

## REMINISCENT HOMŒOPATHY.

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In writing the history of Homœopathy in Canada, I shall hardly be considered egotistical in referring briefly to my personal career, which is intimately connected with that of Homœopathy, not only in Canada but in the world in general.

I was initiated into medicine in the year 1833; (it is hardly necessary to say allopathically) that was in the year, between the two fearful cholera epidemics, which decimated Montreal and Quebec. Those towns which had then a population of 30,000 each, losing 3000 apiece in 1832 and about the same number in 1834. Having been indentured (as was then customary) to Dr. James Douglas of Quebec in 1833, I was a first year's student in the summer of 1834, and was in the thick of the cholera epidemic, the panic-stricken people being only too glad of the help of anybody supposed to have even a minimum of medical knowledge. My patron, Dr. Douglas, lived in the Lower Town and had a most extensive practice among the shipping and in the coves, so it is easy to see that I did not lead an idle life. I am free to confess that he and I killed more patients than recovered in spite of our treatment. I may here incidentally mention the case of one patient in the stage of collapse, the doctor told me to take sixteen ounces of blood from him. I bandaged his arm and punctured the vein, when to my surprise the blood spurted out, for I thought him too far gone to bleed, but he died as the blood flowed as if his throat had been cut, he probably would have died anyway, but the treatment undoubtedly accelerated the end, as I have seen equally unpromising cases recover under a better form of treatment.

Even then, although I had never heard of homœopathy, I flatter myself I had an inquiring mind. It being my duty to compound and dispense the doctor's prescriptions; a very common routine one being a blue pill at bedtime and a black draught in the morning; I said to him one day "what do you give the blue pill for?" He replied "it is an alterative." Upon asking what that was, he said, "it is a medicine which causes a change of some sort in the system." (Gould in his medical dictionary says "It seems to be a necessary or convenient term covering our ignorance of the *modus operandi* of certain medicines, as mercury, iodine, etc.) I remarked that the pill must be a good thing, to which the doctor said

"of course it is." I then said "what do you give the black draught for?" He answered, "to work off the blue pill." I said "if it is a good thing what is the need of working it off?" He answered "you go and put up your medicines;" yet Dr. Douglas was a highly intelligent man, far above the average practitioner of the time. I may here remark that he was the ablest operating surgeon in what is now the Dominion, and had little faith in (so called) medicine.

Some years afterwards, on my return from Europe after a six years' absence, Dr. Douglas said to me, "so you have taken up homœopathy; well you might have done better;" admitting at the same time that he did not believe in his own physic. He remarked "when I was supposed to be dying Drs. Morrin, Fremont and Landry held a consultation over me. Dr. F. said one thing, Dr. L. said another, but Dr. M. said "we know nothing about it, let him alone and give him a chance," they did so, or "by gad! if they had physicked me I should have died." Of Dr. Morrin more hereafter.

As to my student career at McGill and Edinburgh being essentially allopathic, I shall only say that after graduating and taking the surgical diploma at the latter university, I went to Vienna to study diseases of the eye and morbid anatomy, which were then supposed to be better taught there than elsewhere. While there I was joined by two of my former fellow students, Drs. Drysdale and Russell (one of them, the son of the professor of surgery in Edinburgh). To my amazement they said they had come to study homœopathy, which I of course ridiculed, talking a great deal of nonsense. Dr. Drysdale told me I didn't know what I was talking about, and advised me to investigate before condemning it. He recommended my going to the homœopathic hospital (which I had not before heard of), and finally persuaded me to do so. To my surprise I found the names pneumonia, typhoid fever, etc., ticketed over the beds, and scouted the idea of the patients having those diseases, as no sane person would trust them to the "little pills" treatment.

Upon being told to satisfy myself by examination, observation, etc., of the correctness of the diagnosis. I picked out a case of pneumonia and confined my attention to it. I was at the time following a course of physical diagnosis under Prof. Scoda (of world-wide reputation) in the general hospital and consequently had a good chance to compare notes. To my surprise, I verified all the symptoms (objective and subjective