

CERTIFICATES OF INSANITY.

(READ BEFORE THE KINGSTON MEDICAL ASSOCIATION.)

CANADA is one of those happy little countries, apparently much nearer the City of Utopia than either the Land of Freedom on our South, or the Mother Country far across the sea, for the general public has faith in its institutions, and if we take as an example the confidence the people have in the Governmental control of its Hospitals for the Insane, we have advanced a strong argument in favor of the assertion. This is a fortunate thing both for the general practitioner and the heads of institutions, for they are loaded with responsibilities not always appreciated, if a careful examination of the facts at hand is made. Now it would be in very bad taste for me to find fault with the busy general practitioner, even if he has at times made trifling mistakes which might have caused him serious trouble in some countries, and I hasten to assure you that my faith in his conclusions is unbounded, even if his method of expressing himself has been at fault in many instances. As a matter of fact in an experience of nearly twenty-three years in Hospitals for the Insane, how often have I seen the verdict "not insane" rendered by the Hospitals authorities? In one or two instances only, in cases where patients were certified to by physicians, and even in these cases I will confess that the physicians were probably right for they had opportunities of judging patients not under control, and in certain varieties of insanity you understand how necessary this is in order to form an opinion of any value. Now if I can say that in an experience of twenty three years, I have never known a general practitioner grant a certificate of insanity dishonestly and with intention to deprive a sane subject of his liberty, and the late Dr. Joseph Workman could say the same thing in regard to a period of twenty-two years before my time, we have a record of forty-five years covering, say nine or ten thousand cases of insanity, in which there has been no appeal against the verdict of the general practitioner, and in which if there had been an appeal, the honesty of such practitioners would have been made plain, although their methods might have been criticized. Now there have been cases where the patients committed to the Hospitals for the Insane have been discharged as not insane, but these have been sent there by all wise grand juries, in whom on state occasions is vested the authority to pronounce on a man's mental condition. Possibly I may speak some-