain on Medical Officers is so severe that a Select Committee of the House of Commons over thirty years ago, having regard to the incessant intercourse of Medical Officers with the insane, recommended a reduction from twenty to fifteen years as the minimum period of service, after which the maximum rate of pension *might* be granted, and effect was subsequently given by statute to that recommendation.

The position of an Asylum Superintendent is a responsible and trying one, and continually calls for the greatest diplomacy in his relations with the patients, the officers and servants of the institution, his Committee, and the public. And in the efficient discharge of that duty he may have to take up a position the difficulties of which are not always understood or appreciated.

Thus the friendly relations that have existed for years between a Medical Officer and his Committee may be suddenly interrupted, unpleasantness sooner or later is likely to arise, and in many cases the permissive legislation regulating our pensions will come to be interpreted in a spirit far from being satisfactory to the person chiefly concerned.

Judging by the action of most of the Asylums Committees in connection with section 115 (18) of the Local Government Act, 1898, this is by no means an unreasonable anticipation.⁽¹⁾ It must not be assumed that the superannuation question has been allowed to remain in absolute abeyance, many efforts having been made for the last fifteen years to protect our interests, notably on the introduction of the English Local Government Bill, 1888; the Lunacy Bill, 1890; and the Local Government (Ireland) Bill, 1898. When the English Local Government Bill was introduced asylum officials were greatly alarmed, lest the change would result in their being deprived of their pensions. These fears were based on the grounds that great opposition was given to pensions in several counties, the

opposition coming from the guardians, from whose class it was anticipated the members of the proposed County Councils would for the most part be drawn.

The result of this feeling was that a large number of officials came to the conclusion that their interests would be better protected by an assured scale, for which they would be willing to sacrifice some advantages of the existing pension clauses.

Evidently these views prevailed with the Pension Committee in issuing their recommendations for the adoption of a modified Civil Service Pension scheme. The discussion at a subsequent general meeting of the Association showed, however, that a considerable difference of opinion prevailed. The Irish members of the Association adopted and supported a course directly opposite to the English, as the latter were anxious to receive a lower rate of pension with *certainty*, whereas the former were anxious for a two thirds rate, and swallowed the bait with avidity. Action was also taken in connection with the Pauper Lunatic Asylums (Ireland) Superannuation Act, 1890, but to no effect. On the introduction of the Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898, the following amendment was suggested :—“That under section 280 of the Lunacy Act, 1890, it shall be the duty of a Committee to grant Superannuation Allowance to their Staff, and the allowance to be granted under the section be not less than would be granted if the applicant were an official to whom Poor Law Officers' Superannuation Act, 1896, applies.”

It is difficult to understand why differential treatment should be meted out to officials whose circumstances and claims are identical. Two officers with the same excellent record, whose length of service and emoluments are the same, in asylums of equal importance, ought in justice to receive the same pension, but in the Asylum Service there is no security that they will. A civil servant from the north of Scotland or from the south of Ireland would, under like conditions, have his pension calculated on the same uniform principle, but in our Service the only point that is definitely settled is, that under no circumstances shall we get more than two thirds.

The present legislation will work out with great hardship in some cases. Without entering into any political discussion, or any comparison between the present Committees and the

former Boards, there is one element which under the present system works out unfavourably to Medical Officers. Formerly there was a practical certainty that a majority of each Board would be men who had for many years been members of it, who had a knowledge of the exceptional nature of Asylum administration, and who knew the character and capacity of the Superintendent, and the value of his work. From a Board so constituted, exercising a permissive power, a retiring officer might reckon on more or less fair treatment. Under the new conditions, however, the triennial election of County Councillors and the selection by them of representatives on our Committees, might have the effect of putting off men who were advanced in the course of acquiring that knowledge of asylum affairs which would enable them to judge fairly in questions relating to superannuation. If the retirement took place soon after a triennial election, the majority settling the pension might consist altogether of persons utterly unacquainted with asylum affairs. Several Asylum Committees passed strong resolutions in favour of the County Asylums' Special Pension scheme. This scheme contained a fixed scale of pensions, within definite periods of service, and a certain age for optional and compulsory retirement.

The scheme was prepared by the Northampton Committee of Visitors, and signed by Lord Spencer, who, during his Irish Viceroyalty, took a great interest in our Service, and had an intimate knowledge of the claims of the department.

The English Commission on Lunacy, in their report for the year 1890, wrote as follows :

“The question of granting superannuation allowances to asylum officials has recently, we believe, engaged the attention of Visiting Committees and County Councils, and our opinion upon it has more than once been sought. We have expressed ourselves in a manner favourable to the granting of such allowances, and we think we should in this report give a wider publicity to that opinion. The Lunacy Asylum Act, 1853, and the Lunacy Amendment Act, 1862, enabled Committees of Visitors to grant superannuation to officials disabled by sickness, age, or infirmity, or who had attained the age of fifty and had served fifteen years. The grant required to be confirmed by the Justices in Quarter or General Sessions. The power was permissive, and its exercise wholly within the

discretion of the Committee, but presumably it was intended by the Legislature to be used as the rule, not exceptionally."

There are specially strong reasons why the asylum scale of pensions should be definitely settled by the Government. By the Capitation Grant, half, roughly speaking, of the asylum expenditure comes from the Government. The remaining portion comes out of county funds, to which the Government further contributes largely through the Agricultural Grant, Estate Duty Grant, surplus from sale of dogs' licences and other grants. The Government, therefore, bear the greater portion of asylum expenditure; they have a special right, and it is their special duty to define and make compulsory a scale of pensions giving us the same fixity of prospect as is enjoyed by civil servants, whose salaries are only to a little greater extent defrayed out of public funds.

A pension scheme of a contributory nature of granting assured pensions to the officials of the Mullingar Asylum has lately been drawn up and adopted by the Committee of that asylum. The object of this scheme is to reduce the rates, and to make the future condition of the officials better than what it is under existing circumstances.

A scale of deductions from the officials' salaries on the lines of the Poor Law Officers' Superannuation Act, 1896, is the basis of the scheme. The objection to it is that it is permissive, and only binding on the Committee who adopt it.

Having briefly touched on the effects, the claim and action taken in connection with the superannuation question, I now propose to deal with the steps that should be taken to remedy the defect in the Acts of Parliament dealing with the subject: the Acts of Parliament dealing with the matter in England, the Lunacy Act, 1890 (53 Vict., cap. 5); in Ireland the Pauper Lunatic Asylums (Ireland) Act, 1890 (53 and 54 Vict., cap. 31), as amended by the Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898; and in Scotland the Lunacy Acts, 1860 (Scotland) (29 and 30 Vict., cap. 51).

These Acts are almost identical, with the exception that in Scotland only the officials of chartered asylums are eligible for pensions, but in each case it is permissive.

Fifteen years' service and fifty years of age or incapacitated through illness is the groundwork of the three Acts. The framers of the Acts apparently intended that the granting of a

pension, though nominally permissive, should be a practically recognised right, and to that simple little word "may" all our trouble is due. I am now come to the strongest point in our favour : we are the officials of the three countries, standing on the same footing, having the same duties and responsibilities, and labouring under the same disadvantages as regards superannuation.

The other services, including the Army, Navy, and Civil Service, have a fixed scale of pension, and every one knows exactly from the first day he enters the service what he will be entitled to on retirement.

Are we expecting too much when we ask for the same security ?

On an important matter of this kind it is very difficult to get a consensus of opinion as to whether a modified scale of pension assured would not be better than the present arrangement. This opinion cannot be obtained through meetings, no matter how representative or how often held.

The only solution is to send out voting papers and let the matter be definitely settled ; then we shall know exactly how we stand, and what action is to be taken.

It is evident to the man in the street that, if we can bring sufficient pressure to bear in getting rid of the permissive clauses of the existing Acts, we shall have gained what we are justly entitled to.

In this go-ahead age all developments are hatched and brought out on scientific principles, and the flotation of many undertakings is worked on the basis of a trust, or the fusion of many interests into a common one. Why, then, should we not have the asylum pension "combine," and develop our grievance into an international one, by embodying our legitimate claims into a memorial signed by every asylum official in the United Kingdom, and by united action press on the Government the recognition of the injustice of the existing Acts of Parliament ? Thus every asylum official in his own way can get the machinery of legislation in motion by adding fuel to the fire, by securing the support and interest of the Member of Parliament for his district, by having the word "may" changed into "shall."

In conclusion I must, in justice to the old Board of Governors of my own asylum and my present Committee,

bear testimony to the very impartial and considerate manner in which they have on all occasions dealt with applications for pensions, with a result that the pension list is one of the highest in Ireland.

(¹) Since this paper was written a very favourable decision has been given in the Court of Appeal by Chief Baron Pallas in the case of Taylor (Medical Superintendent, Monaghan Asylum) against the Local Government Board.

DISCUSSION

At the Annual Meeting of the Medico-Psychological Association, Cork, 1901.

Dr. NEWINGTON.—Dr. O'Neill has shown that this question is going through the same stages as in England. I am sure that the Parliamentary Committee of the Association, which has had a good deal to do with the English question, will, if it can, offer its very best aid to the Irish Committee.

Dr. FINEGAN.—As Dr. O'Neill has referred to the Mullingar scheme, it is as well that you should know that even that has not been adopted yet. It is still under the consideration of the actuary. It is not perfect, but it is the only scheme that we could have under the circumstances. It is established on the ground that it is better than no scheme at all. The question of pensioning an official in the second stage of phthisis came up, and the Committee said, "We cannot pension this woman who has been well paid. Let her go about her business. Besides, her husband is in the asylum. Let him support her." Then one committee-man said, "If you are going to give a pension let the officials contribute towards it." I therefore drew up the Mullingar scheme. Trying to be as favourable as possible to officials, I took the Poor Law Officers' Superannuation Act for the contribution, and the Pauper Lunatic Act for the scale of pension that should be paid. If the Mullingar scheme were not framed as it is, it would mean that we would have no scheme at all; and if pensions are not given in Mullingar soon they would not be given in any asylum in Ireland, because Ireland wants some asylum to set a precedent.

Dr. HAVELOCK.—I think that the only way to get pensions is to bring personal pressure on individual members of Parliament. Some of them are most conscientious in the discharge of their duties, and if well-informed they would probably take action. I was approached some time ago by a Scottish member of Parliament who happens to be a member of the Board of Montrose asylum. He appealed to me as a Superintendent of a Scottish asylum, as one who would give him an impartial opinion on the English pension scheme. I gave him an impartial opinion, and I am sure that he returned to the House of Commons with a full desire to aid in doing it justice. In this matter I do not think that you can carry all three countries together, but if you can succeed in getting a satisfactory pension scheme in England, there is no doubt others would follow in Scotland and Ireland.

The PRESIDENT.—Dr. Finegan has said that his scheme has not yet been adopted. I hope he will think better of it, and not carry it further. I think it is an exceedingly bad scheme. He will, I am sure, excuse me for saying so, as I think it better to speak out. The Act at present is not compulsory, but in nine cases out of ten in Ireland it has been very liberally interpreted. Because Dr. Finegan has not succeeded, and because his Board has not acted liberally, in order to get a pension for an individual, he put forwards what he admits is not the best scheme. It goes behind our Act of Parliament and accepts a lower rate than that which we say we are entitled to, and which is lower than the amount the Act of Parliament says may be given. There will be a new Committee of Management next May, and that Committee may say, "You accepted a less pension than the Act provided from our predecessors, and you must accept a still smaller pension from us." In that way pensions may disappear altogether. If the Committees of Management had a life of ten years, the argument in favour of the scheme would be stronger; but with the short-lived Committee

changing every three years I think the scheme would fall to the ground, and I hope that it will do so.

Dr. O'NEILL, replying on the discussion, said he considered that separate action would be a mistake, as the question was of vital importance to all Asylum Officials, and he believed in combined action. He hoped the Parliamentary Committee would take up the matter and bring it prominently under the notice of Government. It was rather late in the day for Superintendents to say, "We know our Committee, and we know we shall get a fair pension, and agitation may imperil our positions."

Experience had taught that nothing was gained without agitation. Dr. Finegan seemed to infer that he (Dr. O'Neill) had taken it for granted that the Mullingar Scheme had been adopted. He trusted that it would not be carried, as what was wanted was an assured pension scheme, and not a Mutual Relief Fund.

Recent Lunacy Legislation: Retrogression or Progress?

By WILLIAM GRAHAM, M.D., Medical Superintendent,
Belfast District Asylum.

LITERARY apologies, it has been said, are either superfluous or impertinent—superfluous if the matter apologised for is of itself worthy of public regard, impertinent if it can lay claim to no such merit. Therefore it does not seem necessary on the present occasion for me to introduce the subject of asylum management with any deprecatory language. It will suffice simply to recall the fact that in this city the question has come up in an acute and even controversial form, and is deeply interesting the community in whose midst we are assembled. We may well hope that the impulse given by this discussion will leave a permanent impression throughout the length and breadth of Ireland. One thing, at any rate, we may expect—the abolition of the standing scandal that has so long permitted the insane poor to be huddled together in workhouses without the benefit of scarcely one of those ameliorative agencies elaborated by modern science wedded to a genuinely philanthropic spirit. It is an oft-told tale, and need not be repeated here. The Poor Law guardian who takes for his axiom "keep down the rates" must shut his eyes to the uncleanness, the untidiness, the lack of discipline, the absence of proper scientific supervision, the utter discomfort which reigns everywhere—characteristics that have made the name of workhouse a by-word and a reproach even among the most degraded. If at any time he is visited with a qualm of conscience, he reflects,