

THE CANADA LANCET.

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF

MEDICAL AND SURGICAL SCIENCE,
CRITICISM AND NEWS.

VOL. XXII.] TORONTO, OCT., 1889. [No. 2.

Original Communications.

A WONDERFUL POST-MORTEM.

TRANSLATED BY DR. J. WORKMAN.

Five years ago Professor Tebaldi, of the University of Padua, published a charming and very instructive little book, with the title *Ragione e Pazzia*.—(Reason and Madness.) He was well qualified for the task, as he had well and long studied both his subjects. It is never possible to translate from one language into another any work of genuine merit, without more or less detraction from the force or beauty of the original, and none understand this better than those who undertake to turn into our bald but powerful English idiom, any production appearing in the primitive garb of the sweet and graceful language of Italy. It is a pity that so interesting a book as this of Professor Tebaldi should be passed over unheeded by English and American publishers, for it would, or at least it certainly should, command an extensive sale.

We purpose at the present time to abstract from its pages a portion of the concluding chapter, but with the admonition to the reader, that he is not take to this as a specimen of the preceding contents. It is manifestly but a parting *jeu d'esprit* of a good-natured author, but it may be read by that class of young men for whom, no doubt, it was mainly intended, with some profit.

We must now allow Professor Tebaldi to speak for himself, in introducing the wonderful personage who was the protagonist of a most thrilling drama.

"Before parting with my reader," writes the kind-hearted Professor of Psychiatry, I would like to answer a question which is frequently heard by alienists:—Do we find in the organic changes of our subjects any which may account for the

numerous and varied forms of mental disorders? Is there a material structural alteration of the brain, which should explain the strange manifestations of insanity?

The answer might be rather difficult, but I shall try to give it by relating a singular occurrence which happened in a University of this world or if better should please if the reader in the world of dreams, into which I am pleased sometimes to wander.

An old professor, whose hairs had become silvered in the study of insanity, and who was accustomed to long vigils whilst poring over questions of science, was one night overtaken by drowsiness; he placed his head against the back of his chair, and closed his eyes, to get a little repose. When he awoke he found on his table a letter; it showed no post-stamp; it was strangely addressed, a little in one direction and a little in another, partly in small characters, and partly in large, with some hieroglyphics interposed; it was just one of those to which alienistic physicians are accustomed, and thus it read:

My dear and good Doctor,—A sentiment of profound gratitude, to which I am not a stranger, my respect for the untiring kindness which you lavish on your patients, and the desire to explain an occurrence which has caused so much noise, have induced me to address to you this letter.

I know that the sedate and tranquil minds of the Professors of this celebrated University, as well as of a few of the public authorities, have been much disturbed by the fact of the disappearance of the body of a woman from the School of Anatomy; here I am to explain the secret, and by so doing I hope to quiet the minds of all those gentlemen.

You know who I am, and you will well remember that, whilst I was your clinical guest, you made a world of enquiries in order to know me thoroughly. My genealogy was traced back to its most remote source, and it was discovered that I descended from a merry and thoughtless god; my features were studied as earnestly as those of a lover; my body was subjected to a thousand examinations and experiments, poked, punched and peered into in every part; convulsed by electricity when I was quiet; restrained in a camisole with long, closed sleeves, when I became too lively; my inward parts were no less annoyed, for I swal-