the heavy expenditure entailed by their maintenance will, however, ere long awaken the interest of ratepayers, and we may then hope that this will reinforce philanthropic effort and lead to more enlightened and liberal views predominating in our lunacy procedure.

Irish Local Government Bill.

The Local Government (Ireland) Bill has passed through the stage of Committee, and, as it is little likely to be modified in the House of Lords, may be considered to have reached its final shape.

In the April number of the JOURNAL we drew attention to the clauses which deal with asylums.

Section 9 provides, as we then pointed out, for the general management of asylums, giving to asylum committees appointed by the county councils, and consisting in a proportion of not less than three fourths of county councillors, powers generally similar to those possessed by asylum committees in England. In Ireland the Lord Lieutenant will take the place held in England by the Home Secretary, as approving of the purchase of new lands and buildings, sanctioning plans for new works, and approving regulations for the government of the asylum.

Sub-section 6 of Section 9 has been amended in the manner indicated below, certain words being added which we distinguish by italics:

"(6.) The county council, through the said committee, may, and if required by the Lord Lieutenant shall, make regulations respecting the government and management of every lunatic asylum for their county, and the admission, detention, and discharge of lunatics, *and the conditions as to payment and accommodation under which private patients may be admitted into and detained in the asylum*, and the regulations when approved by the Lord Lieutenant with or without modifications shall have full effect, *and shall have the same effect for the purposes of the fourth section of the Lunatic Asylums (Ireland) Act*, 1875, *as if made by the Lord Lieutenant and Privy Council.*"

The power is conceded under the first of these amendments by which county asylums will be able to receive paying patients on reasonable business terms. The old Privy Council Rules laid down that no patient was to be charged a larger

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sum for maintenance than the average capitation cost, and that no distinction was to be made between the treatment of a patient whose friends paid for him and a non-paying patient. As we often pointed out, this put a premium upon friends declining to pay. Another result was an immense exodus of poor middle-class lunatics to the English and Scotch Royal and Chartered hospitals, and a corresponding lack of interest in Irish asylums among the most intelligent part of the population, which again told injuriously on the welfare of those institutions in others, besides the mere money aspect of matters. We never could understand why the Privy Council should not have exercised long ago the powers it possessed to enable Irish asylums to receive paying patients on more favourable terms. Doubtless the county councils, on whom in future the expense will fall, will be more enterprising. We shall see presently how this special point came to be provided.

The second amendment to Section 9 places the new regulations of the asylum committees on the same footing legally as the Privy Council Rules. Boards of governors of Irish asylums used to have a favourite excuse for being backward in many matters, namely, that they were very closely tied up by rules not made by themselves. The new bodies will not in future be able to cloak indifference under so plausible a pretext.

The Treasury grant, as we noted previously, is discontinued, and its place taken by a rate in aid derived from the local taxation (Ireland) account under the following terms:

"(*c*) To each county council who satisfy the Lord Lieutenant that they have fulfilled their duty with respect to accommodation and buildings for lunatic poor, and that their lunatic asylum is well managed and in good order and condition, and the lunatics therein properly maintained and cared for, sums at the rate for each lunatic in the asylum for whom the net charge upon the council (after deducting any amount received by them for his maintenance from any source other than poor rate) is equal to or exceeds four shillings a week throughout the period of maintenance for which the sum is calculated, of one-half of such net charge, or four shillings a week, whichever is least" (Section 50, 1 c.).

In this manner a large measure of eventual control is very properly left with the central government. The Lord Lieutenant is, of course, merely a name, under which it may be conjectured the Lunacy Commissioners, or inspectors, as the

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Irish law calls them, will act; and they are probably here provided with ample powers, especially as they will also have the function of advising as to the sanction of building works and as to the approval of rules. They will thus be enabled to impress their own ideas upon the local bodies quite as fully as is judicious. Government retains the power of "the mailed fist," though very wisely enduing it with a silken glove.

The following provision is worthy of notice:

"(1) The council for a county may, either by the exercise of their powers under this Act, or by taking over for the purpose any workhouse or other suitable building in possession of the guardians, provide an auxiliary lunatic asylum for the reception of chronic lunatics who, not being dangerous to themselves or others, are certified by the resident medical superintendent of an asylum of such council not to require special care and treatment in a fully equipped lunatic asylum; and any such auxiliary lunatic asylum shall either be a separate asylum within the meaning of the Lunatic Asylum Acts, or, if the Lord Lieutenant so directs, a department of such an asylum:

"Provided that the sum payable out of the local taxation (Ireland) account in respect of the net charge for any lunatic therein may be paid when the net charge equals or exceeds three shillings and sixpence a week, but that sum shall not exceed two shillings a week" (Section 58, c. 1).

It is a favourite notion in Ireland that disused or superfluous workhouses, which seem to exist in abundance, could be cheaply converted into asylums. We doubt whether it would not be more expensive from an architectural point of view to modify the wretched structures which are considered good enough for paupers than to build new asylums. The fancy that chronic and harmless lunatics can be maintained for three shillings and sixpence a week with clothing and provisions at the prices they command in Ireland is a fond illusion. The resident medical superintendent, with whom, in spite of the jealousy of those unfortunate officers which exists everywhere, the supreme power in this matter by this quaint provision rests, is never likely to draft away to the auxiliary asylum all his working patients, and thereby increase his own difficulties in management, and bring upon himself the discredit of an increased cost at the parent asylum. Accordingly the helpless imbecile is the person who will be sent to the auxiliary. If he is badly clothed, insufficiently

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fed, and not attended to, the helpless imbecile will promptly show his gratitude by disappearing, and a great economy will thus be brought about: *solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant.* The notorious result of cheap treatment in Irish workhouses has not been encouraging up to the present.

The following enactments with regard to officers are important to those who are serving in our specialty in Ireland:

"Where any part of the salary of an officer of a county council is paid out of money provided by Parliament, or from the Local Taxation (Ireland) Account, he shall not be appointed or removed, nor shall his salary be fixed or altered, without the concurrence of the Local Government Board, and he shall have such qualifications (if any) as may be prescribed" (Section 63, 4).

"Where . . . any resident medical superintendent or assistant medical officer of a lunatic asylum is appointed by a county council after the passing of this Act, and at the time of such appointment held an office in another lunatic asylum, he shall, upon ceasing to hold office, be entitled, for the purpose of the enactments relating to superannuation, to reckon any previous service as officer of a lunatic asylum which he might have reckoned if his appointment had been under the appointing committee" (Section 63, 12).

"(1) Subject to the provisions hereinafter contained, the county council acting through their committee—

"(*a*) shall appoint for each lunatic asylum a resident medical superintendent, and at least one assistant medical officer, and

"(*b*) may appoint such other officers as they consider necessary; and every officer so appointed shall perform such duties and be paid such remuneration as the council may assign to him.

"(2) Every resident medical superintendent shall be a registered qualified medical practitioner of not less than seven years' standing, and shall have *served for not less than five years as a medical officer or assistant medical officer in an asylum for the treatment of the insane,* and every assistant medical officer shall be a *registered* medical practitioner.

"(3) The Pauper Lunatic Asylums (Ireland) (Superannuation) Act, 1890, shall apply to every officer appointed under this section.

"(4) The provisions of this Act respecting officers of the county council shall, subject as aforesaid, *and with the substitution of the Lord Lieutenant for the Local Government Board,*

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apply to the officers appointed under this section, as well in a county borough as in any other county, and the grant paid out of the Local Taxation (Ireland) Account for lunatics shall be deemed to be paid in respect of a part of the salary of any resident medical superintendent and assistant medical officer.

"(5) This section shall be without prejudice to the provisions of this Act respecting existing officers" (Section 64 entire, the amending words and sentences being italicised).

* * * * *

Section 83 provides for the transfer of the business of certain authorities to the new county councils, and for the transfer of the officers serving such authorities to the service of the new authorities, and enacts (sub-section 16) that—

"Subject to the provisions of this Act, every existing officer transferred under this section shall hold his office by the same tenure and upon the same terms and conditions as heretofore, and while performing the same or analogous duties shall receive not less remuneration than heretofore."

It would thus appear that the rights of those officers who are at present in the service of public asylums are safeguarded as completely as possible, and that some control is still maintained by Government over the appointment, dismissal, and payment of all medical officers. Therefore we may presume that in Ireland such a shameful scandal will be impossible as that which recently occurred in England, where an officer was entrusted with the duties of a first-rate post and paid on second-rate terms, solely in order to evade the Act under which the dismissal of a chief officer, at the mere whim of a timid committee in search of a scapegoat, was supposed to be guarded against.

The provision by which service can be carried from one asylum to another and reckoned for pension is a fair one, and will certainly assist committees in obtaining the best men for the best offices.

Sir Walter Foster is to be thanked for the amendment whereby a medical superintendent is required to have had five years' experience in an asylum, which he succeeded in carrying easily, in spite of some opposition from the Nationalist members. It is a pity that the amendment did not go further, and provide for an examination for the post of assistant medical officer. It appears probable that if our Irish brethren had been as keenly alive to the advancement of their order as the Irish engineers were, and had, like the latter gentlemen, secured qualifying clauses in the original

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draft of the Bill, such clauses would have passed with little or no opposition. It seems unreasonable enough that the county surveyors (surveyor of roads, &c., civil engineers) and their assistants should need to be specially educated and examined, while the assistant medical officers of asylums, of whom the public ought to expect much more, and whose responsibility is far greater, may be selected any way. Perhaps the explanation of the anomaly lies in the sentiment of a former Chief Secretary, who in introducing a once famous Bill described it as a measure "for the protection of life, and above all of property." A few roods of well-mended highway have a market value far above the life of a few lunatics. Nevertheless Sir W. Foster's clause is a great improvement, and will go far to protect the asylums from the risk, to which it must be admitted they were sometimes exposed in old times, of getting for their chief officer a man whose qualifications were more political than medical.

If our Irish colleagues were, as we think, a little late in pressing their views, they eventually put them forward with considerable vigour, and obtained a respectable measure of support. The Irish College of Physicians and the Irish College of Surgeons warmly supported Sir W. Foster's amendment, and also an amendment moved by Mr. Carew, and eventually negatived without a division, providing for the examination of assistant medical officers. An endeavour was made to press upon Government to adopt a clause whereby the Lord Lieutenant would retain the gift of the superintendencies in his own hands for a limited number of years, on the supposition that in this way those who had entered the service in the hope of Government promotion would be provided for. In spite of the kindly advocacy of Mr. Lecky this failed, as did also an attempt to induce Government to make compulsory the clauses of the Pauper Lunatic Asylums Superannuation Act (Ireland), 1890, which are now permissive.

They also generally deprecated strongly the notion of giving any control over asylums to the Local Government Board. We hardly think that this was contemplated in the original Bill in spite of certain safeguarding clauses, but it was in the view of several Nationalist members, who urged that the Local Government Board should take the place occupied by the Lord Lieutenant in the lunacy provisions of the Bill. Happily Government stood firm on this point. It would have been a lamentably retrograde step to associate the treatment of the insane with the relief of paupers, which would have been the

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inevitable consequence of establishing the rule of the Local Government Board.

The Boards of Governors of Irish Asylums did not collectively do much to improve the Bill. Many of these bodies wasted their powder by petitioning Government to drop local government *quâ* asylums, and take these institutions entirely under central control.

Nevertheless a conference of asylum governors was held in Dublin on the 28th of April, at which several points in the Bill were discussed, and some rather important resolutions come to. One, strongly pressed by the Board of Enniscorthy Asylum, on the initiative of our able colleague Dr. Drapes, secured the ear of Government, and was accepted as the first amendment of sub-section 6 of Section 9, to which we have already called attention, by which paying patients can be received into district asylums.

The Boards of the Richmond Asylum, Dublin, of the Enniscorthy Asylum, and of several others, drew attention very strongly to the financially bad position of asylums under the new Bill. The Treasury grant disappears, and the local taxation fund, with a small margin at present, has no means of expanding, and will be wholly unable to meet the many increasing demands which will be made upon it. The conference drew the attention of Government to the fact "that the Government rate in aid to Irish lunatics, hitherto paid out of the Consolidated Fund, has risen from £101,800 in 1887 to £143,635 (estimated) in 1897, an increase of £41,835. If the number of insane under care continues to increase—and there is no reason to expect otherwise—the surplus will be wholly inadequate, after a few years, to take the place of the increased contribution from Government which would have been available had the Bill not been introduced."

Government refused to reconsider the financial aspects of the Bill, but no doubt this very serious question must come up again before very long.

This conference also adopted the two following resolutions:

"That we would further most strongly urge that the passing of this Act should be availed of to enable such of the provisions of the English and Scotch Lunacy Acts to be adapted to Irish purposes as may be considered advisable. A complete code of lunacy laws exists in England and Scotland, but practically nothing has been done for many years past in connection with the Irish Lunacy Law. Reference to the Acts scheduled in Part 2 of the Bill will show this. A most

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important question is that of boarding out of lunatics. In Ireland there is no such power. In England and Scotland the power exists, and is very much used, especially in Scotland. We are of opinion that facilities for boarding out patients ought to be extended to Ireland."

"That we are of opinion that lunacy administration in Ireland should be assimilated to that of England and Scotland as regards the establishment of a lunacy commission in this country."

The former is probably what is the fashion to call rather too large an order; the latter slightly too vague; both of them rather pertaining to a lunacy regulation Bill than to a local government Bill. Neither met any response from Government, but they are, we hope, to be regarded as signs that some healthy interest is felt in lunacy affairs in Ireland. Such interest is badly wanted. Nothing is more singular than the little interest or intelligence shown by the majority of the Irish members in the debates on the lunacy clauses in this Bill. Some of them used these sections as a mere excuse for personally reviling the Inspectors of Lunatics and the officials of the Board of Control. Others fell foul of asylums generally, and seemed to have been briefed by the Society of Imputed Lunatics. The most ridiculous blunders as to matters of fact were made on all sides. Even the Chief Secretary is reported by all the Irish newspapers as having spoken of the Treasury rate in aid of 4*s*. 2*d*. per week per head, which is really only 4*s*.

We hope before the Irish Lunacy Act comes which we have been so long hearing about, but which appears as far off as ever, the Irish public will be somewhat educated as to the requirements of the case, and further that the state of Irish politics will be such that Irish parliamentarians will be able to afford a little time and consideration to a subject which is not perhaps showy, but is of vast importance to a large and very pitiable class of their countrymen.

Habitual Inebriates Bill.

The progress which this Bill has made does not justify any expectation that it will become law in the present session of Parliament, and so for still another year these unfortunates may be permitted to drink themselves into criminality, lunacy, or the grave, as accident shall determine.

The Bill provides that an habitual drunkard, convicted of

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