

would be no difficulty in doing this, were a patient maniacal and indulging in all kinds of "fantastic tricks," but any one who has passed through the wards of an asylum knows, that a very large proportion of the patients are not of this class. Visitors and grand juries often mistake patients for attendants, and *vice versa*. A few weeks ago an intelligent banker of Toronto wrote me a letter beginning with these words, "The *housekeeper* mentioned to me yesterday." He had been a visitor to the ward every few days for weeks to see a sick friend; yet he mistook one of the most cunning patients in the ward for the housekeeper, and had been consulting him about matters connected with the patients. He was somewhat astonished when told that the *housekeeper* was at times one of the most intractable patients in the ward. A short time ago one of our city lawyers, who prides himself on his power to read almost intuitively the hieroglyphics of character, and who, in his own estimation, could tell an insane person at sight, mistook one of my clinical assistants for a lunatic, and commiserated him on his unfortunate condition. He afterwards came to me for information about "the poor fellow," as he had taken a deep interest in his forlorn and apparently hopeless condition. His pride had a fall when the truth came out. A prominent government official, not long since, mistook one of my most intelligent looking attendants for a patient. I am prepared at any time to select say twenty-four intelligent attendants or citizens, and twenty-four patients out of Toronto Asylum, and present them to any court of law before our most eminent judges, lawyers and jurymen. They will be allowed to make the same superficial examination which is often accorded to medical men in similar circumstances. The selection of patients shall be made from paretics in the early stage of the disease, from those afflicted with remittent insanity, from the melancholy and taciturn, and from monomaniacs. The judgment given of the mental condition found in each case, by such an intelligent and acute board of examiners, would show in a comical light what a travesty of justice it is, to ask even an expert to give an opinion of mental unsoundness, or sanity, after a cursory examination of a prisoner. About a year and a half ago, I was called to attend the assizes in a neighboring county, and asked to decide in a few hours the *mental status* of a prisoner, who had attempted to take the

life of his neighbor by shooting him. The houses of the two parties were near together, being situated on opposite sides of a country road. The prisoner cut a hole in the gable end of his house, and being a bachelor living alone, there was no one saw him cut the hole or shoot. He shot twice at his neighbor, the last shot taking effect in his lung, but not fatally. Every one of the prisoner's acquaintances, lay and medical, thought him eccentric, but perfectly sane. The first two interviews I had with him, I was led to suppose the same. He could talk intelligently on every topic of conversation that was introduced, but would give no reason at first for the attempted homicide. At the last interview I had with him, we began to discuss religious matters. Suddenly he asserted with great solemnity, and with a request to keep it a secret, that he was more than human. I suggested that possibly he might be God in human form. He asserted that I had found out the truth. He was omnipotent, and consequently could do what he wished. He had often lived sixty days at a time without food, to show that Christ's fasting of forty days was not a miracle. When he got out of gaol he intended to fast a year. He had been shot at with bullets by his enemies as he went along the road, or worked in the fields, but having an immortal body they could not harm him. We were sitting on a bed, and I suggested that he might be smothered to death, but he said that he could live without breath. If his head were cut off it would not affect him. He could make himself invisible whenever he pleased. Every one's life was in his hands, and the wife of the man he shot, was his by his divine right to her. Here it will be seen, that a morbid idea led to the attempt at homicide. Had I not happened to touch the key that opened the door to this chamber of fantasies, these aberrations would not have been developed. I was subpoenaed by the Crown, but the Queen's counsel knowing that my opinion would be, that this man showed evidence of insanity, I was not put in the witness box. The defence had not sufficient acumen to see, that this refusal to examine me by the prosecution, was presumptive evidence of my opinion being inimical to the case of the Crown counsel. The prisoner was treated as a sane man and a criminal. He is now in the Penitentiary Asylum. This case is cited to show the danger of hasty conclusions in cases of insanity, and the difficulties medical men