

PIONEERS OF MEDICINE IN THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC.¹

BY

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MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN :

Meeting as we do, here in Quebec, the very cradle of our nationality, the place and the occasion is I think, peculiarly appropriate for recalling to your memory, a few of the old-time worthies of our profession; the men who were first to plant the Æsculapian banner on the soil of Canada. It is difficult to write, or say anything about the ancient city of Quebec, without picturing some of the great events which have occurred in her history, for history surrounds us on every side, from the banks of the St. Charles, where Jacques Cartier held his conference with King Donnacona and erected the sacred emblem of christianity, to the plains of Abraham where fell the gallant Wolfe and chivalrous Montcalm—but I must forbear, and pass on at once to the subject in hand.

It was indeed a motley crew that followed in the train of the French merchants, who were first attracted by visions of the fabulous wealth to be acquired in trading with the aborigines of the New World; warriors fresh from the battle fields of Europe; men of the proudest lineage of France, and who had breathed the atmosphere of courts, missionaries whose souls were fired with zeal at the alluring prospects of evangelization awaiting in the forests of America; and adventurers, daring as ever followed the standard of William of Normandy. Picture to yourselves if possible, the harbour of Port Royal, or what is now Nova Scotia, on the morning of July 27th 1606. There is unusual bustle and excitement down by the shore, where the little ship "Jonas," commanded by Captain Poutrincourt, is engaged in discharging her complement of passengers, mostly hailing from La Rochelle. Among the band of newly arrived immigrants there is one sturdy figure which I want you to study well, for it is the figure of Louis Hébert, the pioneer physician of Nouvelle France.

We can imagine this young fellow fresh and enthusiastic, as he strides along, gazing with curious and occasionally amused eyes, on the strange sights surrounding him on every side, and startled when addressed by some wild looking Coureur de Bois or fur-trader whose semi Indian attire, and savage bearing, seemed so inharmoniously to blend with the language of France.

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