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THE SECTION OF MEDICINE.

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On the Influences that have Determined the Progress of Medicine during the Preceding Two and a Half Centuries.—On this very interesting, and indeed, unique occasion, when the British Medical Association meets for the first time on Canadian soil, the mind is irresistibly led to compare the condition of medicine at the present day with that which existed when Europeans first settled in Canada, and to trace the paths by which progress has been made. When Maisonneuve and his companions landed in what is now the Custom-House Square in Montreal in 1642, and when shortly after, the first hospital was established by the missionary priests, medicine was in a rudimentary stage. Though anatomy had been prosecuted for some centuries, chiefly on the European continent, it formed no part of ordinary medical education; physiology in the scientific sense was unborn, and organic chemistry not yet created. The medical teaching of that day consisted mainly of the ancient doctrine of the four elements and their corresponding temperaments; of the separate functions of the vegetative, sentient and rational souls; of the agency of the natural, vital and animal spirits, that had continued to be taught with very little variation from the time of Galen. It was an age of Aphorisms, Definitions, Systems and Nosologies. Medical opinions were so dominated by theories and burdened by the weight of authority, that the phenomena of disease for the most part passed unnoticed, and its teachings neglected. Such knowledge of medicine as the enterprising members of the medical profession who accompanied the early expedition to Canada possessed, must have been of the most elementary character, gained by apprenticeship under teachers whose