It is perhaps not strange that the Irish country gentlemen, who have suffered much of late years, should regret that transfer of power to another class which the Bill will effect, and should be anxious that this transfer may not injuriously affect the insane. It is, however, very singular that, as we learn from the Irish papers, the Granard resolution was adopted subsequently, not only by the Mullingar and several other Asylum Boards, but also by some popular Boards of Guardians. That the last-named bodies should have taken up anything so contrary to their constant contentions shows how little they understood what the proposal amounted to, and how much needed was a broadening of the basis of asylum management such as will enable "the man in the street" to take some intelligent interest in what are, after all, his own affairs. There is probably only one class with whom the change desired by Mr. Edgeworth would be popular—office seekers. To carry out from a State centre the duties heretofore performed by local governors would require an army of officials.

In our view the adoption of State management and State control would be an unfortunate and retrograde movement. Government in Ireland is not paternal, is not even grandmotherly. The source of wisdom is no longer recognised (if it ever was in the distressful island) as springing from the Imperial Government, and the centre of political power has entirely shifted. Asylums governed by the State would be hateful both to the public and to the patients. The cast-iron discipline of a prison would supersede the freedom which is possible under popular control, while at the same time no central government in Ireland will ever again be strong enough to support an unpopular institution against attacks, so that at any crisis of difficulty the real ruler of the asylum would be the proprietor of the loudest of the local newspapers, or the most excitable of the local politicians. Such indirect popular control is wholly pernicious.

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### *Irish Local Government Bill.*

The long promised Local Government (Ireland) Bill was introduced into the House of Commons on February 21st by the Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant in a speech the singular ability and lucidity of which evoked flattering comments from all sides of the House.

Mr. Gerald Balfour's introduction contained numerous

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references to lunacy questions, and we find a curious indication of the interest which such subjects are beginning, under the pressure of recent events, to attract, in the fact that there were no portions of his opening speech which were received with more satisfaction by the Irish members, and none which attracted a larger share of attention in the Irish press.

From the old-time standpoint the Bill, so far as it deals with lunacy affairs, may fairly be called revolutionary. It places the management of asylums, financially and otherwise, on the same broad democratic basis as in England.

The most important and fundamental portion of the Bill as to asylums is contained in Section 9, which runs as follows:

"**9.**—(1.) It shall be the duty of the council of every county to provide and maintain sufficient accommodation for the lunatic poor in that county in accordance with the Lunatic Asylums Acts, and if it appears to the Lord Lieutenant that any council fail to perform such duty, he may order that council to remedy the failure within the time and in the manner (if any) specified in the order.

"(2.) The duties of the council under this section shall be exercised through a committee appointed by them, and if the Lord Lieutenant fix a number, of the number so fixed; and out of that committee a number not exceeding one fourth may be persons not members of the council.

"(3.) There shall be transferred to the council, acting through that committee, the business of the governors and directors of the asylum under the Lunatic Asylums Acts, and the committee, subject to the general control of the council as respects finance, may act without their acts being confirmed by the council.

"(4.) Plans and contracts for the purchase of land and buildings, and for the erection, restoration, and enlargement of buildings, shall not be carried into effect until approved by the Lord Lieutenant.

"(5.) The county council through the said committee shall properly manage and maintain every lunatic asylum for their county; and, subject to the provisions of this Act, may appoint and remove the officers of the asylum, and regulate the expenditure; and the powers, under the Lunatic Asylums Acts, of the Lord Lieutenant or the inspectors of lunatics, as to those matters, and as to land and buildings, and as to the appointment of governors or directors, shall cease, and also the Board of Control for lunatic asylums shall be abolished.

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"(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 regulations when approved by the Lord Lieutenant with or without modifications shall have full effect.

"(7.) Where a district for a lunatic asylum comprises two or more counties, this section shall apply with the necessary modifications to those counties and to the councils thereof," &c.

This brief section, which we may parenthetically say appears to have been accepted with universal applause, revolutionises the entire system of lunacy administration in Ireland. The local bodies are in future to build and own their own asylums, manage their own affairs, spend their own money, employ their own servants, and make their own rules.

Hitherto the Board of Control provided accommodation, built and owned the asylums. The Board of Governors appear to have been merely a sort of tenants, and though, like other tenants, they have latterly agitated a good deal, they did not succeed in securing much addition to their legal rights. Hitherto the Governors have been appointed by the Lord Lieutenant; in future the Asylum Committees, who take the place of the Governors, will hold office from the county council. Hitherto the medical superintendent was appointed by the Lord Lieutenant, the assistant medical officers under His Excellency's sanction, and only the servants (nurses and attendants) directly by the Board of Governors. The new committees will in these respects have powers identical with the English. The salaries and wages of employés were hitherto fixed by Order of the Lord Lieutenant in Council. This vexatious and unnecessary restriction on their powers is removed from the new committees entirely. Each asylum committee will frame its own code of rules, subject to approval as in England, and the Privy Council will no longer be empowered to frame general rules. In this Journal we have often during the last forty years drawn attention to the unsatisfactory nature of the General Rules of the Privy Council. Even if the Privy Council in Ireland had cared about such matters it would have been impossible to frame a working code applicable to a number of differently circumstanced institutions. We have only to hope

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that the necessary approval by the Lord Lieutenant will not lead still to too much uniformity in minor details.

With reference to funds for building, it would appear that the county councils will have power to borrow under conditions similar to those laid down in the Local Government Act of 1888, one of the Acts scheduled with this.

As to maintenance, the Treasury rate in aid will be discontinued, but a grant similar in amount (4*s.* per head per week) will be made out of the Consolidated Fund to the Local Taxation (Ireland) account on behalf of each lunatic in a public asylum. The remainder of maintenance will be met out of a county rate, known in Ireland as the "cess" (or colloquially "cut;" words of interesting etymology, compare Norman-French *taille*). Now half this tax, *as far as relates to agricultural land*, will be in future paid by Government out of a fund derived from the Consolidated Fund, known as "the agricultural grant." How far this will be a relief to local burdens in country districts appears to be disputed among those who have studied the complicated financial clauses of the Bill. There is no concession similar to the agricultural grant provided for the relief of taxation in urban districts, which will, therefore, remain much as before in this respect.

With reference to existing officers, Section 72 provides (clause 1) that "where the business of any authority is transferred by or in pursuance of this Act to any county or district council, the existing officers of that authority employed in that business and not in any other business of that authority shall become the officers of the council of that county or district;" and that "the officers of every lunatic asylum shall be deemed to be existing officers of the governors and directors of that asylum;" and further (clause 14), 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."

These provisions appear to secure existing rights in a satisfactory manner.

With regard to future appointments, Section 56 provides that—

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

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"(*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 legally qualified medical practitioner of not less than *seven years'* standing, and shall have had experience in the treatment of the insane, and every assistant medical officer shall be a legally qualified medical practitioner.

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

* * * * *

"(5.) This section shall be without prejudice to the provisions of this Act respecting existing officers."

This section introduces the notion of special training and qualification for the post of medical superintendent, and thereby shows the sagacity and alertness of those who advised the promoters of the Bill. But we feel bound to point out that this will not satisfy medical opinion. The qualification laid down is quite insufficient. All medical students now-a-days are required to take out a course of clinical instruction in mental disease, and many of the older men took out such courses voluntarily as students or in the post-graduate stage. These gentlemen might all claim to have had experience in the treatment of the insane. So might any general practitioner of a few years' standing who had treated a dozen or twenty cases of insanity. The subject of psychiatry is a very special one, and requires long study to learn thoroughly. Besides, asylum management is a subject that can only be acquired slowly, and capacity for the important official work and responsibility thrown upon the medical superintendent of an asylum can only come through years of familiarity with such duties. In the interests of the insane the framers of this Bill have recognised that a qualification is needed. They should be urged to make it a full and satisfactory one. We would say that not less than five years' service as assistant medical officer should be required. As this is merely an amplification of a requirement which the Bill admits, Government would

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probably adopt such a suggestion if it was urged upon them. As we go to press we learn that this suggestion has been urged by the Irish College of Physicians and by the Dublin Branch of the British Medical Association.

The Bill requires no special qualifications for the post of Assistant Medical Officer. The Chief Secretary was probably not acquainted with the fact that our Association holds an examination and gives a certificate in psychological medicine, and that the Royal University of Ireland does the same. We do not think it would be too much to ask that an Assistant Medical Officer should hold one of these or a similar qualification when appointed, or take out such a qualification within say a year of appointment. We think that such a test, easy though it may be, would be of distinct value.

It is to be noted that the provisions with regard to pension leave this question just as it was before, and just as it still is in England. It is understood that the attendants in the Irish asylums petitioned Mr. Gerald Balfour to take up the matter of pensions in this Bill, and to provide, even at a somewhat less liberal rate than at present, a pension scale which would be fixed, as pensions are in other public services, and would come to its recipients as a matter of right. This he has apparently not seen his way to doing, being probably unwilling to seem to limit the fiscal powers of the new bodies. It is a reform which ought, we think, to be effected, and which is evidently bound to come some time or other.

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### *The Sheppard Asylum, Baltimore.*

The development of hospitals for the insane of the middle and wealthy classes of the United States of America has not been checked, as with us, by the intervention of State aid. The magnificent buildings of the Maclean Hospital at Waverley, near Boston, have been recently erected in conformity with the latest ideas of asylum construction under the wise direction of Dr. Cowles. They have already been supplemented by gifts of detached houses, so that the accommodation for all classes of private patients is on a level with the demands of the most fastidious.

The Sheppard Asylum, near Baltimore, has lately been enriched by the munificent bequest of the late Mr. Enoch Pratt under circumstances of special interest. We briefly recount the history of this institution, which has the advantage of the able services of Dr. E. N. Brush as medical

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