

In my search for a topic upon which to discourse, I fully verified the words of Terence "Nullum est jam dictum quod non dictum sit prius." Everywhere I found the fields of medico-psychology so well harvested by my forebears that there was apparently nothing left for even a gleaner. Nevertheless a subject had to be selected, and I finally concluded that, as the oldest medical officer connected with the insane asylums of Canada, in point of length of service, I could not do better than tell you something about the development of our Canadian asylum system, the status of the insane in our Dominion, and what, in my estimation, are some of our most crying needs for the betterment of those so justly styled "the most unfortunate of all God's afflicted ones."

#### EVOLUTION OF THE CANADIAN ASYLUM SYSTEM.

Of the number or condition of the insane in Canada under the French regime, that is prior to its accession to England in 1763, I have been able to learn little or nothing. Doubtless their treatment differed in nowise from the cruelty shown them in all other countries at the same period. That they were not totally neglected is manifested, however, by the fact that, in 1639, the Duchess d'Aiguillon, niece of Cardinal Richelieu, founded the Hotel Dieu of Quebec for the care of indigent patients, the crippled, and idiots. As here employed, the term idiot probably refers to all forms of mental disorder, acquired as well as congenital, and the creation of this establishment is especially noteworthy inasmuch as it was not only the first move toward the proper care of the insane, but was the first hospital instituted in North America. Four years later, namely in 1643, Mademoiselle Manec founded the Hotel Dieu of Montreal to meet the same requirements.

For well nigh three-quarters of a century after the establishment of British rule, the condition of the insane in the various Crown Colonies, which now make up the Dominion of Canada, was deplorable in the extreme. Each county seems to have cared for its insane as best it could by confining them in almshouses and jails. The poor lunatic did not appeal to the sympathies of the public,—a workhouse was good enough for him if harmless, a prison his proper place if dangerous. The thought that he might be cured, and that no effort should be spared to cure him, occurred to few if any. Bereft of man's noblest attribute, the mind, lunatics were regarded as little better than brutes, and were too often treated accordingly. While falling short of the Napoleonic Code, published in 1804, which openly classed the insane with beasts, and ordered the punishment of those who allowed "the insane and mad animals to run about free," the law in Canada deemed them at least on a par with