only accept for their purpose what bears the stamp of accuracy and what admits of indubitable asseveration. There is no one sanguine enough to believe that the tables of causation can be more than approximately true, and the vexed question of classification of mental states will, as heretofore, afford opportunity for lively discussion. Nevertheless, there are many other points which present no such disadvantages, and a well-considered plan of action cannot fail to elicit much that will be of permanent value.

We have been careful to avoid entering upon the obvious difficulties in the way. There are always more than enough of those whose delight it is to shout that there is a lion in the path—they have no difficulty in discerning a whole menagerie. We deprecate great expectations and will be well content with the day of small things. It is very certain that friendly, energetic, and capable workers, operating in different parts of the country, animated by a common enthusiasm and proceeding on well-defined lines of action, will not fail to place on record results of the utmost value, results which will command the attention and the gratitude of the scientific world.

Fair Play.

What has become of the Report on the Inquiry at St. Ann's Heath? The weeks and months pass, and the shameful allegations Mr. Labouchere scattered broadcast are in danger of being forgotten. It was a serious and specific charge—nothing less than the "slow torturing to death of a helpless maniac." The colours were laid on with a lavish hand—"in all the blood-stained records of modern lunatic asylums there is not to be found a more sickening and horrifying story." Mr. Asquith followed up this precious rhodomontade by appointing a Commission, which proceeded on extremely doubtful authority. The Speaker of the House of Commons, assisted by Dr. Savage, made a full investigation, in the course of which every facility was granted for the elucidation of the case at issue. The responsible managers of St. Ann's Heath Asylum welcomed the inquiry, and after much labour and anxious care the facts are set forth by Mr. Gully. But the Report remains unpublished. It has not been called for by any private member. Mr. Labouchere, having obtained so much sensational "copy," having served it up with vitriolic sauce, leaves it in the limbo of cynical

https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.41.174.495 Published online by Cambridge University Press

forgetfulness. Will no other touch this unclean thing? We have a right to expect that when foul charges are made and investigated, the result should be brought into the light of day. An important institution has been assailed, its responsible directors vilified, the work of all connected with lunacy administration imperilled, defamed, and abused. We demand justice!

O'Reilly v. the Governors of the Richmond Asylum: Interpretation of Recognizance Clause of the Act 30 *and* 31 *Vic., c.* 118.

An interesting case was tried in Dublin, in December, 1894, and a decision given of very great importance as to the interpretation of the Act known as the Dangerous Lunatics Act (30 and 31 Vic., c. 118).

Under this Act the majority of the patients in the Irish District Asylums find their way into those institutions. Its provisions, which are extremely simple, are really no more than modifications of an earlier Act, under which, before the existence of District Asylums, lunatics were sent to the Irish prisons.

Its chief enactment is that the Magistrates (one stipendiary or two ordinary justices sitting together) shall have the power of committing by warrant to the district lunatic asylum any person who shall have been arrested "under circumstances denoting a derangement of mind and the intention of committing an offence for which he or she might be indicted." This charge having been made the bench is required to satisfy itself that the individual is insane, and the dispensary medical officer having signed a medical certificate to the same effect, the patient can be forthwith committed.

The process is convenient because it is summary and permits of immediate committal. It is bad because it makes insanity a crime, and because it is so vague that it is capable of great abuse. Patients committed under this Act are legally known as "dangerous lunatics" (or idiots, as the case may be), but to have done something denoting an *intention* of committing some offence for which one could be indicted is a very insufficient proof of "danger." Nine-tenths of the patients in Irish Public Asylums have been committed under this Act, and in most of the cases the intention of offending is indicated by some trifling threat, or by the mere use of bad language.

https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.41.174.495 Published online by Cambridge University Press