

THE CANADA LANCET.

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF

MEDICAL AND SURGICAL SCIENCE,
CRITICISM AND NEWS.

VOL. XXIII.] TORONTO, OCT., 1890. [No. 2.

Original Communications.

ADDRESS IN MEDICINE.*

BY L. C. PREVOST, M.D., OTTAWA.

I hardly know truly, how to thank our worthy President and the members of the Council, for the distinguished honor they conferred upon me in intrusting to my hands the task of presenting the address in medicine before the highest medical society of the Dominion. In selecting me, in spite or rather, perhaps, on account of the nationality to which I belong, when so many others were certainly better qualified to fulfil this duty, they yielded more to courtesy than to the appreciation of my own merits.

This is the way that we, physicians, understand true and genuine equal-rightism, and surely we are right to be proud of it. Politics may divide, but science unites nationalities. As I eagerly wish not to be in debt of delicate manners with those who bestowed such an honor upon me; being aware, besides, of the deep feelings of loyalty so universally contained in the hearts of all true Englishmen, I am satisfied that I shall be agreeable to you all in availing myself of this occasion to highly confess the sentiments of respect with which I am animated towards our most gracious Queen, whose humble and most devoted subject I am proud to be.

Gentlemen, when we look back to the few years which have just expired, we are amazed at the immensity and importance of the advancement realized in medical sciences. I would have liked to lay before you, in this paper, all the acquirements recently obtained in medicine, but I would have had to deal with a gigantic task, rather impossible to overcome, when such a work had to be contained in the narrow limits of a small num-

ber of pages. Never, in fact, has such an amount of work been done, as now-a-days. There are few sciences in which so much has been accomplished as in medicine; observers have never been so numerous and never have they offered with such liberality to the medical world the precious results of their investigations.

I regret, for example, that the limits of this address do not allow my presenting with details, the admirable discoveries realized by neurologists. What marvels revealed by the thorough study of hysteria, mental diseases and heredity in these affections! What precious revelations attained with regard to the pathology of the brain and the spinal cord!

Every corner of neurology has been perused; usual symptoms have been studied over, and more closely examined, their value in semeiology has been more precisely indicated; new ones have been discovered, new morbid entities created.

The influence of these researches will daily more and more be felt in therapeutics. What cannot be hoped, indeed, when the study of nervous diseases has arrived at such a degree of precision that the surgeon can, to-day, almost harmlessly open the skull with the trephine, remove neoplasms from the cerebral substance, guided in his researches by the nature itself of the troubles he wants to combat! But amongst the discoveries which recently have most contributed to the advancement of medical science, there is one newly born, the effect of which has been to cause the healing art to enter a new era and which has transformed in medicine even up to the sense of the word, malady; I want to speak of bacteriology.

The medical science of to-day, gentlemen, has not been renovated, as is generally said, but its object has changed. During several years the study of symptoms, pathological physiology, the researches of anatomical lesions have been the object of scientists' attention; but to-day, pathogeny is the subject towards which they particularly direct their investigations. The study of the origin of new diseases is what characterizes our medical epoch.

Among the processes through which morbid causes succeed in producing diseases in our organism, there is one, the notion of which can be traced far in the past, but which appeared in its true light only within the last twenty-five years:

*Read before the Canadian Med. Association, Aug., 1890.