

# THE CANADA LANCET.

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF

MEDICAL AND SURGICAL SCIENCE,  
CRITICISM AND NEWS.

VOL. XVIII. TORONTO, MARCH., 1886. No. 7.

## Original Communications.

### REPORT OF AN OUTBREAK OF DIPHTHERIA IN THE PARISH OF "PAIN COURT."\*

BY GEORGE T. MCKEOUGH, M. B., M. R. C. S. E.,  
CHATHAM, ONTARIO.

The parish of Pain Court, which is inhabited by about 250 families—exclusively French Canadians—adjoins the Dover Plains in the County of Kent, notorious for their malaria and ague. The land is low and flat, the soil a rich clay, and the district an agricultural one. The great majority of the people reside along the banks of a winding creek which runs from one end to the other, and is the principal source of drainage for the parish. In the spring months this creek is a flowing stream, and carries off the refuse material of the entire locality, the larger part of the remainder of the year it is either dry or contains stagnant pools of water. The sanitary environments of the various habitations are perhaps superior to those found in country districts generally, from a natural cleanliness of habit of the people. There is however, no system of drainage whatever. About the centre of the community is a church, school house, saw mill etc., the usual conglomeration of a small country village. Malarious affections are exceedingly common; typhoid fever as yet exceptionally rare; scarlatina and diphtheria have occurred sporadically, but there had been no cases of either for a year or more until the late violent outbreak of diphtheria of which the following is a brief report:

The first cases which occurred were two children of J. B.'s aged respectively 5 and 11 years. They both presented symptoms of the disease the same

\*Read at the Chatham Med. and Surg. Society, January 8th, 1886.

day, Sept. 16th, and within a few hours of one another. During the following week four more children aged 6, 8, 9 and 14 years, of the same family contracted the disease. They all recovered save one—the youngest, aged 5 years, who died Oct. 3rd, being ill 18 days. The cause of death was asthenia. Several members of this family had diphtheria about two years before, when one died; and a year previous to this many of them had scarlatina. This man's house is situated at the very outskirts of the parish of Pain Court, and is surrounded mainly by English speaking people. The house is an old frame building, located upon a slight rise of ground. The barn yard is distant at least one hundred yards up stream from his house. There was nothing special about the premises to indicate any source of generated specific poison except the aforesaid creek, which runs through the corner of his lot, not twenty yards from his house, and which drains his barn-yard. The bed of the creek just here is deeper than ordinary—in consequence, there has been a stagnant pool of water all summer, which imparted characteristic odors to the neighborhood especially at night.

2. The next family afflicted was almost at the other extreme end of the parish, about five miles distant. A boy of P. L.'s, aged 6, was seen by Dr. Holmes, Oct. 9th, and laryngo-tracheal diphtheria diagnosed. This child had been unwell for two months previous, was anæmic, slightly jaundiced, and had frequent attacks of epistaxis. For two weeks prior to the onset of the croup the child had a very sore throat, for which he was kept within doors. Inspection of the throat on several occasions by the parents revealed redness and some swelling of the fauces, but no white patches. During the afternoon of Oct. 7th his throat affection having improved he was permitted out for an hour or more; the greater part of the time he played about the barn-yard or creek. The child made no complaints on going to bed, but his father on awaking the following morning heard him breathing "croupy." The child died Oct. 10th. A brother and sister of the above aged 10 and 12 contracted diphtheria, the former Oct. 29th, the latter Nov. 3rd. Both recovered. The creek passes directly in front of this residence, not thirty yards away. Its bed is here also deeper than usual in its course, and the rainfall