

for a moment mean to insinuate that all relatives will come to him with their minds fully made up either to evade these queries, or tell absolute falsehoods; but I do say, that he will find it no easy matter to get a full and truthful family history of many of the cases brought to him. People are very loath to admit the existence of any hereditary taint. Why brain-disease should be regarded as more disgraceful than disease of the lungs or any other organ of the body, or why the fact of insanity being in a family should be looked upon by the public as tantamount to an acknowledgment of criminality, I for the life of me cannot see. Such, however, is the case, and, until the masses are educated out of such erroneous beliefs, friends will continue to lie about their antecedents most unblushingly. Often I have known cases where the relatives have positively asserted that there was no trace whatever of insanity in their family history, and often I have afterwards discovered that it had been well marked for generations.

In the matter of heredity, the wise physician will inquire from other sources than the relatives, and not only note insanity in the ancestry, but also eccentricity, epilepsy, hysteria, and alcoholism, because these diseases are predisposing causes second only to actual mental disorder.

A doctor has also to delve deeply to get at the true cause of insanity, and is apt, to save himself trouble, to say, "Unknown." It is a very frequent thing for asylum officials to be asked the cause of insanity, and relatives can scarcely be made to grasp the fact that it is upon themselves and the family physician that the hospital authorities must in great measure rely to discover it. The statements of friends are usually vague and often shed but little light on the true cause of the disorder. Sometimes a wholly irrelevant circumstance, which happens to precede the break-down, is assigned as the exciting cause; and quite commonly certain symptoms, which the patient displays in the period of emotional disturbance that goes before the complete loss of self-control, are wrongly taken as the exciting cause instead of what they really are, mere incidents of it. This is notably true as regards religious excitement. Care should also be taken not to snatch at effect for cause, as is too commonly done. Masturbation and intemperance are more frequently the consequence of a diseased brain than physicians state.

There are a number of other points upon which I might touch respecting the examination of lunatics and their commitment to asylums, but I fear I have already trespassed too long upon your patience. What I have said may seem trivial to some of you, who would perhaps have preferred that I should have taken up some of the abstruse pro-