

THE Canadian Journal of Medical Science.

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF MEDICAL SCIENCE, CRITICISM, AND NEWS.

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SUBSCRIPTION, \$3 PER ANNUM.

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TORONTO; APRIL, 1881.

Original Communications.

MALIGNANT DISEASES.

BY GEO. WRIGHT, A.M., M.D., VICE-PRESIDENT.

(Read before the Toronto Medical Society.)

My object, Mr. President, in reading this paper is, not so much to discuss the subject of malignant diseases in all its breadth, as to give the results of my own personal experience in coming in contact with the various manifestations of these diseases, and the conclusions to which I have been led in my inquiries. To undertake an elaborate discussion of a subject so comprehensive, and involving so much mystery would be a task at once laborious and without any special profit in the present state of uncertainty among scientific men regarding almost every important feature of what is known as the cancerous dyscrasia. Despite all that has been said and written upon the subject, it is a painful reflection that malignant diseases, at whatever point in the human frame they make their appearance, seem to pursue their insidious course, with but one termination—the ultimate destruction of the lives of their victims. In these, more than in any other form of disease, the professional man is brought face to face with the unpleasant fact, how utterly helpless he is, further than to mitigate in some degree the urgency of the symptoms as they present themselves. Other forms of disease which resemble cancer in the commonly fatal results of their invasion of the system, differ, however, from it in the fact that they are occasionally so far arrested in their progress as not to destroy life always. We have frequently, for instance, seen unmistakable

evidences of the arrest of tuberculous disease in persons who ultimately succumbed to some other affection having no relation to tuberculosis. But it is extremely doubtful in my mind if there ever was a *bona-fide* example of the arrest of any form of malignant disease. It will not be doubted that such cases are commonly found in the records of charlatanism. And, perhaps, it is not too much to say that no form of lingering disease has afforded so ample a field for the various forms of quackery as malignant diseases. From time immemorial almost, such assurances as the following have been tendered to a too-confiding public: "A certain cure for cancer." "A painless, but effectual cure for cancer." "Wonderful discovery! cancer cured without the use of the knife." "Cancer drawn out by the roots by a certain and comparatively painless process." "The surgeon defeated. The knife no longer called into requisition for the effectual cure of cancer." "Suffering surely and certainly avoided." Such are a few of the specimens of advertisements distributed by nostrum vendors everywhere within the limits of civilization. Indeed this may be regarded by some as one of the blessings of an advancing civilization. It is doubtful if there ever was a time in the history of the race when the public were more susceptible to the influence of imposture than at the present moment. This conviction was peculiarly strengthened in my own mind the other day during a conversation with an acquaintance, who has been a somewhat serious sufferer for sometime from chronic rheumatism. Finding no permanent relief in the ordinary channels, he was induced to try the skill of one not far from any of us and a great deal too