

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. Address, DR. J. L. DAVISON, 12 Charles St., Toronto.

Advertisements inserted on the most liberal terms. All Letters and Remittances to be addressed to DR. C. SHEARD, 320 Jarvis St., Toronto.

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

TORONTO, JANUARY, 1889.

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

DIDACTIC LECTURES IN MEDICINE.

A few words regarding the necessity of medical students taking two courses of didactic lectures in all the important subjects of the medical curriculum, may not be inopportune, now that the subject has been briefly discussed, both in print and out of it.

Those who can look back, even a few years, and compare the clinical advantages enjoyed by the then students of medicine, with the advantages of to-day, in all our centres of medical education, must in all honesty admit that much has been done to advance the practical side of medical science; and none too much, indeed not even enough has been accomplished in this direction; but sufficient has been done to show that our teaching bodies recognize the fact that practical work is an absolute necessity in the present day of advanced scientific research. In Toronto the two schools have wisely united their forces, and by the assistance of the authorities of the hospital, a very creditable clinical course is now open to every student who chooses to take advantage of it. But during the winter months the number of students practically precludes the possibility of each one getting a large amount of personal instruction at the bedside. When we say instruction at the bedside, we mean not that he shall stand or sit with a patient in sight while the lecturer gives an elaborate and well digested lecture on, say, pleurisy, but that he shall have the opportunity of examin-

ing the patient himself, under the guidance of this clinical teacher. For, we maintain that a lecture at the bedside, thoughtful and interesting as it may be, is in no way more practical than one in the class-room, if the students can not examine the patient for themselves.

If we can by any means increase the amount of practical knowledge a student shall gain while at college, by all means let it be done. But we do not believe that the didactic teaching should be curtailed. One of the oldest and most popular teachers in Ontario has said, that a man who gains his education from books is narrow, and one sided in his views of nearly every subject he has undertaken to master; or in other words, that the self-educated man is a weak man. Now if there be one department of science more than another, in the study of which, the student requires careful guidance, it is medicine. It may seem unnecessary to an old practitioner, who has not only read but practised for years, that a youth should have lectures on, say, pneumonia, repeated to him twice in a purely didactic way. But if it be considered that that same student has at best, but a hazy notion of pneumonia, that his youth and inexperience make it impossible for him to seize upon the salient points and vital principles which go to give him a clear understanding of the disease, even though he had at his disposal the whole medical library at Washington; it will appear that a thorough didactic training is an absolute necessity. It separates for the student the grain from the chaff, it indicates the essential and salient points in any given subject, and saves an immense amount of labor, and time, which would otherwise be spent in wandering more or less aimlessly, far afield, in the maze of text-books in which he would be groping.

Of course the *quality* of didactic lectures, just as of tea or sugar, has much to do with their value. Medical students are, as a class, rather hard-headed, and endeavor to get a *quid pro quo* for their time and money. It is certain then that if the time occupied in didactic lectures could be more profitably spent in their own studies, there would the students be found, as is indeed the case when a lecturer is not up to the mark as regards the quality of the article he supplies. But the didactic lectures of all earnest, hardworking, skilful teachers, are we believe, always largely attended. If