

**Copies of documents in relation to the appointment of chaplains to the Belfast District Lunatic Asylum : respectfully submitted to the consideration of his excellency the Earl of Carlisle, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, by a deputation from the counties of Antrim and Down, and County of the town of Carrickfergus April, 1855.**

**Contributors**

Belfast District Hospital for the Insane.

**Publication/Creation**

Belfast : Printed at the Northern Whig Office, 1855.

**Persistent URL**

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IN RELATION TO THE

APPOINTMENT OF CHAPLAINS

TO THE

BELFAST

DISTRICT LUNATIC ASYLUM,

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED TO THE CONSIDERATION OF HIS EXCELLENCY  
THE EARL OF CARLISLE, LORD LIEUTENANT OF IRELAND, BY A  
DEPUTATION FROM THE COUNTIES OF ANTRIM AND DOWN,  
AND COUNTY OF THE TOWN OF CARRICKFERGUS.

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APRIL, 1855.

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BELFAST:  
PRINTED AT THE NORTHERN WHIG OFFICE,  
CALENDER-STREET.

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1855.

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BELFAST DISTRICT LUNATIC ASYLUM.

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*"To his Excellency the Earl of St. Germans, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, &c., &c., &c.*

"MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—We appear before you as a Deputation from the Governors of the Belfast District Lunatic Asylum, to urge upon your Excellency most respectfully, but, at the same time, most earnestly, the propriety of abandoning the appointment of Chaplains to that Institution.

"To shew your Excellency in mere outline (which is all a Memorial could attempt) the grounds of our well-considered application, we are compelled to solicit your attention to the following statements and details:—

"The Belfast Asylum was established in the year 1829, and remained without any definite regulations respecting religious instruction for the patients until the year 1834, when the Board of Governors unanimously sanctioned the following plan, 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.

*' Board-room, Belfast Asylum, March 3d, 1834.*

*' Present—*Bishop of Down and Connor, in the Chair. Rev. A. C. Macartney, Vicar of Belfast; Rev. Thomas Hincks, Curate of Belfast; Joseph Stevenson, Esq., Marquis of Downshire, John M'Cance, Esq. Ordered,—That on a wish being expressed by a patient to be visited by a Minister of Religion, the Manager of the Asylum, if he is of opinion that such visits are not likely to produce any injurious excitement in the patient, but are likely to be beneficial to him, be authorized to request the attendance of a Clergyman of the Established Church, whether the Parochial Clergyman, or, with his permission, the Clergyman of the parish to which the patient belonged before his admittance; or of a Minister of such other Denomination as the patient may have belonged to before his admittance, if he should give a preference to such other Minister—subject, however, to the same local limitation as in the case of the Clergyman of the Established Church.



‘That in any case of application being made to the Manager for the attendance of a Minister of Religion, the Manager to report the application and its results at the next monthly meeting of the Governors.

‘And that no nurse, or other person connected or unconnected with the Asylum, be suffered to introduce any Minister of Religion to a patient, without the knowledge and permission of the Manager.’

“Your Excellency will perceive that, under the arrangement just cited, ample provision was made for all salutary religious instruction and consolation; and we rejoice to say that, from the period at which it was adopted, it has been uniformly acted upon, with the happiest results, and without a single complaint being made by any patient or his relatives, either with regard to its defective or improper operation; nor did any of those respectable Ministers of Religion, who so appropriately represent four Denominations on our Board, at any time propose the appointment of Chaplains, or seem to consider such appointment necessary, until the Autumn of the year 1851, when the question was *forced* upon our consideration by two external authorities, viz., the Commissioners of the Board of Works and the Inspectors of Lunatic Asylums in Ireland. We desire to speak of all the gentlemen who pressed the matter upon us with perfect courtesy, and without impugning the purity of their motives; yet we respectfully take leave to aver that, whilst *our* regard for religion is not less ardent than *theirs*, our local knowledge is vastly greater, and our interest in the well-being of the insane amongst our people necessarily much more profound.

“Without denying the reasonable consideration due to the opinions of Clergymen (although we believe them to be, like other men, subject to professional bias), we respectfully solicit your Excellency’s attention to the fact—that of the nine Clerical members of the Board, only four, and one of them a non-resident in the district, supported the proposition of the Inspectors. On the other hand, with the exception of one very aged and most respectable gentleman who remained neutral, every lay Governor ardently opposed the appointment of Chaplains, not merely as *inexpedient*, but as almost certain to become, owing to antagonistic religious and political feelings in Down and Antrim, a source of serious injury to the patients, and a ground of irritation in the public mind.

“With regard to the decidedly pernicious tendency of systematized religious instruction, by several Chaplains in the same Asylum, where the patients must immediately afterwards converse with each other in the grounds or corridors, we have never entertained one moment’s doubt. On this point, our convictions have been strengthened by the writings of distinguished medical authorities in several countries; by the decided opinion of the late truly eminent Dr. M’Donnell, our first Visiting Physician, and of his almost equally eminent successor the late Dr. Thomson; by the strongly expressed views of our present Visiting Physician, Dr. M’Cormac, who has read almost every published treatise upon insanity,



and who has himself written several works on the physical and mental constitution of man; and, finally above all, our convictions have been corroborated by the unhesitating opinion of Dr. Stewart, our most faithful and most successful Manager and Resident Physician, during the last eighteen years—a gentleman whose theoretical information is both accurate and extensive, and whose vast practical knowledge, aided by his perfect acquaintance with our social condition, entitles his views upon the question, as we sincerely believe, to higher consideration than those of any other individual in this country.

“We are not unaware that several eminent and experienced Physicians have sanctioned religious instruction as ‘a medical aid’ in certain convalescent cases and under certain conditions: and we know that on these opinions our zealous Inspectors prominently relied in their elaborate report to Lord Clarendon, dated 31st December, 1851. We respectfully submit to your Excellency, however, that not one of the opinions cited bears distinctly upon the case of the Belfast Asylum, with the exception, perhaps, of a very qualified statement made by Dr. Rogan, of Derry, so far back as the year 1845. All the other statements evidently refer to places where *one* Chaplain alone is employed, and where, consequently, no excitement can be produced either by controversial preaching, or by the very presence of several Chaplains connected with the antagonistic sects out of doors; whilst every opinion is guarded by the earnest deprecation of sectarian, exciting, or gloomy discourses; by shewing that religion should be administered, as far as possible, in conformity with the soothing influence of family usages; and setting it down as a *sine qua non* that, even the one Chaplain should be a man carefully selected for his piety, prudence, gentleness, and moderation.

“Now, we respectfully submit to your Excellency, that all the advantages contemplated in the most favourable circumstances have been virtually attained in the Belfast Asylum, under Bishop Mant’s judicious regulation. Ministers of their own communion have, in cases of sickness, and at other times when desired, attended patients mentally convalescent; whilst those more perfectly restored to health have been not only permitted but encouraged to visit their respective places of worship, in company with a respectable attendant. But should your Excellency appoint THREE, or in the exercise of a strict impartiality, SEVEN Chaplains (as our inmates belong to seven Denominations), we most respectfully maintain, that the very fact of such appointments to please different sects would not merely imply the propriety, but induce the practice of sectarian preaching, and thus disturb the delightful harmony which has uniformly pervaded our Asylum, and produced those happy results to which, for a moment, we solicit your Excellency’s attention.

“We first quote a portion of the Inspectors’ Reports:—

‘June 5, 1849.

‘On my inspection of the Belfast Lunatic Asylum this day, I found the house itself in the usual state of order and cleanliness; whilst the



patients—judiciously employed and carefully attended to—reflect the greatest credit on the Resident Physician, Dr. Stewart. This being my first visit since the death of the late amiable and highly-informed Attendant Physician, Dr. Thomson, I deem it but justice to his memory to state that, with the utmost professional care of the inmates of this establishment, he conducted himself with a delicacy towards the Governors, &c., and various officers of the Belfast District Asylum, so as to command their unqualified respect and admiration.

(Signed) 'JOHN NUGENT.'

'September 27, 1851.

'I have inspected the Asylum this day, and have only to express the greatest satisfaction at finding it in such admirable order and state of cleanliness. The patients appeared very happy and comfortable, and nearly all employed at their respective works. (Signed)

'FRANCIS WHITE, Inspector-General of Asylums.'

'May 4th, 1852.

'Inspected the Belfast District Lunatic Asylum, this day and yesterday, and have every reason to express my unqualified satisfaction, as a Government officer, with the details of its management, and the general appearance of the institution; the comfort and tranquillity of the patients afford the *truest criterion* whereby to judge of the attention and care bestowed upon them by the Resident Physician Superintendent, Dr. Stewart, as well as by the Matron. Dr. M'Cormac, who is most regular in his visitation, gives the benefit of his professional experience in the treatment of the inmates; and hence the Belfast Asylum is particularly fortunate in the per-centage of its recoveries. No Board is more fully attended in Ireland than that of this Asylum; it is, therefore, unnecessary to observe on its fiscal condition.

(Signed) 'JOHN NUGENT.'

'We have been supplied, however, by our worthy Inspectors with other and irresistible evidence in favour of the wisdom and success of the course of medical and moral treatment hitherto pursued in our Asylum. In their clear and accurate 'Return of cases cured and improved in the District Lunatic Asylums in Ireland, during the years ending March, 1850 and 1851,' we find that Belfast stands eminently above all the others, both in regard to cures and improvement, thus:—

ASYLUMS.	Total Inmates.	Cured.	Per centage Cured.	Improved.	Per centage Improved.	Total Cured and Improved.
Belfast,.....	792	133	16 $\frac{3}{4}$	50	6 $\frac{1}{4}$	23 and a fraction over.
Londonderry..	621	92	14 $\frac{3}{4}$	12	2	16 $\frac{3}{4}$ .
Ballinasloe,...	769	59	7 $\frac{2}{3}$	4	0 $\frac{1}{2}$	8 and a fraction over.
Richmond,....	801	83	10 $\frac{1}{2}$	17	2	12 $\frac{1}{2}$ .



"The other seven Asylums would shew, in each case, similar results, but we have selected Londonderry as the *model* placed before Lord Clarendon by the Inspectors, to prove the advantage derived from the soothing and salutary influences of religion, under three 'most judicious Clergymen;' and the result is, that, in Belfast, upwards of 37 per cent. more persons are cured and improved than in Londonderry. The case of Ballinasloe is still more striking, where there is, possibly, but one Chaplain—certainly not more than two—the proportion of cures in Belfast being greater by very nearly *three to one*. The great Richmond Asylum, with all its Chaplains, confers advantage upon very little more than *one-half* the proportionate number that receive benefit in Belfast.

"These facts, we respectfully state, are irresistible proofs of the practical good resulting from the system which we have hitherto pursued; for the Inspectors could not deny them, and, though undoubtedly very able and ingenious men, they never even attempted to explain them. If it be alleged that the transcendent care and skill of our two Physicians have produced a result so remarkable, and *not* the absence of authoritative and systematic religious teaching, we then deferentially submit that such a fact ought to give a paramount weight to the deliberate opinion of our medical officers. We believe, however, that, in reality, the gratifying success of our Asylum has emanated from the happy co-operation of two great causes—professional skill and the judicious, though not authoritative, inculcation of religion.

"Your Excellency will feel no surprise, therefore, that, entertaining such views, we earnestly pressed them upon your distinguished predecessors, the Earls of Clarendon and Eglinton. That we did so without success, is to us a subject of deep regret, on public grounds, alleviated only by a continued conviction that we merely performed a painful act of duty, on behalf of a most unhappy portion of our fellow-creatures. The same conviction, strengthened by additional inquiry and experience, has caused us, at present, to trespass upon your Excellency's time and patience, in the earnest hope that, as wise and good men frequently take different views of the same question, *you* may be induced to lend a more favourable ear to our application now urged, and to be urged much more fully by arguments than on any former occasion, and sustained by the provisions of an Order in Council, issued by Lord de Grey, ten years ago, for 'The Government of Lunatic Asylums in Ireland.' That Order, which remains unrepealed, had, on former occasions, escaped our notice; and we respectfully claim of your Excellency the continued enjoyment of the powers and privileges which it confers upon us and our medical officers.

"Rule 13 stands thus:—'The *Board* to make regulations for the admission of Clergymen, to visit in that character the patients of their own persuasion. Frequent visits of the Parochial Clergy to the institution are particularly desired. The *Board* to make arrangements for



the celebration of Divine service before such of the inmates as their respective Clergymen and the Physicians shall deem fit to attend the same.'

"We *have*, agreeably with this rule, made regulations for the admission of Clergymen—we *have* encouraged the visits of the parochial and other Clergymen—we *have* made arrangements for the celebration of Divine service before such of the inmates as their respective Clergymen and the Physician shall deem fit to attend the same; and, being convinced that our arrangements were as judicious as they have unquestionably been salutary, we entreat your Excellency to sustain us in our disinterested and conscientious endeavours to carry them out as heretofore.

"Rule 45 provides that:—'The Physician is to direct the course of moral and medical treatment of the patients;' and assuredly no portion of moral treatment is so delicate and so important as that connected with religious teaching and ordinances.

"On behalf of our Resident and Visiting Physicians, therefore, whose fidelity has been above all praise, and whose labours have been admittedly crowned with unequalled success, we implore your Excellency not to humiliate them by disregarding their matured opinions, or to paralyse their future exertions by permitting any novel interference with their professional arrangements.

"We respectfully assure your Excellency that, with the exception of the Lord Bishop of Down, the Right Rev. Dr. Denvir, the Rev. Dr. Edgar, and the Rev. Mr. Monsell, we have not conversed with any individual of any Church, profession, or employment, who does not participate in our sentiments upon this question; and the ardour with which it has been opposed by Newspapers representing, we believe, all creeds and parties, abundantly testifies the deep interest which it has awakened in the public mind.

"With regard to ourselves, we venture to assure your Excellency, that, cheerfully admitting the sincerity of those who dissent from our views, we do not yield to them in our Christian anxiety to see the wounded spirit cheered and sanctified, in due time and place, by the blessed influences of religion; and we trust that our earnest pertinacity in this matter will be ascribed, not to any morbid craving for victory or power, but to its true cause—an imperative sense of personal and public duty. At the same time, we have no desire to conceal the fact, that we shall feel deeply disappointed should gentlemen, howsoever respectable, possessing less local knowledge, and assuredly much less interest than ourselves in the well-being of our unfortunate brethren, succeed in *forcing* what we believe to be a most injurious arrangement upon an Asylum to whose benefit and management we have cheerfully and faithfully devoted our best exertions.

"Under these considerations, we respectfully venture to express a



hope that your Excellency will deem it expedient entirely to abandon the purpose of appointing Chaplains in the Belfast Asylum.

“Belfast Asylum, February 14th, 1853.”

The Deputation also read and handed in to his Excellency the following Documents, in support of the views and statements contained in the Remonstrance :—

“Statement of Thomas Jackson, Esq., the Resident Superintendent of the Armagh District Lunatic Asylum, respecting Chaplains.

*‘Armagh District Asylum, 16th February, 1853.*

‘To become thoroughly acquainted with the insane, and to be enabled to form just ideas of their character, and the treatment suited to each case, it is absolutely necessary to *reside* amongst them. After a residence of thirty-four years, and the whole of that period devoted to their moral treatment, I am *decidedly* of opinion, that to the *resident* officers of our Asylums and their staff are we solely to look for the judicious and successful treatment of the inmates and character of the Asylums. I am equally *convinced* that the interference of daily or casual visitors, or undue interference of *non-resident* officers, is sure to prove most injurious, producing excitement, when to calm and tranquillize is of so much importance. Strong proof of this view could be brought forward. I recollect a Visiting Physician to one of our Asylums, who felt an interest in being what he conceived useful to the patients, but who committed a great error in *over conversation* with them, and in consequence—it took a day and night to calm the excitement produced.

‘As to the appointment of Chaplains, I am *perfectly* convinced that their interference with *all recent and curable cases* would prove most injudicious, for it is an established fact, that the cure of the insane depends on *knowing how* to let them *alone*. We had a trial here of the effects produced by a benevolent and excellent Clergyman of the Church of England; he attended for some time, and a most judicious selection was made, I think the number of patients was six, but he came to the conclusion that his continuing the practice was *worse* than useless.

(Signed) ‘THOMAS JACKSON.’

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“Rev. William M’Ilwaine, Incumbent of St. George’s Church, Belfast, on the subject of Chaplains for the insane.

*‘February, 1853.*

‘Having been requested by some who are interested in the question at present pending with respect to the appointment of Chaplains to the



Belfast District Asylum, to state concisely my views on that point, as grounded on some acquaintance with the affairs of that institution and its inmates, I readily accede to the suggestion, not only as one having a deep interest in the afflicted class principally concerned, but from an anxiety to afford any information in my power with reference to a matter which has become, in a good measure, one of public interest. With respect to the subject, generally considered, there may, and, doubtless, there do, exist difficulties to be met by a prudent dealing with cases as they may arise. I can easily imagine a combination of circumstances which might render such an appointment as a Chaplain to such an institution a matter perhaps necessary, even though not desirable. It would, at least, be presumptuous for one but partially informed on such cases to express a decided opinion, although I must confess that, from all that I have either seen or read on the matter, I would be strongly disposed to consider any such appointment as better calculated to form the exception than the rule. With respect, however, to the Belfast Asylum, I have not the least hesitation in declaring that I consider the appointment of Chaplains thereto most undesirable. My reasons for so stating may be briefly given as follows:—I have been acquainted with the Resident Physician of the District Asylum for a period of about seventeen years, and during that time I have had frequent occasions of witnessing the manner in which the treatment of the insane has been conducted by him. It is only justice to state, that this treatment has been eminently successful. The annual tabular returns (which I always peruse with much interest) will of themselves prove this. My reason, however, for forming this high estimate of Dr. Stewart's professional ability and consequent success, under the Divine blessing, is drawn not only from these sources, but from the fact of my having been, ministerially and otherwise, acquainted with very many cases under his care.

'In some of these cases I have been urged by the friends of the patients, as well as by my own anxiety for their restoration to reason, to visit them and observe their progress—never, indeed, but with the sanction and permission of the Physician (Dr. Stewart); and I feel it only my duty to state that, although thus permitted to visit and to have such intercourse with those afflicted individuals as they were capable of appreciating, in nearly every such instance I regretted having done so; at least until they were in a great measure pronounced convalescent by him. I almost invariably found my visit to tend to their excitement and consequent injury. More or less, I believe it is a generally admitted fact, on the part of those best acquainted with the psychological phenomena, that insanity which takes what is called a religious form is among the worst of its many phases, and is most difficult of treatment. I think it, therefore, a matter but of common sense, and extensively corroborated by experience, that the very sight of a Minister, especially one formerly or habitually known to such patients, by its necessary con-



nexion with the latent source of their mental disease, has a decided effect towards the aggravation of that disease. I am far from saying that insane persons are incapable of moral and religious impressions; but I am also decidedly of opinion that the introduction of such topics, as regards time and manner, ought to be left to the judgment of the Superintendent.

‘If he be properly qualified to treat his patients, I think this matter may safely be left in his hands, especially if such institutions come to be considered, as assuredly they ought, not places of restraint for the violent, but curative ones for the mentally afflicted. I may add, to my experience, as above given, that in such an institution as that at Belfast, where the patients are professors of so many different religious creeds, the introduction of so many Chaplains as would be rendered necessary, in order to carry out the idea, if at all entertained, would be a most disastrous occurrence in my opinion.

‘In England or Scotland, or in any other localities where, perhaps, the services of a single Chaplain might suffice, if such an appointment were productive of no positive good, it might justly be considered as at least a harmless, if not an interesting experiment; but in Ireland, and more especially in our part of it, and, above all, in Belfast, from the reason just adduced, I cannot but consider the experiment a most rash one, and to be deprecated by all who have the interests of the unhappy class of our fellow-creatures under consideration sincerely at heart.

(Signed)

‘WILLIAM M’ILWAINE, A.M.,  
‘Incumbent of St. George’s, Belfast.’

“Extract from a Review on Insanity and Hospitals for the Insane, published in *The Dublin Quarterly Journal of Medical Science*, Nov., 1851, conducted by the distinguished Dr. Neligan:—

‘We quite agree with Dr. Kirkman and Dr. Cheyne, in this view of the matter, and feel called upon here to state our belief that it is one of the *monomanias* of the present day, the extremes to which the exercise of religion is carried professionally in our Lunatic Institutions. One, or at the utmost two, discreet and judicious official Chaplains, to administer spiritual comfort and advice in those cases deemed by the Resident Medical Superintendent not likely to be prejudiced, may, perhaps, be right and proper; but in Institutions where there are several entirely different religious denominations, all of whom would necessarily require a distinct Chaplain—three or four, perhaps, according to the particular locality—we esteem that it would be a *positive evil*, and more likely to injure than serve the patients.

‘The very fact of three or four different kinds of religious services being performed each Sunday, by three or four different Clergymen,



under the one roof, would, in a common sense view of the matter, be calculated to cause no small excitement, even among the sane; to say nothing of that community being composed of insane individuals, and the Sunday, instead of being a day of rest, would, under such circumstances, become one of more than ordinary disquietude.'

"And again, from the same Journal, on the same subject, in November, 1852:—

'*Professional* religious instruction in a Lunatic Asylum is a *quæstio vexata* not confined to Ireland alone, where there are so many angry elements, owing to difference of creed, to cause strife and contention by the multiplication of Chaplains; but in England also, with but *one* form of religious faith, the propriety of Chaplaincy in her Hospitals for the Insane is more than doubted.

'The following is what the eminent Physician of the Suffolk Asylum says on this point:—"The subject of religious instruction is too delicate to be discussed in an ordinary report. It will be enough to convey the repeated conviction that, to be really effective, 'professional' care can never supersede 'domestic' instruction. The administration should be in that guarded manner which is only learned by the knowledge of the existing peculiarities of the parties addressed. Moral delinquencies may arise from mental idiosyncrasies, which need great forbearance, and a peculiarly delicate mode of conveying instruction in righteousness. A patient went home well, whose relapse, after a former discharge, came on, as he expressed it, 'after hearing an alarming sermon;' his morbid conscientiousness was morbidly acted on, and he had left the Church to cut his throat. He is now well again."

'We have ourselves only further to remark on the foregoing, that we feel firmly impressed no such office as that of Chaplain should be attached to any Lunatic Asylum whatever, much less to those of them containing members of the different sections into which Christianity is split in this country. We would not debar patients from being visited by their respective Ministers of religion as frequently as might be deemed prudent, or in accordance with the desire of individual patients—quite the contrary; but to have religious offices for the patients *en masse*, in a Lunatic Asylum, as regular routine business, performed by a Chaplain or Chaplains, we hold to be altogether and entirely unsuited for those who are considered fit inmates for such establishments. Religious instruction, we consider, is as much part and parcel of the medico-moral treatment of the patients as their diet, exercise, employment, medication, &c., which are placed in the hands of the medical officer charged with the conduct of the whole institution, and who should no more be interfered with in this particular of management than in any other, for the performance of which he alone, and properly so, is the responsible party.'



“Extracts from the recently published Lettsomian Lectures, delivered before the Medical Society of London, ‘On the Medical Treatment of Insanity,’ by Forbes Winslow, M.D., Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, Vice-President and Lettsomian Professor of Medicine of the Medical Society of London, &c., 1852:—

‘Among the causes which have unfortunately given force and longevity to the idea that the administration of physical agents is of little or no avail in the treatment of the disorders of the mind, one holding the most prominent rank is the unsophisticated hypothesis which have been entertained and promulgated respecting the nature of insanity. To this source much of the fallacy, the false induction, the bad logic, and the neglect in reference to the use of remedial measures, may be traced. Insanity has been considered to be a spiritual, a functional disease—to be an affection of the immaterial essence—to be a disorder of the soul, and not the result of a derangement of the material instrument of mind interfering with the healthy action of its manifestations. The brain has been supposed to be intact; not a fibre disturbed; not a vesicle altered; not a vessel overloaded: this organ has been imagined, in the severest forms of disturbed mind, to exist in all its integrity, so preposterously absurd have been the notions relative to the proximate cause of insanity. This spiritual doctrine has naturally led in the conclusion—false in theory and destructive in practice—that for the alleviation and cure of the spiritual malady, spiritual remedies were the most important and essential. The Clergyman, instead of the Physician, was, therefore, summoned to the bed-side of the insane, and the Bible and Prayer-book displaced the physical remedies prescribed for the cure of the disorder.’

‘Madness,’ says Dr. Burrows, ‘is one of the curses imposed by the wrath of the Almighty on his people for their sins, and deliverance from it is not the least of the miracles performed by our Saviour!’ (Commentaries on Insanity, by Dr. Burrows.)

‘I quote this passage to shew what are the prevailing notions of the cause of insanity, among the first authorities in this country. Why should the relatives and friends of those so unhappily afflicted seek the aid of medicine, when men of position and repute both public and privately propound such doctrines, and as a consequence discourage all physical treatment? Great and awful is the responsibility of those who thus thoughtlessly weaken the confidence of the public in the efficacy of the physical curative agents in the treatment of insanity. “I was told,” said a lady, “that medicine was of no avail in the affections of the mind. I went to the Clergyman for assistance, but could obtain none. I have struggled for weeks heroically against the disposition to suicide, with the Prayer-book in one hand, and the open razor in the other. Five times have I felt its keen edge at my throat, but a voice within me suddenly commanded me to drop the murderous instrument; and yet at other



times the same voice urged me despairingly on to self-destruction. I knew I was ill—seriously ill—bodily ill; yet no one pointed out to me the right remedy for my horrible impulse, or recommended me to put myself into the hands of the Physician.” Such was the state of a patient who voluntarily subjected herself to medical treatment, and was happily restored to health.’

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“Extract from the letter of the Resident Physician-Superintendent of 22 years’ standing, of an English County Hospital for the Insane:—

‘February, 1853.

‘I was speaking, the other day, to one of the most intelligent of our Commissioners in Lunacy about the Chaplaincy question, who seems quite inclined to consider legislative orders on the subject injudicious. On this point, as on all others connected with Asylums, I think we owe a debt of gratitude to the Editor of *The Dublin Medical Journal*. There were some able notices on the subject I remember in some numbers back.’

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“Extract from a communication of the Chaplain of a County Lunatic Asylum in England:—

‘October, 1852.

‘As for Chaplain’s duty, which we have twice a-day, it is a most solemn farce and prostitution of religion. Such is my testimony, after twelve months’ experience.’”

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The above Memorial, and the several documents thereto attached, were presented by Sir Robert Bateson, Bart., the Very Rev. Dean Stannus, R. B. Blakiston Houston, J.P., Rev. Dr. Montgomery, and J. S. Crawford, J.P. Doctors White and Nugent, the Inspectors of Asylums, were also present, at the special request of the Deputation, and took an active part in the discussion, which, through the Lord Lieutenant’s great courtesy and patience, lasted fully three hours.

The Deputation retired, confidently calculating on a favourable reply; but, in the month of March, they received communications from Major Larcom, stating that his Excellency declined compliance with the prayer of the Memo-



rial, and had appointed a Roman Catholic and a Protestant Chaplain, in addition to the Presbyterian Chaplain, previously appointed.

Under these circumstances, the Governors deemed it their duty to lay the whole case before the Grand Juries of Down, Antrim, and Carrickfergus, who, thereupon, adopted the following resolutions, viz. :—

From the Grand Jury of the County of Down, dated 2d March, 1853 :—

I. “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.”

From the Grand Jury of the County of Antrim, dated March 8th, 1853 :—

II. “That we have attentively considered the subject of the appointment of Chaplains to the Lunatic Asylum, and are of the opinion that the Governors have pursued the most judicious course in declining to sanction such appointments, and that we fully approve of the manner in which they have hitherto managed the Institution ; and, further, that the Members of this County, and of the several Boroughs within the County, be requested to wait upon the Irish Secretary in London, and remonstrate against the appointment of Chaplains to the Lunatic Asylum.”

From the Grand Jury of the County of the Town of Carrickfergus, dated March 11, 1853 :—

III. “That this Grand Jury disapprove of the appointment of Chaplains to the Belfast Lunatic Asylum ; and that the following Committee be appointed to draw up a Memorial to the Lord Lieutenant on the subject—Thomas M. Birnie, Esq., Foreman ; W. J. C. Allen, Esq., and W. Molony, Esq.”



The Board of Governors subsequently resolved :—

I. “That, retaining as we do in full force our objections to the appointment of Chaplains to this Asylum, we observe with regret that the Lord Lieutenant and Council have proceeded to nominate three such officials, and to order the payment to each of a salary of £50 per annum.

II. “That, though unaware of the legislative provision under which such appointments have been made, and such salaries ordered, we yet, out of respect to the Lord Lieutenant and Council, do hereby direct Dr. Stewart, the Resident Physician, to give to the Clergymen so designated as Chaplains, every facility whether for personal interview or for the celebration of Divine service ; but always under his responsibility, not to permit their access to any patient or patients to whom he may deem it likely to be injurious, on the same principle as has hitherto been acted upon with respect to the parochial and other clergy ; and that he continue to act in the same manner with respect to the patients of other persuasions.

III. “That we consider it scarcely necessary to record the fact, that the Resolutions of the Board of Governors on the present question have not been influenced by any degree of political or sectarian feeling. They have been arrived at on a deliberate consideration of the subject, and from an intimate knowledge of the local circumstances which, in the judgment of the majority, make the proposed experiment perhaps more dangerous here than elsewhere. They have been supported by the great majority of the Governors, including various shades of political and religious opinion, and they have, as we feel assured, the approval of the great mass of the educated and intelligent portion of the community.”

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The Lord Lieutenant in Council afterwards ordered the Governors to pay the sum of £50 per annum to each of the



three Chaplains ; which order—believing the appointment of Chaplains to have been unauthorized as well as injurious—the Governors respectfully declined to obey, and resolved again to lay the whole case before the Grand Juries, who, thereupon, passed the following Resolutions :—

County Down Spring Assizes, 1854 :—

I. “ That the Grand Jury of the County of Down, after due and mature consideration of the question involved, in the appointment of Chaplains to the ‘District Lunatic Asylum,’ at Belfast, are of opinion, that after the decided convictions expressed by the Medical Officers of the Institution, as to the injurious effects of collective religious ministrations on the patients, any assent to the measures ordered by the Lord Lieutenant and Privy Council would be most unadvisable, and against the restoration of the mental health of the patients ; and as it appears, at the same time, by the resolutions of the Board of Governors, of the 2d of January last, that all requisite facilities, compatible with their unfortunate condition, have been ordered for the spiritual welfare of the inmates, the Grand Jury feel themselves called upon to express, in the strongest manner, their entire approval of the measures taken by the Board of Governors, to prevent what they consider an injurious establishment of Chaplains being forced upon the Institution.

“The Grand Jury consider themselves further called upon to record, though with all due respect for the Government, their great regret at the measure of coercion, adopted in a presentment for the salaries of the Chaplains, being forced upon them by the law, after they had declined to approve of the same, and they are of opinion, that, considering this presentment has not virtually received the consent of the County represented by them, the Governors of the Institution will act most properly in declining to draw cheques for the payment of the salaries of the Chaplains ; and, should the Governors adopt this suggestion, the Grand Jury will fully and cordially approve of their so doing, as, by such a pro-



ceeding, they conceive all responsibility will be removed from the Governors, and remain where justly due, should they be further constrained by law to pay the said salaries."

County of the Town of Carrickfergus Spring Assizes, 1854 :—

II. "That the Grand Jury of the County of the Town of Carrickfergus, having read and considered both the published minutes of the Board of Governors of the Belfast Lunatic Asylum, and the replies to the circular of the Lord Bishop of Down, are of opinion, that the appointment of Chaplains to that Institution would be prejudicial to the patients therein, and for that reason decline to make a presentment for the salaries of such Chaplains, unless they are legally bound to do so."

County Antrim Spring Assizes, 1854 :—

III. "That the Grand Jury of the County of Antrim decline making any presentment for the salaries of Chaplains for the Lunatic Asylum."

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In this state of affairs, the Attorney-General, at the suit of the Chaplains, applied to the Court of Queen's Bench, in Trinity Term, 1854, and obtained a conditional order for a Mandamus, to compel the Governors to pay their salaries, against which Order their Solicitors, Messrs. Davison and Torrens, were desired to show cause; and the Governors again laid the matter, in its new aspect, before the Grand Juries, at the ensuing Summer Assizes of 1854, who resolved as follows, viz.:—

I. "The Grand Jury of the County of Antrim decline, as the Grand Jury at Spring Assizes had done, to make any presentment for the salaries of Chaplains."

II. "The Grand Jury of the County of the Town of Carrickfergus refuse to present their proportion of the Chaplains' salaries."



III. "That, pending a writ of Mandamus issued against the Governors, the County Down Grand Jury decline making any presentment for Chaplains, and express their cordial approval of the conduct of the Governors, for the zealous manner in which they had endeavoured to maintain the rights of those taxed for the support of the Institution."

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The Governors, on Monday, February 5th, 1855, received the annexed copy of Opinion of Counsel, with reference to the appointment of Chaplains, viz. :—

"We have conferred, and carefully considered the Case of the Governors of the Lunatic Asylum, and have arrived at the following opinion :—

I. "The appointment of Chaplains to District Lunatic Asylums was not, in our opinion, in the contemplation of the Legislature, in the Act of Parliament under which such Asylums are established.

II. "But if the Lord Lieutenant, by and with the advice of the Privy Council, has authority, under such Acts, to make that appointment, we are of opinion, that having regard to the Order in Council in 1843, and especially the 13th Rule adopted by such order, that the alleged appointments of Chaplains, by the Lord Lieutenant and Lords Justices, are invalid.

III. "The Order in Privy Council of the 7th November, 1853, did not, in our opinion, constitute a valid appointment of Chaplains, so as to enable those gentlemen to enforce payment of their salaries, (as part of the expenses of the Institution, payable by the Rate-payers,) for the time previous to the annulling of the 13th Rule above referred to, under which the Governors of the Asylum were, in our opinion, justified in acting until the same was annulled in Council; and, on this account also, we are of opinion that the present Mandamus ought to fail, and that a return ought to be made, which would enable the Governors to put upon the records of the Court the grounds upon which they have acted.



IV. " This is our opinion on the true legal construction of the Statutes ; but it is right to say, that we consider those Statutes obscure in their phraseology, and difficult of construction, and that the questions in this case are novel, and yet undetermined by any authority.

" We are of opinion, that Costs will follow the Judgment of Court in this case, and will be payable by the unsuccessful to the successful party.

*"Four Courts, 27th January, 1855.*

(Signed)

"JOHN BROOKE.

"HENRY H. JOY.

"THOMAS O'HAGAN.

"MICHAEL HARRISON."

The Board having considered the above Opinion, the following Resolutions were adopted:—

I. "That after mature deliberation and anxious inquiry, we considered it our bounden duty to remonstrate, earnestly and respectfully, against the contemplated appointment of Chaplains to this Asylum, as a measure likely to prove injurious to its unfortunate inmates, by producing religious excitement and animosities, where perfect harmony had theretofore prevailed.

II. " That when our repeated protests, although sustained by the *unanimous* support of the Grand Juries of Antrim, Down, and Carrickfergus, entirely failed to influence the Irish Government, we endeavoured to shew our respect to the Lord Lieutenant, by availing ourselves of the power vested in us, by an Order in Council of the year 1843, to admit three Reverend Gentlemen, whom his Excellency had named as Chaplains, to administer instruction and consolation to such inmates of their respective communions as the Resident Physician might deem fitted to engage in religious exercises.



III. "That we did not, and could not, however, with our views of public duty, pay over to them, *as Chaplains*, the annual Salary allotted to them by the Lord Lieutenant.

IV. "That our experience, during the last twelve months, so far from proving the admission of the three Reverend Gentlemen to have been salutary and comfortable, has shewn it to have been, in several ways, decidedly inexpedient and injurious; and, consequently, although sincerely reluctant to oppose any desire of the Lord Lieutenant, we feel ourselves compelled, by an imperative sentiment of duty to the poor inmates of this Asylum, and to the public at large, to direct, as we now do, our Solicitors, Messrs. Davison and Torrens, to make a suitable return to the Mandamus recently issued by the Court of Queen's Bench, seeing that the legal position we contend for has been sanctioned by the concurrent opinion of four eminent Counsel, in deliberate consultation.

V. "That a statement of the proceedings in this case, since the last Assizes, be duly printed, and respectfully submitted, by Deputation, to the Grand Juries of the Counties of Antrim and Down, and County of the Town of Carrickfergus, at the Assizes now approaching.

"Deputation to Antrim and Carrickfergus Grand Juries—John Clarke, Esq., and Rev. Dr. Montgomery.

"Deputation to Down Grand Jury—Sir Robt. Bateson, Bart., and Rev. Dr. Cooke.

(Signed)

"H. COOKE, Chairman."

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At the recent Spring Assizes, accordingly, the respective Grand Juries resolved:—

County of Down Spring Assizes, 1855:—

I. "That the Grand Jury have taken into consideration the statements laid before them by a Deputation from the



Governors of the Belfast Lunatic Asylum, of their proceedings in refusing their assent to the appointment of Chaplains to that Institution, made by the former Irish Government. That whilst we would desire that the inmates of the Asylum should be supplied with the ministration of the Clergy of the religious denomination to which they might each of them respectively belong, at such times as their condition of mind would, in the opinion of the Medical Attendant, render it useful or expedient, we nevertheless concur in the objections which the Governors have stated to the appointment of paid Chaplains, with a view to the celebration of Divine Worship, according to the forms of their respective Churches, in the body of the house, as likely to produce an excitement highly detrimental to the recovery of the patients, and we approve of the course taken by the Governors, in declining to sanction such appointments.

It is further Resolved—"That for the reasons before assigned, and considering that the question of the mandamus is still pending in the Court of Queen's Bench, this Grand Jury will make no Presentment for the payment of the Salaries of the Chaplains, at these Assizes.

"That Mr. Sharman Crawford, Mr. Robert Batt, and Mr. R. B. Blakiston Houston, be appointed a Committee, to confer with the Grand Juries of the County of Antrim and the County of the Town of Carrickfergus, in case they should be disposed to appoint like Committees, with a view to their joint action in preparing and presenting a Memorial to the Lord Lieutenant, if such should be deemed proper, or in such other proceedings as may be determined on.

(Signed) "J. T. REILLY, Foreman."

County Antrim Grand Jury, Lent Assizes, 1855 :—

II. "That Thomas Greg, Esq., Thomas G. Batt, Esq., and Thomas Verner, Esq., be nominated from this Grand Jury, to meet the Deputation from the County of Down Grand Jury, on the subject of Chaplains to the Lunatic Asylum, and to take such steps as to them may seem necessary.

(Signed) "T. PAKENHAM, Foreman."



County of the Town of Carrickfergus Grand Jury, Spring Assizes, March 14, 1855 :—

III. “ That this Grand Jury concur with those of the Counties of Down and Antrim, in declining to make a presentment for the salaries of Chaplains for the Lunatic Asylum, and appoint the following gentlemen a Committee, to confer with those appointed by the Grand Juries of Down and Antrim :—T. M. Birnie, Esq., Foreman ; William Marshall, Esq., and John Borthwick, Esq.”

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The Governors, at their meeting on March 29th, having received Reports from their Deputations, appointed Sir Robert Bateson, Bart., J. Clarke, J.P., the Rev. Dr. Cooke, and the Rev. Dr. Montgomery, to confer with the United Committee of the Grand Juries ; and, at said Conference, it was resolved, that a Deputation, representing the several Counties, do wait upon his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, and present the following Memorial, viz.:—

For Down, W. S. Crawford, D.L. ;

For Antrim, Thomas Greg, J.P. ;

For Carrickfergus, James Barnett, J.P. ;

To be accompanied by the Rev. Dr. Cooke, on the part of the Board of Governors.

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Copy of Memorial of a Deputation from the Grand Juries of Antrim, Down, and County of the Town of Carrickfergus :—

“ *To his Excellency the Earl of Carlisle, Lord Lieutenant-  
General and General Governor of Ireland.*

“ MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,

“ We respectfully appear before you, as a Deputation from the Grand Juries of Antrim, Down, and the County of the Town of Carrickfergus, appointed at the recent Spring



Assizes, earnestly to solicit your Excellency's attention to certain circumstances which have materially affected, and may continue to affect, the harmonious working and efficiency of our District Lunatic Asylum.

"The several Documents which we have had the honour of transmitting in a printed form, for the sake of more convenient perusal, present the main features of the case which we have been commissioned to bring under your Excellency's consideration ; and the Governors of the Asylum have deputed a member of their Board, the Rev. Dr. Cooke, to accompany us, for the purpose of aiding us in supplying such additional statements and explanations as may be required for the clear understanding of the entire question, not only in its past and present relations, but likewise in its probable future bearings.

"We assure your Excellency, that nothing but an imperative sense of duty, arising from our local knowledge, our acquaintance with the state of enlightened public opinion, and our deep conviction of the injurious tendencies of the late Chaplaincy appointments, could have induced us so strenuously to oppose the wishes of your Excellency's amiable Predecessor, the Earl of St. Germans, or to dispute, in the Court of Queen's Bench, the legal validity of the appointments which he deemed it his duty to make ; and the same sentiments, alone, strengthened by further experience, impel us now to trespass upon your patience, in the firm persuasion that your Excellency is possessed of sufficient magnanimity to review and rectify either your own acts or those of another, should you see good cause to question their wisdom, or admit their practical injuriousness.

"We, therefore, earnestly entreat your Excellency to annul the Chaplaincy appointments to the Belfast District Asylum, recently made by the Earl of St. Germans, so as to restore our Institution to the remarkably harmonious and efficient state in which it previously existed, and to place it on the same footing as the District Asylum of Armagh, in which, amidst a population similar to our own, the experi-



ment of regular religious instruction was at one time made, but subsequently abandoned as injurious.

“At the same time, although we have legal advice, and firmly believe, that those appointments were inadvertently made contrary to Law, we have no desire to press injuriously upon the three Reverend Gentlemen who have for some time acted as Chaplains, under your Predecessor’s authority; and, consequently, in the event of their future services being dispensed with, the Grand Juries, we are convinced, will cheerfully present, and the Governors of the Asylum will as cheerfully pay, the several sums allotted by the late Lord Lieutenant, for their past services.

“We are anxious, your Excellency should understand that we have no desire to interfere with the appointment of Chaplains in other Asylums, where the Governors of such Institutions, and the Grand Juries of their several Counties, may deem such appointments expedient; but we do respectfully urge that, as in the County Jails of Ireland, and as in the Lunatic Asylums of England, the appointment of Chaplains, if made, should, in all cases, be made, and their salaries fixed, by the Boards of Governors, who would be the best qualified to judge of the characters and competency of candidates for the office; instead of allowing Officers, whose duties are necessarily so delicate and difficult, to owe their situations, possibly, to political or other influences, without due reference to their personal qualifications. This arrangement, besides, would remove the offensive anomaly of compelling Counties to pay unlimited salaries to officers in whose appointment they have no concern, and over whose conduct they have no control; whilst it would place in the hands of Boards of Governors the salutary power of enforcing proper attention to duty, on the part of Chaplains, or removing the negligent or incompetent.

“We further desire respectfully to request your Excellency’s attention to a Bill now before Parliament, entitled ‘Lunatic Asylums (Ireland, Advances) Bill,’ that contains a provision, in the 5th clause, which, if enacted and put in



operation, would place, not merely the erection and establishment, but also the entire internal regulations of all Asylums for the Lunatic Poor, in the hands of the Commissioners of the Board of Works, irrespective of the Governors of such Institutions; whilst even the Lord Lieutenant himself would be restricted, by a proviso in the Clause, to select the Commissioners solely from Members of that Board.

“Finally, we respectfully submit, that the unanimous and four-times repeated wishes of three Grand Juries, as well as of the entire Lay Governors, and a moiety of the Clerical Governors of our Asylum, are entitled to your Excellency’s favourable consideration—the expression of such wishes, emanating from men whose local knowledge is abundant, whose interest in the well-being of the Lunatic Poor is deep and disinterested, and whose religious and social character, we trust, cannot be disputed.

“Signed, on behalf of the Deputation,

“WM. SHARMAN CRAWFORD, Chairman.

“Belfast, April 10, 1855.”

