

Medical Criticism.

"FIRST ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PROVINCIAL BOARD OF HEALTH OF ONTARIO, BEING FOR THE YEAR 1882.

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No. III.

We observe that the doctors vote each other trips from time to time, at the expense of the public, with of course, an ostensibly professional object in view, one of these expeditions was appointed to investigate an outbreak of typhoid fever at Sarnia; we may assume that the training of the body has been so defective, and typhoid fever to be of so rare occurrence in Toronto, that it was necessary for these gentlemen to proceed to Sarnia for enlightenment on the subject; they necessarily deliver themselves of a "Report of the Commission," and after the reception of this report, it is interesting to learn that "*it was discussed in Committee of the Whole—the Whole* amounting to seven gentlemen, five of these are addressed by the remaining two, as "your honourable body," so that it is but too obvious that the infection of legislative diction has already extended to the apartment which must be somewhat inconveniently crowded when "the whole" seven are present.

In order that this august Board might have wherewithal to occupy itself, on the occasion of its inaugural meeting, the Provincial Secretary was utilized to request a Committee of the Board to take a trip to Sarnia; this Committee therefore went in quest of that novel commodity, styled "advisory information," and it returned presumably replete with material relating "to the sanitary condition of towns in the West, where, from the level nature of the land, *miasmatic and other fevers would be most likely to prevail*," the Committee appears to have undertaken the work which some would consider was rather within the province of a civil engineer, or of an agriculturist, for it reported "on drainage, sewerage, and disposal of sewage generally;" it had its trip however at the public cost, and it played the part of Jack in office, and its necessarily invaluable report was, as we have seen, ultimately "*discussed in Committee of the Whole*."

The Committee, in common with "the Whole," is evidently addicted to liberal draughts of cod-liver oil, for it tells us that "the progressive spirit of the inhabitants of the towns and cities of Canada demands all modern improvements *inside* their houses." (We hope this "progressive spirit" may ere long extend to their closets.) "They ask for water supply and waste pipes in all directions." This testimony of the two gentlemen despatched to the West, to the "progressive spirit" of Canadian citizens, may possibly induce them to rest content with the present rate of mortality, and prevent their connecting it with mal-practice.

One of the points to which the two gentlemen who constituted "the Sarnia Investigation Commission," "considered it to be their duty to impress upon" "the Committee of the Whole," is that "the functions of Local Boards of Health should be the investigation of *undue* sickness and mortality, *and as far as possible, the providing of remedies for such sickness*."

Much may be said to attach to the phrase "*undue sickness and mortality*;" is not all sickness *undue*, and the mortality experienced in civilized communities premature? Pending these

considerations, however, we can heartily commend the latter part of this "point" of advice on the part of the Commission—"the providing remedies, etc.," albeit we should say that nothing is more remote from the average medical mind than to entertain for a moment any of the multitudinous modes of healing which are outside the track of professional tradition. Evidence of redundancy of *cod-liver oil* crops up as we proceed—the fever-stricken City of Sarnia is described as a "very desirably situated town," and the hygienic precautions adopted in reference thereto were necessarily those of "*the advanced system, etc.*," all of which will, by our readers, be doubtless "taken as read."

There are certain features of this "very desirably situated town," which, as the Commissioners have themselves described them, will enable us to estimate the value of their testimony—"The backs of the houses on George Street are all at the edge of the open portion of the sewer; so that all the refuse from these houses is allowed to accumulate in the sewer, and may be seen floating along in the sluggish current of the stream, or collected in places along the edge of the water. The fall in George Street sewer is five inches in 100 feet; the depth of water running through this sewer is five inches, and the current is slow. There are about forty-nine water-closets between George and Wellington Streets, and a great many of these empty directly or indirectly into the George Street sewer."

Our readers will therefore concur with the doctors in regarding Sarnia as a paradise for gentlemen of their profession; stately mansions will no doubt be erected in Sarnia as residences of doctors, after the model of those in Toronto, which will serve as monuments to the ignorance of the people and to the more criminal (because wilful) ignorance of the medical profession. With regard to the extreme "desirableness" of the situation of Sarnia, we must add another scrap of testimony from heaps of a similar kind, embodied in this Official Report—"At the wharf at the foot of George Street, may be seen the sewer water mixing with the water of the bay. About thirty feet from the mouth of the sewer is the engine-house of the water works, and the supply-pipe passes out very near the mouth of the sewer."

Such are the statements of this Report which immediately follow the blarney as to the "desirability of the situation of Sarnia, etc.," and such is the mode in which public money is fooled away by the officious pretensions of men who are seeking to vivify the corpse of their profession by such means; we can scarcely suppose they will be more successful, than was their friend Victor B. Hall, when he gathered his family around the corpse of a neighbour, that they might communicate their united "vitality" to the departed.

ST. VITUS' DANCE.

Four of those gentlemen who, by hook or by crook, have contrived to secure the confidence of the ignorant, have been operating on a girl of twelve years of age, in relation to the above named disorder; the child's experience of them was that of many a million—"she was nothing bettered but rather grew worse," until her case was undertaken by a licensed practitioner in this city; it is satisfactory to be able to record that the child is now well, and if a register office existed, the public could have the benefit of the name of the successful physician.

We know a case in which a father paid \$500 for two years' medical attendance on his son; at the expiration of the two years, the boy died; the charge was the same as if a cure were effected; is this according to the ordinary principles of interchange of service?