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## THE DUTIES OF THE GOVERNMENT TO OUR PROFESSION.

There are four classes of persons practising medicine in Canada, first the *regular practitioners*, who constitute about nine-tenths of the whole,—second, the Homoeopaths,—third, the so-called Eclectics, and fourth the unlicensed Quacks. It is clear that the public at large has an equal interest in the competency of them all, and has a right to expect that every person who presumes to take the responsibility of curing disease, (which is tantamount in many cases to holding the balance of life and death in his hands) should know enough to enable him to distinguish the different forms of disease from each other. This he cannot know without first, a thorough knowledge of the character and situation of every organ and tissue of the body. This knowledge he cannot acquire without observation of every portion of the body, or in other words, without studying *anatomy*. Secondly, he must understand the use of all these organs and tissues, in the *healthy economy*—or, *physiology*. Thirdly, he must know the changes which occur in the functions and structure of every part of the body as the result of disease, or *pathology*. Neither physiology nor pathology can be mastered without a knowledge of chemistry; so that we have four branches of medical study, without a good knowledge of which no man, we care not to which *pathy* he belongs, can understand the simplest case of disease which comes under his care. If he does not understand a disease, it is equally unimportant upon what theory of practice he treats it, for the disease takes its course, and if the patient recovers it is more probably in spite of treatment than by the aid of it. If on the other hand, the patient dies, it is quite possibly attributable to the neglect of the proper remedial measures. In either case the physician has done no good, and it is not impossible that he may have done harm.

These remarks apply to practitioners of all the four classes enumerated above. It is our purpose, however, in this article, to indicate the remedy for this condition as applicable to the three first classes only, they having a legal standing already.

There may be a few who do not see any justice in

requiring statutory enactments to protect the public from ignorant practitioners. They may be quite willing that innocent and confiding people should have their lives jeopardised and constitutions undermined by legalised empirics. There may be such persons, we say, but we are unwilling to believe that the vast majority of the people can regard the necessity for qualified medical practitioners as other than one of grave state importance. The time has not arrived when the state can take medical education into its hands, but it will assuredly come. In the meantime what is to be done?

We believe it to be the duty of the legislature to place all the sects of medicine upon a somewhat equal footing. At the present time the public has no guarantee for the competency of Homoeopathic or Eclectic practitioners. Their respective "Boards" are to all intents and purposes closed corporations. They may abuse their privileges to an unlimited extent (and we have good reason to believe that the latter does do so) for they are beyond the restraining influence of public, or even professional opinion.

We are not going to discuss the relative merits of these rival systems of medicine. At the proper time we will be quite prepared to show why our allegiance has been given to the so-called Allopathic School. Nor do we intend to discuss the wisdom displayed by the Legislature in granting charters to the Homoeopathic and Eclectic bodies. It is our duty as a journalist to recognize the fact that they have received the authority of the Legislature to grant licenses. Such being the fact, it is the duty of the Legislature to make such further enactment as may be deemed necessary to ensure the competency of their licentiates before they are allowed to engage in the responsible duties of their profession.

Certain "regulations" of the Medical Council (which have the force of Legislative enactments by virtue of their having received the sanction of the Executive) require that all persons who study medicine shall spend four years in studying *before being allowed to present himself for examination*, not only is the period of study fixed, but it commences at the time when an examination in preliminary education has been passed. It goes even so far as to specify the number of terms which the student is to attend lectures on each branch of Medical Science, and the order in which they are to be studied. Here is a very complete guarantee of competency, but to make the matter surer, the Legislature has given the Medical Council power to enforce these regulations. This system of "checks and guarantees" complete as it is, remains practically useless, because it cannot be applied to the Homoeopathic and Eclectic Schools of Medicine.