

THE ASYLUMS FOR INSANE.

The following communication from Dr. A. MacKinnon, one of the most prominent practitioners of this Province, and a Past President of the Ontario Medical Association, appeared in the *Toronto Globe*:

I beg to be allowed to notice some comments which appeared in your issue of the 18th inst., under the heading, "Imposing on the Province." The Hon. J. R. Stratton is quoted as affirming "that within the past few months five persons were committed to the asylum as insane who were not insane, though the usual certificates were signed by medical men in each case." This remarkable statement is followed by something still more astonishing, "that there is good reason to believe that these persons were sent only to relieve their friends or the House of Refuge, etc." If these statements are true it means that there are ten registered medical men in the Province who sign false certificates—knowing that these persons were not insane, yet certifying their insanity. Whose liberty is safe if medical men sign false certificates of insanity? If the Provincial Secretary believe this true, it is clearly his duty to lay information before the Discipline Committee of the Ontario Medical Council. I am sure an immediate investigation will be made, and if the charges are proved the names of the medical men guilty of such grossly infamous and disgraceful conduct will be erased from the roll of registered practitioners. It is not necessary to appeal to the Attorney-General or to amend the law in any respect. Their names being struck off, they can no longer practice, and cannot, therefore, repeat the offence. Besides, the example will surely prevent any medical man, if so disposed, from transgressing in a similar way.

But, sir, it concerns the public to know what tribunal has decided that these five persons were not insane. It is said, furthermore, in the article referred to, that the Provincial Secretary sent these five persons back to the counties from which they came; one had rheumatism, another was blind. Does the occurrence of rheumatism or blindness make it impossible for insanity also to exist? It will be very interesting to learn the future history of these five persons. It is well known that there are hundreds on the borderland between sanity and insanity. One day or one week they may impress one as being properly responsible. At other times they are far otherwise, and may commit atrocious acts. Then, let me ask who it was that decided that these five persons whose insanity was certified by ten medical men were not insane? Was it the Minister himself, the Medical Superintendent of the asylum or some junior officer in an asylum? For what period were the patients