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.

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

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were led to believe it was in self-defence, and he was let off with a caution.

Dr. Mills.—You have absolute power in the matter to fine or dismiss for cause shown. The evidence of M'Donnell contradicts the theory of self-defence.

Father Begley.—How could he contradict that when he was not there? This poor fellow was left alone with fifty refractory patients, the worst in the house, and no wonder he lost his head. It does not follow that he might not have kicked him to death as he was kicking the patient, whom Mannion went to save. Who brought the prosecution?

Mr. Byrne.—It was brought by the Attorney-General and Solicitor-General. It was stated somewhat differently in the court to what was stated here. I did not understand that the patient was in a straight jacket, and it was stated that there were only thirty patients there instead of fifty.

Father Begley.—It's putting a premium on lying when there was no evidence against him but himself.

Chairman.—Will you go back on your action of the last day?

Father Begley.—Are we to be over-ruled by parties, or are we to enact a farce by punishing a man and then being over-ruled?

Dr. Mills.—I rather pressed the Committee to dismiss him.

Mr. Lohan.—I look upon the act of the Castle as throwing a slur on us. We should draft a resolution protesting against their interference.

Father Begley.—It is a terrible snub on us, who spend our time here, to be over-ruled.

The matter was allowed to drop.

However, the matter did not drop, for we find the following question in Parliament recorded in a later issue of the journal above quoted.

Mr. Sloan asked the Chief Secretary for Ireland whether he was aware that an attendant named Kenny, of the Ballinasloe Lunatic Asylum, inflicted injuries upon an inmate under his charge, and if, in view of the fact that the acting medical superintendent dismissed Kenny, who has since been fined by a magistrate in £5, he could say for what reason have the Asylum Committee reinstated Kenny.

Mr. Wyndham.—The facts are as stated. Kenny was ordered to pay a fine of £5, or in default to undergo two months'

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imprisonment with hard labour. The appointment and dismissal of attendants are vested in the Committee without power of intervention on the part of the Executive. The Committee, I understand, consider that the fine of £5, together with a caution which it administered to Kenny, was sufficient punishment. Should the Committee insist on retaining the service of Kenny, the Government will consider how far the action is consistent with the conditions upon which the capitation grant in aid of the maintenance of the insane is payable under section 58 (2) of the Local Government Act, 1898.

This section provides that the capitation grant be payable to such County Councils as shall "satisfy the Lord Lieutenant that they have fulfilled their duty with respect to accommodation and buildings for lunatic poor, and that their asylum is well managed and in good order and condition, and the lunatics therein properly maintained and cared for." The Inspectors of Lunatics seem also to have addressed a letter to the Committee remonstrating with them for retaining this attendant in their service.

At the Committee meeting on May 9th it was reported that Kenny had resigned his appointment. A lay member of the Committee, who had exhibited some humane feeling on the subject, remarked that this was "a good way out of it." We do not quite agree with him, but consider that this man's resignation may have been the best way possible out of the difficulty, for if he had held on the terrible scandal might have been presented of the Asylum Committee, out of mere wantonness, defending a criminal against the central authority. Such a demonstration of the Committee's inability to understand their real functions or the very object of the institution over which they preside would have been equally deplorable and unnecessary.

We feel that acts of this kind—too frequent in Irish asylums and too lightly thought of—cannot be glossed over in our paper. Our Association and our JOURNAL exist primarily for the object of securing and maintaining the humane treatment of the insane, and it is chiefly due to the exertions of our predecessors in the Association and in the JOURNAL that barbarity is rare in British asylums and finds no sympathy in any quarter.

Some lessons may be drawn from these occurrences besides

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those which are so obvious that they do not require to be inculcated. In the asylums in certain parts of Ireland restraint is used much more freely than is regarded right elsewhere. The Ballinasloe Asylum has long been distinguished as being the cheapest in Ireland as regards the item of "salaries and wages." This probably means an insufficient staff and the consequent supposed necessity for restraint. Mechanical restraint should be unnecessary in the asylums of to-day. It always ends in disaster. Its malignant influence is equally baleful to the patients and to the staff; it encourages cruelty as certainly as it ensures neglect and promotes degradation. Nor is this influence confined to the wards: it seems to penetrate to the very committee room, as this last example shows.

In one of the abortive Lunacy Bills which owe their paternity to the present Lord Chancellor a provision was inserted, according to which County Councils would have the power of electing on their asylum committees a certain proportion of persons who do not belong to their own body. The design evidently was to include philanthropic outsiders who might take a liberal view of the requirements of the patients. In commenting upon the bill in question we protested against this provision. An enactment of the kind exists in Ireland. How inoperative it is for the protection of patients is obvious.

With regard to the future of the patients in the Ballinasloe Asylum, we hope the hint that there is a point beyond which the most complaisant Government will not go may have some effect. Furthermore, we look to the newly-appointed Resident Medical Superintendent, who must be presumed to possess the confidence of the Committee, who commend him in the strongest language. In returning thanks for his appointment, Dr. Kirwan is reported to have said: "There is a large staff here and 1300 of the most helpless of God's creatures, and I will do my duty to them with the greatest justice and impartiality."

These be brave words! We have every hope that our colleague in Ballinasloe will maintain them with equally courageous acts. We trust that, disdaining easy methods of acquiring popularity by pandering to party feeling, he will show that he can merit the esteem of honest men by rising to the responsibilities of his great office and teaching his committee, no matter at what inconvenience to himself, their duty to the poor afflicted persons whom they, as well as he, are bound to protect.

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