

Original Communications.

Address in Surgery. Delivered before the Canadian Medical Association in St. John, N.B., August 6th, 1873. By WILLIAM H. HINGSTON, M.D., L.R.C.S., Edin., Surgeon to St. Patrick's Department, Hotel Dieu, Montreal.

While thanking you for the honourable position your partiality has assigned to me, I am fully sensible of the difficulty of dealing, in a satisfactory manner, with so important a subject as Surgery; and especially of giving an *aperçu* of its condition, its status, in this extensive but thinly populated territory.

Since the organization of this important Association, destined, let us hope, to cement into one body the members of our profession scattered throughout this vast Dominion—the addresses have been confined to those delivered annually by the retiring President, and on such general subjects as fitted the occasion. It was resolved last year to inaugurate at this, the seventh annual meeting, addresses in Medicine, Surgery, Midwifery, and Hygiene, and, speaking in the interests of this Association, I cannot but regret that to some other had not been confided the first address in that branch of the healing art which pertains to external therapeutics—the *quod in therapeia mechanicum*.

The fact that, in this Canada of ours, partially rescued, as it were, but yesterday, from the primeval forest, and its lordly master the red man, an association of this character should have been formed, is, in itself, an indication of a progress which has no parallel save in the adjoining republic:—and the circumstance of a division into the various departments which make up the general science of medicine as a whole, is an indication of the advanced condition of each. But a few years ago, and in the place where we are now assembled, the *Medicine* or *Mystery* man, the Maskiki inini, sought, by incantations and other devices, to relieve the distressed in body of their sufferings. And even now, near where villages dot the surface, and towns and cities usurp the primeval forest, charms and amulets, and the potent mystery bag, are, despite the laugh of the white man, used to ward off the ills and perils of life.

The history of Surgery in this Dominion is the history of its civilization. When Jacques Cartier dropped anchor at the foot of Hochelaga, (at a period when Polypharmacy drenched its victims with its multifarious combinations,) and when his fellow countryman, Ambroise Paré, made known *au très*

Chrestien Roi de France et de Pologne the boldness of his surgical skill, the Aborigines also had their Doctors and conjurors who were valued as dignitaries in the tribe “the greatest respect was paid to them by the whole community, not only for their skill in their materia medica, but more especially for their tact in magic and mysteries.” “In all tribes their doctors were conjurors, ‘magicians,’ ‘soothsayers,’ ‘high priests.’ They superintended and conducted all ceremonies.” “In all councils of war and peace they had a seat with the chiefs; were regularly consulted before any public step was taken; and the greatest deference and respect were paid to their opinions.”* It is meet, Mr. President and Gentlemen; that in this, the first address in Surgery before the representatives of the profession in this Dominion, I should say a few words of that singular class of men now fast passing away, our *devanciers* in the healing art on this Continent, and however much may have been achieved in that art since then, we, their *remplaçants* must admit, that with less mystery, and with better claims to regard, we receive not always so considerable a degree of influence and consideration. But waving wheat fields take the place of forests; the red man wends steadily and fatally to the setting sun; and our forefathers of European origin usurp their places. New arts are substituted for the old—and mystery bags and their appendages, the “toes and tails of birds, hoofs of deer, goat and antelope, and the tails and tips of almost everything that swims, flies or runs,” to make great medicine, give place to a somewhat rude surgery, and to a crude and ill digested materia medica. It is interesting to trace the rise and progress of surgical science in Arabia and Egypt, and its gradual extension to the West, where, in our day, it has attained an elaborateness—a refinement—little dreamed of by our forefathers. It is no less interesting to note the rise and advance of the healing art on this Continent: Without much effort of imagination we may fancy the Indian youth preparing himself for the practice of the art, wandering from his father's lodge to some secluded spot, fasting for several days, and, with his face to the earth, praying to the Gitché Manitou—the Great Spirit, to designate to him in his dreams the beast, bird or reptile He has destined to be his mysterious protector through life, and his conductor to those fair hunting grounds in the kingdom of Ponemah—the Land of the Hereafter. The dream is, no doubt, sometimes proportionate to the valour or ambition of the dreamer,—and the black bear or

* Catlin.