

THE CANADA LANCET.

A Monthly Journal of Medical and Surgical Science
Criticism and News.

Communications solicited on all Medical and Scientific subjects, and also Reports of Cases occurring in practice. Advertisements inserted on the most liberal terms. All Letters and Communications to be addressed to the "Editor Canada Lancet," Toronto.

AGENTS.—DAWSON BROS., Montreal; J. & A. McMILLAN, St. John, N.B.; GEO. STREET & CO., 30 Cornhill, London, Eng.; M. H. MAHER, 23 Rue Richer, Paris.

TORONTO, FEBRUARY, 1884.

The LANCET has the largest circulation of any Medical Journal in Canada.

THE SPREAD OF MEDICAL KNOWLEDGE.

We have been much surprised and gratified at the widespread interest that is taken by newspaper readers, comprising of course the majority of the population, in medical science, when that science is brought within the scope of their comprehension. Should any one be inclined to doubt the fact, let us take up a well known Toronto daily of the date at which we are writing—an entirely hap-hazard method of proving our assertion—and see what we find:—

Temperance in Sweden; tea-leaves for burns and scalds; dressing and undressing the sick; cure for styes; how to tell diphtheria; how to cure a cold; Canon Farrar on temperance; milk fever; tar for burns and scalds.

All these, exclusive, of course, of advertisements, are inserted in one issue of the usual eight pages, at a time when there is an actual plethora of news—Orange riots; war in the Soudan; France and China; election returns; controverted elections; trades congress; Exchange Bank; the University question; cable news; etc.

Here, again, is a paper of a totally different type, one devoted to trade; the first we happen to lay our hands on is *Cotton, Wool and Iron, and Boston Journal of Commerce*, of the date of October 6th last. In this we find the following.—

Lotions to prevent chilblains; salicylic soap; dichloroacetic acid for warts; treatment of snake bites; rational dress reform; tobacco smoke; hydro-quinidine and quinidine; hydro-bromic acid;

solidified bisulphide of carbon; the mush disease (a column and a quarter—about twelve hundred words); the remedies of nature (three columns and a half—about thirty-three hundred words).

Thus throughout the whole of the periodical literature of the present day, a very large part of what is technically known as *padding*—that is matter other than late news, which would suffer from delay in insertion—is composed of the thoroughly practical, sensible ventilation of the sources, prevention and cure of perhaps minor, but truly important maladies. It is not, of course, recondite and intricate problems of medicine and surgery that are discussed—one would not expect in our daily papers abstruse discussions on ligation of the carotid or the transfusion of blood—there would soon be an outcry against that; but it is generally to those slight divergences from health, which make up indeed the majority of ailments, that attention is paid. Such, for example, as the results of the variations of temperature, inefficient or unscientific wearing apparel, innutritious food, insufficient exercise, disregard of cleanliness, deprivation of fresh air, etc.

Attentive readers have also doubtless observed that the newspaper press has not unfrequently made insinuations and complaints against the medical profession for the exclusiveness with which, it is said, they devote their attention only to the higher branches of medicine and surgery. Nor is this a phantom only, for in several instances these complaints have found definite utterance.

Another and fruitful source of the inuendoes we have remarked upon was the practice in former years—falling happily into comparative desuetude in the present day—of clothing all medical utterances in the technical language of the schools. This did much to foster the habit of looking upon the profession as a somewhat pedantic and supercilious body of men.

The fact, then, to which we would point those who indulge in such complaint is, that all this vast mass of useful medical knowledge, imparted to them gratis in the pages of their daily paper, is in reality the production of that profession which they assert is remiss in its duty in this very direction. This is the point that is overlooked. Fifty per cent. of this useful scientific knowledge is anonymous; ninety per cent. of it is probably clipped from purely medical magazines (of which the