

THE "MEDICINE-MAN";

OR INDIAN AND ESKIMO NOTIONS OF MEDICINE.

*A paper read before the Bathurst and Rideau Medical Association, Ottawa,
20th January, 1886.*

By ROBERT BELL, B.A.Sc, M.D, LL.D,
Assistant Director of the Geological Survey of Canada.

Last year, having had the honor of reading before you a paper on "Diseases among the Indians," I would now beg to follow it with a short account of the notions of these people on the subject of medicine.

The science of medicine has now arrived at such perfection among civilized nations that we have almost forgotten the crude beginnings out of which our present knowledge has been gradually evolved. But from our pinnacle of learning, it is curious and interesting to observe the darkness amidst which some of our fellow-men are groping even yet. The false and mistaken notions as to the principles and practice of medicine which prevailed among our forefathers are recalled by some of those in vogue among the red-men; and while, in the light of our own superior knowledge, we may be disposed to laugh at their primitive ideas, we are reminded that many—perhaps the majority—of the doctrines once taught among our own people were absurd enough.

It is very difficult for a white man to learn precisely what the aborigines' views on medical subjects really are. Indians are by nature very reticent, and they appear to be afraid of ridicule;