

THE

MONTREAL MEDICAL JOURNAL.

VOL. XXXVII.

FEBRUARY, 1908.

No. 2.

BIBLICAL MEDICINE AND HYGIENE.

BY

H. B. MURPHY, B.A., M.D.,
Lansdowne, Ontario.

“Honour a physician according to thy need of him with the honour due unto him: for verily the Lord hath created him. For from me Most High cometh healing: and from the King shall he receive a gift. The skill of a physician shall lift up his head: and in the sight of great men he shall be admired. The Lord created medicines out of the earth: and a prudent man will have no disgust at them.” So wrote Jesus the son of Sirach, in Ecclesiasticus. But amongst theologians many texts, such as “They who minister about holy things should live of the gospel” are more popular. In fact, these verses have received scant notice. One writer—a humorist, no doubt—correlates them, as is the theological custom, with certain New Testament verses, and concludes that these are the physicians of whom the woman with the issue of blood had suffered many things, and on whom she had spent all her living. Yet the proverbs of the ancient Hebrews refer to the physician in equally favourable terms: “A wise man will not live in a town where there is no physician”; “They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.”

It has repeatedly been observed that the Hebrew race, in spite of centuries of wandering, is remarkably healthy. To-day they enjoy a relative immunity from tuberculosis (Osler), and when they do not lapse from the Levitical code, frequently escape zymotic disease during an epidemic. This cannot all be attributed to the original virility of the clan because no Jewish blood is pure to-day. An explanation can be found, however, when we consider that which Israel Zangwill has termed the “pot and pan part of their religion” was, in reality, a religion of cleanliness and implied the ability on the part of the priests