

maintained in his present position. Were it not for the interests of the poor lunatics entrusted to his care, we could wish that for the tranquillity of himself and the establishment, the vacancy effected by Dr. Foote's resignation might be filled by some person of gentle manners, tranquil temperament, and a just appreciation of the *dolce far niente*; one who would confine his attention to the treatment of diseases, without busying himself about the causes of their production; who would readily leave the seclusion of the female patients in the hands of the matron, and who would be able to contemplate with placidity the irruption of strangers and objectionable persons into his female infirmary, and the consequences thereof, namely, one patient fainting, another much excited, and another in hysterics.

We could inform Mr. Owen how such things have been managed with complete satisfaction to all parties, only excepting those whose strongest interests are for the welfare of the patients.

But the blame of whatever has taken place that is wrong at the Norfolk Asylum cannot justly be laid upon Mr. Owen's shoulders. Both he and Dr. Foote have been placed in a false position; and the Justices who made that position are alone responsible for its consequences. Indeed, the Justices are responsible for all which is known to take place in this asylum. They have almost unlimited power in the institution; and responsibility and duty are the necessary equivalents of power. The Visiting Justices had a sacred duty entrusted to them by the magistracy of the county, being no less than to protect and to provide for the well-being of the most unfortunate and the most helpless of their fellow-creatures. How they have discharged that duty may be gathered from the few details above given. The most charitable construction we can arrive at is that they have erred through ignorance; and that they have really not been aware of the nature of the "care and maintenance" which pauper lunatics require, which they have a right to receive, and which is provided for them in almost every other part of the kingdom. We believe, however, that they have been led into grave errors by a desire to appear economical in their management: a desire which, if not worthy of praise, may be deemed scarcely deserving of censure. True economy in public affairs is an absolute virtue; but the Visitors of the Norfolk Asylum took the wrong course to obtain it, and succeeded in presenting to their constituents the semblance only of a prosperous finance. They placed on the county rates charges which, by law and custom elsewhere, are borne by the maintenance fund; and in this manner they made it appear that the patients in their asylum were maintained at a very low cost; while, in truth, the actual cost of their maintenance was equal to that in some of the most liberally conducted asylums in the kingdom.

How could the Visiting Justices expect to obtain true economy, while their household was in disorder throughout? Economy, "house law," primarily meant the good management of a household, and its secondary meaning, of financial saving, was taken to express the result of such management. Wherever there is disorder in management, however sordid and penurious that management may be, there will be

waste; and where there is waste, there can be no true economy.

Are the magistracy of the great county of Norfolk satisfied with the manner in which the duties delegated to their Visiting Justices have been discharged? The disinclination of influential justices to join the existing Board is a clear indication that they are not satisfied.

In other counties the most influential and the most distinguished men in the magistracy feel it a pleasure and an honor to participate in the government of asylums, managed on the modern principles: men do this, who would have shrunk from all contact with the regime of the old mad-house, with its damp straw bedding, its filthy clothing, its scanty dietary, and its stinking wards. Among the large body of noblemen and gentlemen who form the magistracy, some may be found to whose dispositions the perpetuation of abuses is not uncongenial; others who are competent to effect reforms: but a much larger class is composed of those who are not partial to either of these employments, but who delight to lend their influence and their services to all works which are creditable, orderly, and humane. If the present Board of Visitors of the Norfolk Asylum could, by any possibility, render that institution a credit to the county, they would not need to persuade influential magistrates to join in their good work. A seat at their Board would no longer be shunned; it would be an object of desire, almost of ambition.

But we do not believe that a Board, which could tolerate the state of affairs above described, will ever obtain this amount of success; and, in our opinion, the only hope for the inmates of the Norfolk Asylum is an entirely new Board of Visiting Justices. We sincerely trust that this change may not be far distant. It is a matter in which the honor and interest of the magistracy, not only of Norfolk, but of the whole kingdom, are interested. As a rule, the governing Boards of county asylums are distinguished by the most enlightened and disinterested humanity; but glaring exceptions ever strike the attention of the public with force.

If the magistracy of Norfolk desire to maintain the high character of their order, as the protectors of the insane poor, let them not delay to appoint a new Board of Visiting Justices.

Appointment of Medical Superintendent to the Bedfordshire County Asylum.

We are delighted to learn that, since the issue of our last number, the Visiting Justices of the Bedfordshire County Asylum have reconsidered the conditions of this appointment. They advertised for candidates, offering the paltry salary of £100 per annum. They have elected a gentleman at a salary of £800 per annum, with board, etc., for himself and his family. They have, moreover, elected the medical officer of an institution containing one thousand patients, and wherein "no hand or foot has been bound, by night or by day," for the last fifteen years. The election of Mr. Denne is honorable to the Visiting Justices, as a proof of the readiness with which they can retrace their steps when they discover they are not in the right path.