

"I saw what you had to say about doctors' prospects out there in the *ONTARIO MEDICAL JOURNAL*. But what would you think of the prospects of one well up, practically and theoretically, and who has proved himself capable of taking hold of almost any case in general practice and do it justice according to the wisdom of the age?"

Come right along and settle in Victoria.

IS SMALLPOX A CONTAGIOUS DISEASE?

We think that the answer to this question will be almost unanimously affirmative throughout the medical profession, and the wonder will be why such a query should be made at this advanced day when the fact of the highly contagious nature of this disease has been so long settled. For curiosity we have looked into the literature on the subject of variola, and the first book consulted was Dunglison's *Medical Dictionary*. He starts out by saying, "It is a disease now of somewhat less interest than before the discovery of vaccination. It is of a very contagious nature, and is supposed to have been introduced into Europe from Asia, at an early period of the middle ages." Quain, in his *Dictionary of Medicine*, defines it to be "an acute, specific, infectious disease, characterized by sudden and severe fever, which after forty-eight hours is followed by an eruption of pimples on the forehead, face and wrists, gradually passing over the body." Watson is stronger still in his statements. He says: "There is no contagion so strong and sure as that of smallpox; none that operates at so great a distance. . . . It is readily communicable in every way by inoculation, by breathing a contaminated atmosphere, by the contact or vicinity of fomites." The late Dr. Austin Flint is generally recognized as an authority on all questions of a medical character. The following is the manner in which he expresses himself: "Smallpox is a highly contagious disease. It may be communicated by means of virus—that is, by inoculation—and by means of inappreciable emanations from the body. The disease is readily transported by means of fomites, which may retain the contagion in an effectual condition for months and even years. A very transient and slight exposure often suffices for the production of the disease. Thus it is not infrequently taken by passing in the

street, or meeting in public conveyances, persons who are affected or have been recently affected with it. It may be contracted in hackney coaches which have been used for carrying patients to hospitals. The disease is generally supposed to be communicable in all stages, but undoubtedly it is most highly so during the stages of suppuration and desiccation."

In his text-book on the principles and practice of medicine, published a few months ago by Dr. Wm. Osler, Professor of Practice of Medicine in Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, that eminent writer and original investigator thus speaks of smallpox: "It is an acute, infectious disease, characterized by an eruption which passes through the stages of papule, vesicle, pustule and crust. . . . Smallpox is one of the most virulent of contagious diseases, and persons exposed, if unprotected by vaccination, are almost invariably attacked. . . . The contagion develops in the system of the smallpox patients, and is reproduced in the pustules. It exists in the secretions and excretions, and in the exhalations from the lungs and skin. The dried scabs constitute by far the most important element, and as a dust-like powder are distributed everywhere in the room during convalescence, becoming attached to clothing and various articles of furniture. The disease is probably contagious from a very early stage, though I do not think it has yet been determined whether the contagion is active before the eruption develops. The poison is of unusual tenacity, and clings to infected localities. It is conveyed by persons who have been in contact with the sick, and by fomites."

This is the latest teaching on the subject that we have seen, and it is just as strong and emphatic as what has been said by the older writers. In fact it is stronger, for Dr. Osler insinuates that the disease may be even contagious before the eruption takes place on the skin. We therefore think that it may be fairly concluded that smallpox is a contagious disease.

We have been led to make the preceding remarks in consequence of the actions of the Medical Health Officer in the city of Vancouver, who holds views contrary to the eminent authorities quoted above, and not only does hold them in theory, but he actually puts them into practice