

in Scotland, Massachusetts, and a few other places for a number of years, and is now permitted, in the case of private patients, in the Province of Quebec. It, of course, necessitates that the patient must be in such a state of mind as to admit of his understanding the nature of his act.

The friends of an insane person having accepted a physician's advice to adopt hospital treatment for him, the proper blank forms should be procured at once from the proper authorities, usually the superintendent of the asylum to which it is proposed to send the patient. In applying for these forms, whether by letter or telegram, such particulars should be sent as the patient's name, sex and age, the duration of the attack, and whether he is dangerous to himself or others. The reason for this is that there might be room in a hospital for a man but not for a woman, or *vice versa*; again, hospitals, especially when crowded, always give the preference to young, acute cases and those dangerous to life and property. In the Province of Quebec it must, in addition, be stated whether the forms required are for a public or a private patient, because the papers differ materially in the two cases.

The various blanks are, as a rule, self-explanatory, and require but reasonable care to fill them up correctly. Nevertheless, innumerable mistakes are made. A physician is chiefly concerned with the medical certificates and the history of the case, but he will find it to his interest, as well as that of his patient, to be familiar with all the forms, so that he may be able to give advice as to the filling of them. Ignorance of the law is no excuse for a breach of it, and a mistake made through ignorance will not render a paper valid. The physician must recollect that in filling up the several forms it is not a matter in which he or the friends may please themselves as to what they say or leave unsaid. The law lays down the exact form that must be followed, often even defines the exact wording that must be used, and any deviation from this renders the paper illegal, and, therefore, valueless. For example, if the law states that the word *lunatic* must be used in filling up a space left blank for the purpose, a man is not justified in inserting therein, "is of unsound mind." A warning that I always give to my students when lecturing at McGill may not be out of place here. It is this. Never put your pen to a paper until you have first carefully read over every word of it. Many of the mistakes made, I am convinced, arise through people trying to fill up forms as they read them, that is, without having previously read them over to get a correct idea of their contents and of what is required of them in the filling.