

## THE "MEDICINE MAN."

HIS CASE DIAGNOSED BEFORE OTTAWA MEDICINE MEN.

Among the papers read at the semi-annual meeting of the Bathurst and Rideau Medical Association in the City Hall yesterday afternoon, was one by R. Bell, M. D., Senior Assistant Director of the Geological Survey, which was interesting not only to medical men, but also to ethnologists. It was entitled "Indian and Eskimo Notions of Medicine," and formed a sequel to the paper which the doctor read to the Association last year on "Diseases among the Indians," and which was received with much interest by the profession. Dr. Bell said it was difficult for a white man to learn precisely what the aboriginal ideas were in reference to medicine. This arose partly from the Indians' incommunicative disposition, partly from fear of subjecting himself to ridicule and partly from a reluctance to give away what many of them consider

## VALUABLE SECRETS.

known only to a privileged class among themselves. However, by long association with them, the author had learned by degrees most of what is current among them on these matters. It was customary to speak of the "Indians" as if they were all one people, alike in every respect; whereas great differences existed between the tribes. Dr. Bell's experience had been principally among the various branches of the wide-spreading Cree or Outchipwai nation, and his remarks applied to the ideas of medicine which prevailed among them. He had also some knowledge of the Eskimos, and of their notions on this subject. Among the Indians referred to, the idea which we express by the word "medicine" did not mean strictly drugs or material remedies, but rather a general power of influence of which that of drugs was only one variety. Hence, a medicine man was not simply a practitioner in medicine, but also a priest, prophet, conjuror, sorcerer, and general dealer in the supernatural. He pretended to tell fortunes, to dispense good and bad luck, to influence game and fish, so as to produce plenty or scarcity, to bring sickness or even death to men and the lower animals. There were doctors, including women, who did not aspire to the more wonderful attainments of the great medicine men. The latter formed a kind of secret society for their mutual advantage and to prey upon the fears and superstitions which they themselves had encouraged. They used their knowledge of drugs to administer poisons of different degrees of virulence. They were employed by other Indians

## FOR OBTAINING REVENGE

upon those who had injured or offended them, and they would execute secret commissions for each other, sometimes at great distances. When a pagan Indian fell sick or met with a misfortune he attributed it to the evil influence of some medicine man in the employ of an enemy. Such influence may be counteracted by another medicine man, if well paid, provided his "medicine" be stronger than that of the opposing conjuror. By certain processes, which the doctor described, these sorcerers pretend to be able to cause

persons a long way off to sicken and die. In this way death and the apparent uncertainties of human life have arisen. People died only because the medicine men willed it, or because one could not or would not remove the spell which is working his destruction. A description was given of the conjuring house or tent of the Outchipwai medicine man, and of some of his performances while inside of it. After the spirit had arrived and commenced to communicate with him he was willing, for a fee, to answer questions on all subjects, in doing which he displayed great shrewdness and ingenuity. In regard to the practice of

## MEDICINE PROPER,

it was stated that the Indians considered that disease was due to some evil influence or spirit, which the doctor could drive off or suck out or render harmless by appropriate means. The idea that disease can be drowned out of the patient was a favorite theory. The curriculum of medical studies among the primitive red men was graphically described. A child, soon after he is born, may be set aside as a candidate for the profession, the call to do so being communicated to his grandfather by a dream. When he has grown to be a young man, if he can stand the first ordeal of starvation and thirst he may be apprenticed to an old practitioner to initiate him, he taking only one pupil at a time. Even after this stage a student may be rejected, and be obliged to fall back to the avocation of common Indian. Their

## MATERIA MEDICA

was divided into branches—good medicines and bad—and each of these into a number of classes. The student was first made familiar with the good or beneficial medicines, and then the bad, the worst of all being taken up last. The great majority of these remedies were of vegetable origin, but quite a number were derived from animals or from the mineral kingdom. One of their most curious preparations was the "black poison," the effects of which were described. The properties and effects of about twenty varieties of native medicines derived from plants with which the author was familiar, as in common use among the Indians, were briefly referred to. But, for the removal of disease, the Indian medicine affects to rely more on sorcery, beating the tom-tom, singing, etc., than on the efficacy of drugs. Midwifery was completely ignored by these great lights of the profession, as beneath their dignity. In surgery they confined themselves to setting bones, dressing wounds, cupping, bleeding, etc., and never attempted any grave operations although their general knowledge of anatomy was not to be despised. The sweat-bath was in general use among these Indians and its mode of employment was described. Delirium, resulting from fevers, etc., was a thing they entirely misunderstood, and looked upon it as a symptom of the approach of

## IRRISTIBLE CANNIBALISM,

or "turning windigo," and it became their duty to knock such patients on the head. In this way many lives had been sacrificed. Among the Eskimos, the notions of medicine were even more primitive and crude than among the Outchipwais, and the pretensions of their sorcerers

were still greater. They dealt entirely in the supernatural, making no use of drugs. They could cure all diseases by charms, if only they wished to do so, could make themselves larger or smaller at will, could walk on the water or fly in the air, but if a common person were present or looked on, these effects could not be produced. Some of their women pretended to cure disease by repeating charms, several of them joining in the chorus. They had some minor surgical appliances and alleviated the pain of sprains, rheumatism and scurvy by rubbing or manipulating the parts.

After a discussion, in which Drs. Hall, Wright and Small took part, a cordial vote of thanks was tendered Dr. Bell for his entertaining paper. *Ottawa Citizen, 21st Jan., 1886.*

## THE INDIAN HOMES,

## SAULT ST. MARIE.

The first Shingwauk Home was built in 1873. It was named after Augustin Shingwauk, the Indian Chief at Garden River. That institution was only six days in existence; it was opened for use on Monday, the 22nd of September, 1873 and the following Sunday it was burned to the ground and everything destroyed. But God brought good out of evil. Great sympathy was stirred up on all sides. In a year's time, \$10,000 had been contributed towards the rebuilding, and July 30th, 1874, the foundation stone of the present Shingwauk Home was laid by the Earl of Dufferin. It is a handsome stone building, with accommodation for 60 Indian boys and stands on the banks of the St. Mary river, about a mile and a half below the village of Sault Ste. Marie. The boys, besides receiving a good education, are taught various trades, such as carpentering, bootmaking, blacksmithing, waggon-making, etc., and some of them are prepared as school teachers. The school department is conducted on Government principles, and the Government School Inspector pays a visit twice a year. There is a preparatory class specially for preparing young men to pass the school teachers' examination.

The Wawanosh Home is also a stone building. It was erected in 1879, and has accommodation for 26 girls. The girls receive a good education and are also taught sewing, knitting and laundry work. It is called the Wawanosh Home after the old Chief Wawanosh, who used to live at Sarnia.

These Indian Homes are supported partly by an annual grant from the Government, but chiefly through the contributions of Sunday School children throughout the country.

It is intended before long to charge the Indians a premium when placing their children in these institutions to be educated, but for the present the admission is free.

Steps are being taken to raise funds for the enlargement of the Shingwauk Home, so as to make accommodation for 100 pupils. It is also proposed to establish four branch homes, one in Assiniboia, one in Manitoba, one in the neighborhood of St. Clair River, and one near Lake Simcoe. A gentleman in Manitoba has promised \$1000 towards the one to be established in that Province.