" Si quid novisti, rectius istis,
" Candidus imperti, si non, his utere mecum."

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The Chaplaincy Question at the Belfast Asylum.

After a prolonged discussion on this question, the Irish Executive and the local Authorities of the Counties of Antrim, Down, and Carrickfergus, have at length come to a dead lock, which appears irremoveable except by new legislative enactment. The Lord Lieutenant has appointed three chaplains for the Anglican, the Presbyterian, and the Roman Catholic patients respectively. The Board of Governors "having referred to the Acts of Parliament regulating their powers," &c., firmly and finally decided against the appointment; and when the three clerical gentlemen presented themselves at the institution in their official capacity, "they were informed of the resolution adopted by the Board, which prevented the authorities of the institution from recognizing or receiving them in any official capacity."

The grand juries of the three counties have severally approved the conduct of the governors. The resolution of the County Down grand jury was, "That we highly approve and cordially concur in the views which have induced the governors to resist the appointment of chaplains, which, from the statements and opinions adduced, would in our opinion be seriously prejudicial to the recovery of the patients." The resolutions of the other grand juries were to the same effect. The board of governors state, that their opinions respecting the inexpediency of appointing chaplains, "have been confirmed by the all but unanimous concurrence of the gentry, and the most intelligent portion of the community in Belfast and its neighbourhood."

It is not necessary to follow the dispute through all its phases, nor if we did so should we perhaps agree with every argument of the governors. In such prolonged discussions, even the party most in the right, is not likely to confine itself to the strictest logic and the most uncontrovertible facts. The Lord Lieutenant has acted on the opinions of the Inspectors of Asylums, and these opinions we are bound to say, appear to us erroneous and untenable. The opposition therefore of the local authorities, to acts founded upon such opinions, has our concurrence and cordial approbation.

It is evident from the whole tenor of their letter to the Lord Lieutenant, dated December 31st, 1851, that the government inspectors, regard the services of chaplains in asylums as an active agency in the treatment of the insane. In the postcript they state as much explicitly. They append a letter from the medical officer of the Londonderry asylum, "who, (they say) it is worthy of remark, was forced, after fourteen months experience, to admit *the efficacy of religious services in the treatment of the insane.*" The letter, bye the bye, admits no such thing, and that of Mr. Cluff, the manager of the Londonderry asylum, states, that the *comfort* to the inmates has arisen from "the performance of divine service, and the *occasional conversation* of the clergymen with the inmates. And that Divine service passes the Sabbath *most comfort-*

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ably in place of idleness." This is a very different thing from the *treatment* of the insane.

To the enquiry of the Belfast governors "whether the chaplains are to be allowed at all times the free passage of the house and grounds?" The Inspectors reply, "A *judicious* and *sensible* (the italics are not ours) chaplain it is presumed, will act with such good taste, discretion, religious quietude, and gentlemanly bearing, that his visits, as at Northampton, Surrey, Hanwell, Londonderry, Cork, &c. &c. asylums, will be always welcomed. He will of course consult with the physicians as to the ministration of his office in detail." This must be considered as an answer to the enquiry, more than affirmative, and intended to convey the opinion of the Inspectors, that not only should the three chaplains have the free run of the wards, but that the physicians must consent to be their consulting referrees. We are not sufficiently acquainted with Irish polemics to judge of the exact amount of probability which the presumption of the Inspectors would have of being verified; the presumption, namely, that three chaplains of the three rival faiths, in their free access to all the patients in the asylum, would always be judicious and sensible, and would invariably act with good taste, discretion, religious quietude, and gentlemanly bearing. The extreme confidence of the Inspectors must certainly be considered as the highest personal testimony in favor of the clergymen with whom they are best acquainted; while on the other hand, the strong opinions entertained by the board of governors, the grand juries, the gentry and intelligent portion of the community of Belfast, must be considered as a less flattering estimate of clerical forbearance.

In the discussion which took place in the House of Commons, on Mr. Lucas's speech, on the third of March last, Sir James Graham stated, that whatever might be the religion of the crew, it was impossible to have more than one chaplain on board a man of war. The crews of our men of war contain about one fourth of Roman Catholics, and on the wide ocean there is no possibility of begging the voluntary services of some neighbouring priest, to shrive the dying or to bury the dead. If Sir James feared that rival chaplains would disturb the iron discipline of a man of war, are not the governors of the Belfast asylum justified in their apprehension, that they would be equally liable to prove a divellent force in the government of an asylum? To those who entertain strong religious sentiments, proselytism under any circumstances is a sacred duty. Neither the honest Catholic, nor the sincere Calvinist, without the belief that he incurred danger to his eternal welfare, could refrain from stretching out his hand to snatch a brand from the burning, to rescue a human soul from perdition. With clergymen of earnest faith, attempts at proselytism are inevitable. With clergymen whose "good taste and gentlemanly bearing" are stronger than their religious convictions, this danger would of course be small; but if such lukewarm persons only are to be appointed chaplains, would it not be as well to leave religious conversation with the patients in the hands of Dr. Stewart, concerning whose "good taste and gentlemanly bearing," there cannot be the slightest doubt, and in whose discretion and ability, the northern Irish of all creeds, rely with implicit confidence; a confidence founded upon nearly a quarter of a century of favorable experience.

The antagonism between the Catholic and the Calvinistic creeds is so direct and complete, that if the Inspectors desire rival chaplains professing these creeds to act with perfect good taste, discretion, and religious quietude, they must be selected from among the courtly place hunters, to be found in the neighbourhood of Dublin Castle. The earnest spirits of county Down will scarcely supply such discreet and quiet persons. What would the Right Rev. Dr. Mc'Hale say of a Catholic priest, who, for £50 a year, would act in official concert and religious quietude, with a disciple of the Rev. Hugh Mc'Neil or of Dr. Cumming? What would the latter gentlemen say on their part to such a surrender of spiritual duties for filthy lucre? Between the Calvinist and the Catholic, "religious quietude" means religious indifference, and the Inspectors of asylums have taken a position which places them and the Government acting on their advice, on the horns of a dilemma; either they would recklessly throw the firebrand of religious controversy into the wards of the Belfast asylum; or seeing this danger, they would appoint chaplains whose tepid zeal would never be the cause of trouble, either to themselves or to any else. If the Inspectors make choice of the latter alternative, we can only say, that they have given the Lord Lieutenant, the governors of the asylum, and the grand juries of Down, Antrim, and Carrickfergus, a great deal of trouble for a very small matter. If the asylum chaplains must be devoid of religious earnestness, the *treatment* of the insane by religious influences, will be of the homœopathic sort, as to dose at least. But perhaps the Inspectors also think, that as so large a number of persons become insane, on account of strong religious emotion, it may have a most beneficial effect to place before these unhappy creatures, the constant example of several sane clergymen, the warmth of whose religious feelings ranges below that of gentlemanly sentiment, good taste, and quiet decorum. Such would be a true application of Hannehman's celebrated dogma, that "similia similibus curantur." An indifferent priesthood may be an excellent means of damping the excitement of an over zealous people.

We receive few reports from Irish asylums, and are therefore ignorant of the extent which this chaplaincy question has reached. In the last report of the Clonmel district asylum, it is stated, that the Protestant and Roman Catholic chaplains "have received no salaries, the board having referred them to the Government (which appointed them) for payment thereof." The sixth report of the Inspectors states, that in the Clonmel asylum, the salary of the Protestant chaplain is £30, and that of the Roman Catholic £35 a year. The number of Protestant patients in the asylum is 10, that of the Roman Catholics, 118.

At the Kilkenny district asylum, the salaries of the chaplains is the same as at Clonmel; the number of Roman Catholic patients 128, of Church of England patients 6, with one Quaker. As more than a third of

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the patients are stated to suffer from idiotcy or dementia, this would leave 4 Church of England patients with mania or monomania. What proportion of this number are accessible to religious influences we cannot ascertain. The most appropriate comment upon these facts will be a brief extract from the Inspectors' own report: "It is considered uncalled for to grant to every persuasion, numerically minute, a special clergyman." If there are to be three clergymen for the treatment of the patients at the Belfast asylum, on what principle, sanctioned by the Inspectors, are the six Methodist patients in that institution to have a special chaplain withheld from them; while, at the Kilkenny asylum, the Rev. John Greaves is appointed to the spiritual treatment of exactly the same number of Church of England patients, at a salary of £30 a year?

Either the State Church should, or it should not, be permitted to retain its old rights in public institutions. If it should, why are Roman Catholic and Presbyterian chaplains thrust upon the Belfast governors? If it should not, why are the same number of Methodist patients at Belfast, and of Church of England patients at Kilkenny, treated in a manner so diametrically opposite? Why should that which is "numerically minute" at Belfast, acquire the proportions of a congregation at Kilkenny?

In their opposition to the Irish executive, the Belfast governors have entrenched themselves behind a resolution "drawn up by Dr. Mant, the late eminent Bishop of Down and Connor, the most valuable and assiduous governor whom the institution has ever been fortunate enough to possess." This resolution, dated March 3, 1834, resembles the provision made by the English Asylums' Act for the visitation of patients not of the Church of England by clergymen of their own persuasion. It sanctions voluntary and unpaid religious ministration, under the direction of the medical officers. As the governors give up the point of economy, the merits of the question at issue are narrowed into those of the regular performance of divine service, and the free intercourse of the several chaplains with the patients, independently of, or in opposition to, the opinion of the physicians. If the Inspectors can be persuaded to retract their opinions on the latter point, we trust that the board of governors will meet them by conceding such arrangements as may ensure the regular performance of the divine services and the sacraments of the several Churches. Both the Inspectors and the governors have drawn arguments, in support of their opinions, from the English law and English reports; but the religious condition of England is so different from that of Ireland, that such arguments cannot be made to hold water. The English law provides for the appointment of one chaplain to each asylum, although, in many asylums, the patients of dissenting denominations are numerous, and at the Lancashire Asylum, at Rainhill, the Roman Catholic patients are more numerous than at Belfast. In English asylums the benefits arising from the services of chaplains are due to the moderation which is possible where no rivalry exists. What precedent is this for the appointment of three chaplains to one asylum?

The English law provides only for the regular performance of divine service; while the regulations and bye-laws of individual asylums strictly limit the personal ministrations of the chaplains to those patients whom the physicians think likely to receive benefit, or at least whom they suppose not likely to receive injury therefrom. What argument does this afford for the unrestrained action which the Inspectors would claim for their band of chaplains in the wards of the Belfast asylum? The board of governors appear to be actuated by a sincere desire to promote the welfare and to expedite the recovery of the patients, by preserving them from the injurious influence of religious excitement. Let them give way in the point of public divine service, which is not likely to produce such excitement; on condition that the Inspectors give way on the personal ministration of the chaplains, which, under the conditions existing at Belfast, is fraught with danger. Thus a reasonable and judicious compromise may be effected.

The Minor Difficulties of Mental Therapeutics

One important and useful purpose of the Asylum Journal is to serve as a medium of intercommunication, and a means of record for matters of practical importance in the treatment of insanity, and in the management of the insane.

Almost every asylum possesses some arrangements, some peculiarity of structure or of fittings which are reckoned among its good points. Again, almost every superintendent of an asylum has devised some scheme, some contrivance to overcome difficulties in the management, or to meet the wants of the insane.

Yet how excellent, how useful soever any such special adaptations may be, the knowledge of them is either confined to the walls of the institution in which they are found, or is extended to very few individuals. Perchance, indeed, wider notoriety may be their lot, if some perambulating doctor, intent on note-taking and publishing, stumbles across them, and liberally takes on himself the task of revealing them to the world.

But this state of things ought not to be: every one will admit it to be a great evil. Among no doubt many causes of it, the chief one certainly was the absence of any suitable channel of communication. This cause no longer exists; let us, therefore, hope the evil will disappear. If it do not, the medical officers of asylums will be to blame for their indolence and apathy. They will neither be doing justice to their patients nor to their professional brethren, if they withhold the fruits of their experience; if, knowing any resources to obviate the manifold difficulties and discouragements which attend the management of the insane, they seek not to publish them.

A difficulty may arise in the minds of some as to making a small, a trifling yet useful contrivance, or it may be some homely topic, the subject of a set paper or formal communication in a journal. But let no diffidence on this score, no repugnance to publicity in relation to what may be called small matters, be a bar to such practical communications.

For, to reflect for one moment, what can be called

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