

# Ontario Medical Journal.

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SUBSCRIPTION \$2.00 PER ANNUM.

All Business Communications should be addressed to DR. ORR, 117 Cowan Avenue, Toronto.

VOL. I.]

TORONTO, SEPTEMBER, 1892.

[No. 2.

## Original Communications.

### MEDICAL LEGISLATION IN ONTARIO.

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*Vice-President of the Council.*

The annual address before the Canadian Institute of Homeopathy, at its session in Hamilton, June 21, given by the retiring president, Dr. C. T. Campbell, was devoted mainly to a review of medical legislation in Ontario, and we give a summary of its main features. After a touching and appropriate reference to the loss sustained by the Institute and the profession in the deaths of Dr. William Springer, of Woodstock, and Dr. W. H. Oliphant, of Toronto, the president proceeded to review the history of medicine in Canada, showing that prior to 1815 there was no legislation specially affecting the medical profession in what is now known as Ontario. The profession was governed by laws of the mother country for twenty-four years, and during that time licensed practitioners were mostly army and navy surgeons. As the profession was not overcrowded, and the population scattered, the presence of those who were not English in the field was no grievance to anyone, and in many cases a great convenience to the public. As the country became settled, however, it was deemed advisable to take some legislative action in the matter of ensuring the public qualified medical practitioners. The first medical Act was passed on March 4, 1815. It provided for a Board of Surgeons, consisting of all military and naval surgeons and all licensed practi-

tioners in the Province, to meet as often as required, to hear and examine all applicants, and if approved, to grant licenses to practise. The Act, however, did not apply to females practising midwifery, to anyone having a degree in any university in His Majesty's dominions, to any commissioned medical officer in the army or navy, or to anyone who may have practised in the Province before the passing of the Constitutional Act of 1791.

A few years' experience made it evident that the Act was impracticable. The Board was too cumbersome; possibly there was too much militarism about it to suit the tastes of the people. In 1818, an amending Act was passed authorizing the Governor-in-Council to appoint a smaller Board to examine applicants. Upon the certificate of this Board, the Governor, being satisfied of the loyalty and good morals of the candidate, issued a license. For nearly fifty years this formed the basis of nearly all the medical legislation in Upper Canada or Canada West. After the union of the two Provinces provision was made that all practitioners duly licensed in Lower Canada should have equal privileges in this Province, and *vice versa*. After the Canadian medical colleges were established, their graduates occupied the same position as graduates of all British universities, and on presentation of their diplomas they received license to practise. On one occasion an effort was made to alter the status of the profession. That was in 1839, when a Bill was passed to incorporate the then existing Board of Examiners, together with all licensed physicians, as the College of