

CANADA

Medical and Surgical Journal.

MONTREAL, JUNE, 1888.

GALLSTONES vs. SOAP.

The London *Lancet* has certainly the reputation of being steady and reliable, if ever journal was, and it is for this reason that we feel so particularly surprised, even grieved, that it should have fallen into believing such an old, old story as that of the "olive oil and the gallstones." In the summary of the advances in therapeutics made in the year 1887 we find, "The treatment of gallstones by the use of a decoction of a well-known fern, asplenium ceredach or doradilla, and also by very large doses of olive oil, is amongst the therapeutical singularities of the year; and there are grounds for believing that each of these remedies may be found of value." We were under the impression that this "oil and gallstone" affair had now become a matter of ancient history.

In the *Canada Lancet*, about five years ago, the whole matter was fully discussed, and as we thought at the time, settled. The suffering patient, the oil, the down-pour of gallstones, the delight of the doctor, the rush to print, the discovery that swans were geese and gallstones soap are all described in that veracious chronicle of the period.

The question seems to be finally settled by D. W. Prentiss, in the *Philadelphia Medical News*, in an article entitled "Gallstones or Soap?" He describes cases in which relief to symptoms really did follow the administration of oil. The masses passed were subjected to careful chemical analysis at the hands of Professor Wiley, chemist of the Agricultural Department, who furnished, it is believed, the only analysis of these concretions yet published. "On reaching me the whole had melted