

Next morning, to my astonishment, he called on me, having walked up from the hotel. He stated, that during the night he had such a profuse discharge of urine that he apprehended he had got diabetes. His dropsical complaints had almost wholly disappeared. He could now use his left arm freely; his right, still powerless, was carried in a sling. From this time he rapidly recovered, under the tonic plan, and in a few days regained considerable power of his right arm, and laid aside the sling. In about a week he returned to New York much improved in health.

It is a matter of extreme difficulty on some occasions (and frequently even of impossibility), to determine what may be the exciting cause of dropsy. These are so various, and often so obscure, as wholly to be beyond the powers of our discrimination or detection. They unfortunately, too, are often beyond the control of our art, even when ascertained. It is, nevertheless, an object of great moment to determine the cause, if possible; as although many of the pathological changes upon which it may depend may be irremediable, we must, however, on all occasions endeavour to avoid injudicious application of our therapeutic means, lest we seriously aggravate the evil. It may readily be perceived how little applicable is the ordinary routine of hydragogues, diuretics, or diaphoretics on all occasions when we look to the *fons et origo mali*. The varieties of hepatic alteration so frequently inducing dropsy, the different changes of structure in the kidneys or circulatory system, an anemic condition arising from debility, or an exalted tone of the capillaries consequent on scarlatina, cannot be supposed to be amenable to a similar plan of treatment, or equally controllable by the most judicious and well-directed curative means. Induration of the liver may take place to a very considerable extent without our being able to detect it during life; and we often find accompanying that peculiar condition termed cirrhosis (which is so frequent a cause), that although there is considerable induration, there may be at the same time a diminution of its size. The attendant, dropsy, also, is an impediment to a satisfactory manipulation, and may prevent the detection of hypertrophy of this gland. Tumors or indurations of other viscera in the hypochondriac region or neighbourhood, also afford obstacles and difficulties to our arriving at a correct diagnosis. On the present occasion, we may in all probability, with propriety, attribute the dropsy to an atonic condition of the absorbents, originating in the state of debility of the general system. The fortunate issue of the case, however, precluded any post mortem examination, and at the same time proved that the dropsy did not depend on any permanent pathological cause.

Montreal, October 21, 1846.

#### POISONING BY VEGETABLE OILS.

By THOMAS REYNOLDS, M.D., Brockville, C.W.

Daily instances of the dangerous consequences of an unrestricted traffic in drugs, by persons ignorant of their medicinal powers, come within the notice of the faculty in Canada West; and it is only to be wondered at that we do not more frequently hear of fatal results from the quackery and intermeddling of the wandering horde, who, in so many ways, contrive to impose upon an ever gullible public. One smooth-tongued Yankee sends "sugar-coated pills," wondrously palatable, to the real or fancying invalid; another follows in his wake, posts up his bills or circulates his pamphlets, advertising some new "arcanum," with matchless virtues; a third exhibits some Indian panacea, prepared from some "traditionary recipe of the Lost Tribes," and possessing "all-the-maladies-that-flesh-is-heir-to"-curing properties.

I might go on to speak of the Thompsonian doctor declaiming against mineral preparations, and proclaiming the wondrous powers of "our native herbs," aided by the universally applicable process of steaming; the travelling vaccinator, daily bringing into disrepute the valuable discovery of Jenner; and others of an equally dangerous tribe; but I have, at this time, to speak of the "essence pedlar," whose wares would be innocuous enough, if confined to external application; not so, however, when internally administered, as the following cases will show; and they are but a specimen of what is constantly occurring.

M. B. came to his death under the following circumstances, as appeared at the inquest a few days ago:—An "essence pedlar" was displaying his bottles in a tavern in the town, about 4 p. m., when deceased, who was present, and had been for several days in a semi-intoxicated state, took up a bottle said to contain oil of winter green (*pyrola umbellata*), and began tasting it. He was told by the pedlar, who, by the way, was not himself quite sober, that if he took much it would certainly kill him. He replied, "The d—— himself couldn't kill me," thereupon swallowing about half an ounce. The pedlar said to the bystanders, "That much would kill me in four hours," and immediately left the tavern, offering four times the usual charge to be ferried to the south of line 45. Deceased soon began to complain of pain and uneasiness about the stomach, vomited a little, and then retired to a bed-room in the tavern, seated himself in an arm chair, and appeared for some time to be stupid and suffering pain. He was allowed to remain in this state till about 8 p. m., when, upon going to the room, one of the domestics found him dead. He was still seated in the chair, his mouth firmly compressed, and his hand grasping his stomach.