

It is manifest that everyone in court—judge, jury, witnesses, and counsel, both for the defence and for the prosecution,—desired to find the prisoner insane; but her own medical witnesses very nearly compelled the judge to pronounce sentence of death! It was impossible to attach serious importance to opinions so wild, so unsupported by observation, so widely at variance with fact; and the usual effect of such evidence is to raise a prejudice in the minds of the hearers against the cause in which it is adduced.

#### THE BALLINASLOE APPOINTMENT.

Though the majority of our readers will have already become familiar with the outlines of this remarkable transaction, we feel that it may not be without interest to supply some details.

Soon after the demise of the late Dr. Fletcher it became evident that there was going to be trouble about the appointment of his successor. As early as December, 1903, a local newspaper, advocating the appointment of the senior A.M.O., expressed in somewhat grandiloquent language the hope that "the asylum committee are not likely to do anything that would give a handle to 'the enemy,' at home and abroad, for retarding—or putting forth greater and more open energy in that direction—the process of equalising and levelling up the classes whose opportunities have been hitherto unwarrantably and unjustly restricted." Another nationalist newspaper followed in the same strain: "It is true that the religion of the candidate is not that of the controlling authority," but "the very suggestion of religious rancour should not enter into such an appointment" (*Westmeath Independent*, January 2nd, 1904). But, in yet another local paper (*Connaught Leader*, January 9th, 1904), it is sneeringly suggested that the gentleman in question should be "elected by a Catholic board to govern a Catholic asylum," "because he happens to be a Protestant." And so the issue was knit.

Certain newspapers, including some of a strong nationalist complexion, adjured the committee to promote the senior officer on principles of fair play, and pointed out that to make the question one of religion would be injurious to the character of the popular body which would base such an appointment on such grounds, and would thereby hinder the ulterior prospects of democratic government. Elsewhere, however, the securing of an immediate triumph for the religion of the majority was plainly indicated as the duty of the asylum committee.

The subject continued to occupy the local press for some months. From one paper, which persistently denounced the introduction of the religious test, and which spoke of the coming election as "a trying ordeal for Ireland," we learn that "the appointment will be made practically by an archbishop, two bishops, a vicar-general, a canon, and two parish priests of the Catholic Church." So it would appear that the spiritual estate is well represented on the Ballinasloe Asylum Committee!

Finally the day of election came, and the proceedings of the committee on the occasion are very fully reported in the local papers. We find from the *Westmeath Independent*, of April 16th, 1904, that the chairman of the committee, one of the bishops above referred to, proposed the appointment of the Junior Assistant Medical Officer to be Medical Superintendent, speaking very highly of that gentleman's worth. Another committeeman, Mr. Thomas Byrne, seconded the Bishop's motion, and spoke thus:

"My lords, it affords me great pleasure to arise and second the motion proposed by Dr. MacCormack. In doing so I desire to say at once that I do so through no motives or feelings of prejudice, or indeed feelings akin to sectarian feeling of any kind. I do so simply on the ground that ——— (the junior A.M.O.) is equal in distinctions, honours, and degrees to the other candidate (the senior A.M.O.). Another thing, this is an institution that is a boon to the poor afflicted patients of the counties of Galway and Roscommon, and each and everyone here knows 97

*per cent.* of them are Catholics—at least 96 *per cent.* That being so, and when we have a candidate of equal merit and distinction before us as a body composed of Roman Catholics, which is the religion also of the patients, to have a man of the same faith and feelings as those he is in charge of, it is our right and privilege, and we should be equal to take advantage of it. If we did not do it we would be less than men. The time is come when the people should put forward men of their own religious beliefs. I don't do that through any religious or rancorous feelings; I do it on the ground it is time for us to have the opportunity of putting men of our own religious belief in the governing ranks of the institutions of the country."

This gentleman was followed by Mr. Galvin, who appears to be chairman of the Roscommon county council, who proposed the senior A.M.O. "in the interests of that spirit of fair play which gives to a man the reward of merit." In his vigorous remarks Mr. Galvin denied that the religious aspect of the question should be considered, and said the public service would suffer unless "the ordinary reward of merit is in front" of hard-working and able officials. He was supported by Mr. P. J. Kelly, who seconded his motion, remarking, "I think it my duty to stand up and say—as one burning with a fierce Catholicity—that I don't think that Catholicity or religion should be dragged into this election. . . . Let it not be said to-morrow or next day that we are unworthy of home rule, for we are too bigotted. . . . I have gone through the fire much more than your Lordship or your Grace for Catholicity, and I say that the senior A.M.O. should be returned." Another member following on the same side wanted a cause for anyone being "pitchforked in over the senior doctor's head. It is without justice or fair play as it is." Hereon Mr. Byrne observed "I did not propose the junior A.M.O. on sectarian grounds. I proposed him because 97 *per cent.* of the patients were Roman Catholics." The election having taken place and the junior A.M.O. being chosen by seventeen votes to five, Dr. Healey, Archbishop of Tuam, said that when you have two men eminently and equally clever the committee should be free to give their vote to the man of their own choice. He also reminded the committee that on the occasion when the senior A.M.O. was appointed Dr. Healey had urged them to select a Roman Catholic, but had been defeated by a casting vote. He spoke highly of the candidate who had now been rejected, and said he would support a proposal for a substantial increase to his salary.

It is the law in Ireland that the appointment of a medical superintendent requires the confirmation of the Lord Lieutenant. When the appointment at Ballinasloe was in due course notified to the Lord Lieutenant for this purpose the Irish Government made a remarkable display of their usual qualities. They at once requested the committee to state "the reason for passing over the senior assistant medical officer of the asylum, who was also acting medical superintendent" in their "nomination" of medical superintendent. The committee replied that they did not "nominate," but "appoint," and added, "we deny the right of any man demanding a reason—whether individually or collectively—for our voting for or against any particular candidate." Thereupon the Lord Lieutenant confirmed the appointment.

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#### THE PRICE OF A NOSE.

We are glad to be able to say that one other journal besides our own, and before we had an opportunity of so doing, has commented upon the case of cruelty at Ballinasloe. Though many papers have enlarged upon such other aspects of Ballinasloe management which could give rise to a polemic discussion, ill-usage of patients would appear to be a thing so consistent with the *raison d'être* of lunatic asylums as to be scarcely worth notice. We must credit our Nationalist contemporary, the *Western News*, however, with taking an interest in this matter. That paper writes as follows, commenting on the action of a member of the committee who was anxious to exonerate the offender:

"Father Begley's feelings are of a highly-strung mixed order. He expressed