

question. Prior to the adoption of steam as an agent of land and sea transport, a somewhat overbearing Englishman practised his calling as a barrister, both in the London and Dublin Courts. When any legal alteration, however minute, was sanctioned in London, he travelled, post haste, to the sister country, and appeared in the Dublin Courts with the, as yet unbound legal alterations in his hand. But he quoted the latest Westminster decisions in vain, inasmuch as an Irish Judge cut him short by saying—"I cannot be bound by laws which themselves remain unbound." Nor can our Judges here, be forced to acknowledge opinions which have never been officially made public. It is imperative that our Government should provide an authorized Legal Reporter for the Supreme Court, and the only wonder is, that such an appointment has not been made long since. In this most important respect we are altogether behind the age we live in. While on the subject of law, and legal proceedings, we cannot avoid noticing a paragraph which appeared within the last fortnight in one of the evening papers, in relation to a poor woman, arraigned upon a very serious charge. We forget the actual words used, but their meaning was this—"The prisoner, being in indigent circumstances, was undefended." Can this be true,—can it be, that the Provincial Government makes no provision for the legal defence of those unable to purchase legal defenders? We sincerely hope that such a monstrous supposition may be utterly unfounded. Before concluding this article, we feel it our bounden duty to advert to some opinions which have been incautiously dropped in public with regard to a recent trial for manslaughter. We cannot,—we will not believe, that such opinions can be universally popular,—but we cannot shut our eyes to the fact, that, a not inconsiderable proportion of the community of Halifax, regard a certain recent trial with misgiving. We do not so regard it; we believe that the ends of justice only were consulted. To even hint at a doubt in such a matter, would be not merely unwise, but criminal on our part. We are of opinion that the accused left the dock a free man, untainted, and comparatively unpolluted,—but we cannot on this account turn a deaf ear to the voice of the Haligonian public, as expressed in the streets, in private houses, and in amicable debate. And it is here we would pause, and ask the public to consider what impression a stranger might carry away from such unqualified assertions. It is no light thing to say—"Such and such a jury was with or against such and such a prisoner"—or to say—"Such and such a Judge may have been influenced in such and such a case by political associations." We cannot for a moment credit any such assertions, nor can we recognise the wisdom which prompts Haligonians to volunteer them—possibly before strangers. "To be once in doubt, is once to be resolved,"—and if we cannot put trust in trial by jury, we cannot put trust in anything.

THE PAUPER ASYLUM.

At a monthly meeting of the Board of Poor House Commissioners, on the 7th of November, it was deemed expedient that certain extracts from the Minutes of the Board's proceedings should be made public in the columns of the *Colonist*. A proceeding more unwise on the part of the Commissioners it would be difficult to imagine. They have, it is true, a perfect right to draw up any Minutes they please, but we cannot recognize the wisdom which prompted them to make public their own shortcomings. While, "acknowledging as they do their responsibilities to the public for the well being and good management of the poor under their charge," they yet come before the public with apparently no object in view save that of apologising for the mismanage-

ment of the Pauper Asylum. Let the public form its own opinion of the following passages from the Minutes under consideration—"By an Act passed at the last session of the Legislature the Commissioners trust they will be enabled to provide hereafter a more suitable as well as more commodious Alms House." We sincerely trust they may, but the public will hardly accept this as a suitable apology for the fact, that up to the present time the Pauper Asylum has been and now is what we stated it to be, viz—"a disgrace to Nova Scotia,—a foul blot upon the fair fame of our metropolis." Again,—"The numerous and increasing applications for admission made by the aged and wholly destitute they cannot, however disregarded, though from the now limited accommodation it is not in their power to classify them as it would be proper to do." Well, whose fault is this? Why has not this fact been represented long since? We must suppose that the Board of Commissioners is, and has been composed of gentlemen gifted with ordinary powers of calculation—of men who make it, and have made it, their special business to note the ratio of increase of paupers from year to year,—of men who know, and have known, the force of the expression, "forewarned is forearmed." The wretched state of the Pauper Asylum is nothing new. What the Commissioners now so hopefully look for at the hands of the Legislature, should have been accomplished long ago, and would, we feel assured have been accomplished long since, had Commissioners shewn less apathy in the matter. The Commissioners lay much stress upon the limited accommodation at their command, but we are not quite clear as to whether they have done all that might have been done with the Asylum as it is at present. Are we to understand that it is altogether impossible to separate those whose only crime is poverty, or illness, from those who have been brought to the Asylum through oft repeated misconduct. Is it impossible to separate the crippled victim of an accident, from the hourly companionship of hardened and reprobate jail-birds? Must a youthful female orphan, necessarily be thrown amongst the most profligate and abandoned of her sex? But the accommodation is limited, and it is we suppose on this account that there is (or was very recently) in the Asylum an able bodied youth who has been born there, *his parents having married while in the Asylum!* It is because the accommodation is so limited, that the Asylum becomes a nursery for the rearing of juvenile paupers. In fact, every thing is the fault of the building, and nothing is the fault of the Commissioners!

And now we come to the fact upon which, in a former issue we laid most stress—viz. the manner in which surgical operations are, and have been performed. Here, again, we find the Board pleading guilty to our charge—"It will be seen that it is not possible that a separate apartment can be provided for necessary surgical operations, even if the Medical Officer were to deem it necessary, so to remove the patient from the sick room." So there it would seem a doubt upon this subject in the mind of the Medical Officer who undertakes to treat the paupers! We have had the opinions of other medical men on the subject, and they coincide with our own, and we venture to hope, with those of the public in general. If we are informed aright, it is not very long since a female pauper went into hysterics upon witnessing the amputation of a hand. This too was, of course, the fault of the building, inasmuch as it never occurred to any one connected with the establishment, to temporarily clear any one ward for the reception of the person to be operated upon. But we are dealing with Paupers, who have perhaps none of the feelings of ordinary men and women, and an hysterical Pauper may be something out of the common.

We are glad to learn that the insane, "have all the com-