

cian, making oath to a patient's insanity, to give the reasons for his belief. In this State then, as in other States now, he had only to testify to the fact, not to the reasons. A man was sent to the asylum on Blackwell's Island with two certificates, in due form, setting forth his insanity, and signed by two reputable physicians. The Resident Physician, Dr. Parsons, soon found that he was not insane, and so discharged him. Thereupon he commenced suit against the two physicians, and it was shown upon the trial that his wife and daughter had invented the story of his insanity, because he objected to the marriage of the latter. One physician had been foolish enough to take the assurance of the other, and the other had been foolish enough to take the assurance of the wife and daughter; one had only seen the man once, and from a distance. Both were compelled to pay the damages. So you see that it is not always safe to trust too implicitly to the relatives of a person alleged to be insane, and you will find in this and similar instances, a warning to rely upon your own judgment, not upon the judgment, or perhaps the self-interest of others.

When you have fully settled in your own mind that the patient is insane, the next step toward his commitment is the preparation of the necessary certificate. This is not always an easy matter; one may very often arrive at a conclusion upon a subject almost insensibly. The conclusion may be perfectly correct and unquestionable, but it will puzzle him to recall to himself the process of reasoning by which he has reached it, much more to make it plain to others. And yet this latter, is just what, in this instance he is required to do. I may tell you for your comfort, that of nearly six hundred patients, admitted to the institution under my charge, since the passage of the new law, but a very few have brought certificates that are perfectly correct and satisfactory. So far as I have heard, the same is true of other institutions in the State, and a recent English writer, speaking of his own land, says: "Scarcely a single certificate is ever sent in from a medical man, that has not to go back to him, for the correction of some error or insertion of something omitted." The points in which, as I have observed, certificates usually fail, are that they are alto-

gether insufficient or else too diffuse, that many things are stated which are irrelevant, that some things are stated as reasons, which are not necessarily reasons, and could only become so in the light of other facts which are not given; in short, that the writer of the certificate forgets, that it is not a mere memorandum for his own information, but a document for the examination of those who have never seen the patient.

You will remember that in the form of the certificate, which I read to you, the introductory words which precede the statement of the reasons, are these: "I further certify that I have formed this opinion upon the following grounds," and in the margin is the direction: "Here insert facts upon which opinion rests." In the space provided, I should first give the physical evidences which mark the departure from health. Remember, that insanity is a physical disease, and as such, must exhibit physical symptoms. You may then state what departure there has been from the patient's usual condition, in his habits, or his behavior, or conversation, in short in his general manner of conducting himself, and take care that you state, that it is a departure. Many certificates err in this respect. A physician finds a man beating his wife, or a woman using filthy and obscene language, and he simply states these facts. Now these are no proofs of insanity, *per se*, because many men of the lower class beat their wives, and many women of a depraved class use improper language, without being insane. They were proofs to him, because he knew from previous acquaintance with the patients, or saw by the character of their relatives and their surroundings, that this was not in accordance with their former custom. This constituted them proofs to him, and this he must state in order to render them proofs to others. He should also state where he obtains these proofs; does he know them himself, or have they been furnished him by others? So also with delusions, show plainly, in the certificate, that they are delusions. If a man says that he has no head, or that he has an elephant in his stomach, these are self-evident delusions, and it is enough to state them, but the larger number of delusions might possibly be true. They only