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## EDITORIAL

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### AN INTERESTING FRENCH-CANADIAN QUACK.

Mr. Justice W. R. Riddell, LL.D., of Toronto, contributed to the *New York Medical Journal* of 30th October last, an interesting article on a noted quack doctor by the name of Ives Phlem, who lived in St. Anne de la Pérade, on the north side of the St. Lawrence, about 50 miles above Quebec. Phlem was born in Breton, in the north of France, and learned some very primitive principles of surgery. He came to Quebec and practised mainly as a cancer specialist, and kept a small private hospital. He acquired widespread reputation, though he had no legal right to practise.

He had in his hospital for a period of eight months a victim of cancer by the name of Bilodeau. After the death of Bilodeau, he sued the widow for his fees and the care of the patient in the hospital. The court refused his fees, but granted him \$27.25 for board and lodging. He was ordered by the court not to hold himself out as a surgeon, but this did not deter him, and he persisted in his practice. The date of the trial was 1736.

During the trial, Phlem produced a good deal of evidence on the subject of his skill in treating and curing cancer. He produced the minutes of a mass meeting which endorsed his skill, and a number of affidavits. But to no effect on the court. He died in 1749, and was buried in St. Anne de la Pérade.

Phlem was a bold operator. On one occasion a person with cancer of the jaw consulted him, and he split the tumor open and removed much of the bone, greatly benefiting the patient. Cancer has ever been a field in which the quack has exploited himself. John Wesley, with his tar water; Samuel Thomson, with his red clover poultice; St. John Long, with his corrosive liquid, were noted examples. Phlem, however, though a quack, displayed, at times, good judgment, and operated with skill.