

Medical Criticism.

"FIRST ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PROVINCIAL BOARD OF HEALTH

OF ONTARIO,

BEING FOR THE YEAR 1882.

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No. 11.

To judge from the unctuous style adopted by the above-named volunteer guardians of our health, the members of the Board, prior to the completion of their Report, must have indulged in copious libations of Cod-liver oil; they inform us (in a topsy-turvy style) that "the Government carefully appreciated the opinions of the general public," (by which the doctors refer to that condition of born ignorance which accounts for their own position) that the said "Government was actuated by an earnest and solicitous concern for the welfare of the people over whom it has been called (by its party) to rule," and in proof of this, its "earnest and solicitous concern" for the popular welfare, it "last session introduced a bill, and the public representatives in the Legislature" (being as little informed on the subject about which they legislated, as the Government itself "agreed to its clauses, establishing a Provincial Board of Health for Ontario," etc. The Government must be acknowledged to have merited an ample lubrication, on the strength of having committed itself to so manifest an act of folly. But the long-suffering, and unsuspecting people,—what have *they* done, that they, for their part, should be ironically told that they possess "a more than average degree of education and refinement." If "a man is to be known by his books," and newspapers are the books of the bulk of the people, we can only refer this latter emanation of the medical mind to its first cause—the Cod-liver oil; to the like first cause, we trace the irony with which the Board besmeared its own profession, when it testified to it being "high in the scale of scientific ability"; by this time, we trust the Board has slept off the effect of one of those over-doses with which it necessarily is not unfamiliar. On the assumption that its slumbers have been attended with so favorable an issue, we will proceed to direct its attention to a dictum with which it is probably familiar, viz. that "words were given us to deceive." No one, on perusing this Report, would be likely to gather that the medical "family" is not one of the most united, and "happiest" of families on the face of the earth; the unsophisticated would presume that the medical owls were on the most affectionate terms with the Guinea pigs, &c., and when they read of "Dr. John Hall having resigned his position, owing to the urgency of other duties," they would conclude that all was perfectly serene within the cage of this "happy family," and would not suspect that the mode adopted by the retiring member, for the cure of disease, bears about as much resemblance to the principles and practice of his former colleagues, as the food and habits of the owl do to those of the Guinea pig. We, however, find ourselves referred to a *resume* of the work completed at the meetings of the Board, in an Appendix to the Report. Foremost in this appendix, stands a copy of "The Public Health Act, 1882," and as we do not suppose the public is aware of the extent of its indebtedness to the solicitude of the Doctors and the Government, we quote a few

of the clauses of this enactment for their behoof. (2.) "The chairman of the Board shall be appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, and shall be paid an annual salary not exceeding the sum of four hundred dollars per annum The travelling and other necessary expenses of the other members of the Board, while employed on the business of the Board, shall be allowed and paid." (7) "The Lieutenant-Governor in Council may appoint a competent and suitable person as Secretary of the Board, who shall hold office during pleasure, and who may be paid an annual salary not exceeding one thousand dollars per annum, and who shall be the chief health officer of the Province." (Editorial Italics) (8.) "The Secretary shall keep his office at Toronto," (there are they who will conclude that it is the office which keeps the Secretary). We observe one eminently *healthy* provision of this clause, viz., that the Secretary is to communicate with various personages, *for the purpose of acquiring information concerning the public health*. Without the slightest desire to be personal in our remarks, we should say that *the acquisition of information concerning the public health*, and how to treat the public *lack of health*, is the paramount need of the great majority of licensed practitioners. The provision of the ninth clause would appear to the uninitiated to be sufficiently remarkable, and in view of the vigorous opposition to vaccination, on the part of persons of high intelligence, in various parts of the world, to be open to the gravest debate; that provision is as follows:—"The Board shall keep at all times an adequate supply of vaccine matter for the purpose of supplying at cost price, or on such other terms as the Board may from time to time determine, every legally qualified medical practitioner with such reasonable quantities of the said matter as he from time to time requires." The question of questions is—if *any* quantity of this vaccine matter be "reasonable." We perceive that *the Provincial Board of Health* has caused a section (10) to be introduced into the Act which gave them existence, which enables them (by manipulating "the Lieutenant-Governor in Council") to exercise "all the powers, rights, and authorities conferred upon, or vested in *the Central Board of Health* by the one hundred and ninetyeth chapter of the Revised Statutes of Ontario." We observe that "any three members of the Central Board of Health may from time to time issue such regulations as they think fit, for the prevention, so far as possible, or the mitigation of epidemic, endemic, or contagious diseases, and may revoke, renew, or alter any regulations, or substitute such new regulations, as to them or any three of them appear expedient." So that if it should "appear expedient" to three of these gentlemen to vaccinate us all, they can vivify their Lancets (so to speak) whenever they think proper. They can also "provide for the cleansing, purifying, ventilating and disinfecting of houses, dwellings, railway stations, churches, buildings, and places of assembly, steamboats, railway carriages and cars, and other public conveyances, by the owners and occupiers, and persons having the care and ordering thereof." No one can therefore affirm that these gentlemen have not, like other professionals we could name, provided for themselves "an enlarged sphere of usefulness." Whether in providing "for the removal of nuisances," they contemplated any *suicidal* measures, it is not for us to affirm. It is observable that the Profession has manifested a lively interest in the subject of remuneration for their possibly valuable services, as is evident from sec. 28 of the "Miscellaneous Provisions" of the Public Health Act, which is as follows:—