

Medical Criticism.

"FIRST ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PROVINCIAL BOARD OF HEALTH OF ONTARIO, BEING FOR THE YEAR 1882.

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No. V.

When persons contrive, by one means or another to inveigle a Legislative Assembly into giving them corporate existence, they are thenceforth committed to make as much fuss as possible, in order to sustain the delusion which gave them being. "Committees of the Whole" (six) have most industriously beaten the air, and they tell us that "so much work arose from action inaugurated at their first meeting, that a special meeting of the Board was held on the 6th of June. In addition to this, another special meeting was called for the 27th of June, at which *previous work* was completed and new work undertaken." The labours of the six, embodying as we have already seen, the work of nine committees, are said to have been recorded, and a *resume* thereof is given in a "condensation of the minutes of the various meetings" which figures in an appendix. The first decision at which "The Committee of the Whole" six arrived was that a trip to Boston, New York, and Albany, at the cost of the Province, was desirable, they therefore moved the Provincial Secretary to request them to go, their pre-concerted compliance with the Secretary's request they express in the following fashion.—"In obedience to the commission of the Honourable, the Provincial Secretary, &c.," your committee proceeded to Boston, etc., to enquire into the details and modes of working of the various Boards of Health of those places"—to ascertain (in other words) how the Medical Trades Unionists of those parts conduct their business.

As no signature is attached to the Report of this so-styled "Committee" we will hope (in the interest of the Provincial Exchequer) that it so far resembled the nine Medical Committees with which we were lately occupied, as to consist of a single individual. We perceive that the Committee speaks of itself in the plural, but we imagine this is in imitation of royalty and bishops. "Having placed themselves in communication with the various (American) Boards as to their intentions (the Committee tells us) cordial invitations were received from the Medical Trades Unionists in the States: "thus armed" says the Committee (*armed with an invitation*) he or they proceeded to Boston; the details of this expedition are not entirely such as ordinarily fall into the hands of the Queen's printer; we learn that the Committee "called at the office of the Secretary of the Massachusetts State Board, but unfortunately found that gentleman absent;" that "his place was taken by another gentleman, and that the representative was out of the city, but was expected to return the following day." All this, and the further information that the absentee "called on the Committee," on the following day, made an appointment "to meet them at his office," etc., seeing that it is presented to us under the sanction of the royal arms, must be regarded as of extreme importance. One suggestive fact however ekes out as the result of it all, on which further light would probably prove to be instructive; it is veiled in the following form—"The Boston Board has undergone several changes through

political causes, which have seriously affected both its organization and usefulness."

We observe that the Power which controls the Boston Board whatever it be, has very judiciously associated with it "*the work of the State Board of Lunacy.*" The Ontario Committee complains of this arrangement as having reduced the work of the Boston Medical Trades Unionists to "practical matters relating to public nuisances, such as the pollution of streams and rivers." Much plunder could not accrue to the Board when its action was restricted to such an extent as that, and it was to be expected that the Ontarian Committee would sympathize with the Bostonians under those afflictive circumstances. The mysterious reference to "political causes" as affecting prejudicially the Boston doctors leads to the conclusion that the State of Massachusetts is becoming as wise as that of Indiana, and is disposed to forego the extension of any trade privileges to the medical profession, in the name of *protecting the people*. So far as we can judge from what is constantly reaching us, the protection that is most urgently needed by the defenceless people is protection *against* the doctors, and the most effectual mode of securing it will be the issue of a Commission of Enquiry into the working of the Medical Acts.

The work alleged by the Committee to be "still carried on" by the Boston Board, notwithstanding the "political causes which seriously affected both its organization and usefulness," appears to us to indicate that if it has not been decently buried, it is in a fair way to be, the Board is stated to be occupied with the publication of weekly mortality statistics, legislation for the restriction and prevention of smallpox (occupation in relation to the preceding subject would hardly be chronic, one may presume) and investigations into the nature and causes of malarial diseases. It would require a vigorous exercise of faith on our part to conclude that the State of Massachusetts will long sustain a Board for the purpose of prowling abroad in the investigation of the nature and causes of malarial diseases. The characteristic shrewdness of our American cousins manifested itself in the constitution of the Boston Board, which, it appears, consists of a physician as chairman, a lawyer, and a layman; had the constitution of our Provincial Board been similar to that of Boston, we should doubtless have been spared the performance of the farce of six doctors, constituting nine committees, and this unique arrangement being the result of "discussion in Committee of the Whole" six. We should not object to our own Board so far imitating that of Boston as to have an executive officer devoted to the duty of overlooking the scavengers, and we think it quite possible that the administration of such an officer might be an improvement on that of our City Commissioner.

We observe that the Boston Board concerns itself with eleven different subjects, one of which is the prohibition of the use of salt on sidewalks; another the granting of licenses to sell fish, a third, the granting of licenses to soap-men, and so forth; "the Committee of the Whole" of our six do not appear to consider us sufficiently *advanced* to advocate such measures on this side the line. We must conclude the present notice with a quotation which indicates the impotence of the profession on the one hand, in relation to diphtheria, and on the other, the extent to which the disorder is traceable to neglect in regard to drainage:—"In the case of diphtheria, the result of the examinations during the past year revealed the fact that with a total of 1,704 cases, 601 of which were fatal, it was found that 1,342 occurred on premises where the drainage was defective, and only 235 where the premises were in good sanitary condition (or where) at least defects were not noticed."