

THE CANADIAN MEDICAL TIMES.

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MEDICAL SCIENCE, NEWS, AND POLITICS

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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Communications and reports solicited. Correspondents must accompany letters, if intended to be printed anonymously, with their proper signature, as a guarantee of good faith.

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REMITTANCES.

Gentlemen who have not sent on their subscriptions for the MEDICAL TIMES are requested to remit One Dollar for the current six months without further delay. The system of advance payments must necessarily be adhered to.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Lower Canada at its recent meeting gave authorization to the Secretaries to issue a notice to the effect that stringent measures would be taken against unlicensed practitioners and graduates of universities practising in the Province of Quebec, who neglect to take the license of the College. It appears there are several graduates of universities who are practising without the license of the College and are not therefore, strictly speaking, and in the eye of the law, duly qualified practitioners. These will be required to present themselves before the College board next May or else they will be stringently proceeded against.

Dr. John Harley advocates a State order of merit for medical men. In a recent public address he observed that entrance to the medical profession at once relieved its followers of the temptations and chagrins which attend the pursuit of wealth. "Titles, too, ill become the man whose deep knowledge of life teaches him to put no high estimate on artificial distinctions. But an order of merit to distinguish its possessor from the less industrious and less skilled of his confrères is a different thing. Such an order, though so tardily bestowed, would be a graceful compliment to a profession which has long served the State for a remuneration altogether inadequate to the charges imposed upon it; a profession which, at risks as great as those to which the soldier is exposed on the battle-field, is laboriously and successfully engaged in freeing suffering humanity from the bonds of disease; a profession whose members, occupying as they do the foremost place in the pursuit of science, have done more for the advancement and enlightenment of the world than those of any other."

The *Lancet*,—taking its cue from a sporting journal which has lately hinted that the medical profession is hardly alive to the health-giving value of sport,—advises a little more attention to be given to this kind of physical enjoyment. It says:—"Many of the foremost men of our own profession have been and are noted for ardour in the prosecution of field sports. There is one sport of a mild kind which is open to many of our profession—viz, driving; and there are several

of our foremost London practitioners who are noted for the dexterity with which they drive their mail-coaches. We have always silently admired the wisdom of these medical Jehus. When a doctor leaves the harassing case, over which perhaps he has been sorely anxious, and takes the ribbons to drive to his next patient, he must, willy-nilly, get his nose off the grindstone, and the excitement of threading his way through the London thoroughfares must for the time drive away the cares of practice. His animated countenance is generally a striking contrast to that of his professional brother whom we see boxed in his brougham poring over his morning paper or his visiting-list." Undoubtedly physical exercise in the open air is as invaluable and as necessary to medical men as to any other class of persons. The *Lancet* might have suggested horseback exercise as a still more vigorous sport in which practitioners in town or country could engage. If a vehicle is used in making visits, it should not be too luxurious. A noted doctor in Philadelphia discarded his spring-carriage for one without springs; and the additional exercise thus forced upon him by the jolting was held to have prolonged his life. A doctor is expected to be healthy and vigorous, and he should avail himself of all means within reach calculated to maintain or improve his physical health.

We are inclined to the opinion that State Medicine is advancing rapidly in Great Britain, and that it is destined speedily to make more rapid strides towards its proper position in the political system of that country. There are medical men in England, however, who claim that State Medicine is comparatively neglected and its value unrecognized in the political world. Mr. Morris, of Middlesex Hospital, is one of these. Said he, when addressing the students of the present session in an introductory lecture:—"State medicine, or public health, though one of the very corner stones of the social safety of mankind, was far from taking that position which even any tyro in political science would give it, modelling out a perfect political society. When hundreds, nay thousands of our fellow-countrymen were annually destroyed by preventable diseases, no one could deny that the want of a properly adjusted system of sanitary medicine was one of the greatest imperfections of our political community. Instead of working invisibly but efficiently, as an agency of prevention should work, we had lately seen it 'humbly petitioning' a Minister of State that it might be administered by competent authorities, and now we saw it groaning under an Act of Parliament which had excited surprise, dissatisfaction, and indignation. The medical officers of district schools and the medical health officers were subject to the opinions of lay inspectors unacquainted with the cardinal principles of sanitary science. In an African settlement, where the drainage and water-supply were recklessly neglected, and where small-pox and fever were rampant, not only was the sanitary inspector not a medical man, but the administrator was a military man, who first erected an arrangement for accumulating stinking refuse of all kinds under the nostrils of the residents, and then complained

that he found doctors the very bane of his existence." Mr. Morris, it will be noted, cites a colonial example to justify the severity of his animadversions; it is taken too from a Crown settlement. Here, in a colony where we have responsible and representative government, things are no better; and were Mr. Morris acquainted with the utter neglect of State medicine in this country,—where our vaccination laws are inoperative; where no precautions are taken in the care of the public health save when the very outbreak of an epidemic incites a spasmodic and temporary activity; and where, in short, we live amid governmental apathy and neglect, compared with which the state of things under the Public Health Act and the administration of the Local Government Board in England are activity itself,—he would probably have been more content. It is right, however, that he and other progressionists should go on demanding improvements and advances, never resting satisfied till an attainable state of perfection is reached.

ON THE INFLUENCE OF FASHION IN
THE EMPLOYMENT OF DRUGS.

Dr. Edgar Sheppard, in his introductory lecture at King's College, remarked that it was curious to note how a kind of fashion extended to the administration of drugs. A few years ago the rage was for what is called vegetable calomel—the resinous extract of a North American plant, *Podophyllum peltatum*. There was a little epigram floating about the town on its virtues. Alluding to our patients, it ran—

"If you want to gripe and kill 'em, give peltatum podophyllum:
If to cure resultant colic, give them something allopathic."

The now fashionable drug is chloral, to whose great advantages over opium in the treatment of insanity he was in a position to testify. But it is a dangerous remedy, and should not be resorted to without legitimate sanction. Ladies kept it in their medicine chests, and coroners had been under the painful necessity of sitting upon it. This fashion extended also to larger procedures, and to systems, and might yet have a scientific basis. He remembered the time when nearly every disease was treated by venesection. But a great physician, whose name and memory were revered in that College, taught us to *renew* life, and not to weaken it. Dr. Todd stopcocked the life-blood of the whole nation by throwing down the lancet and taking up alcohol. Alcohol became the fashion; it was pushed to an extreme, and ran its little day. We had now sobered into the healthy mean.

THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE YOUNG
PRACTITIONER.

The difficulties of a start in the medical profession are much greater than in that of law or divinity, and this by reason of its complex and inexact nature, as also by the issues which it involves. 'It seems to me,' says a quaint Dutch writer, 'the first fire of *Æsculapius* must be of a deadly nature, when his later and calmer zeal may still prove so dangerous.' 'Aye, there's the rub'—that first fire. A young lawyer may make his first will without much anxiety or