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## Original Communications.

### CHARLATANISM.

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*Concluded.*

Having shown the improprieties and dangers arising from the use of secret remedies, we shall now resume the subject of French legislation on this matter, and proceed to point out the advantages which this country would derive from the adoption of that system. The measures applied in France are certainly very efficacious and strike at the root of the evil, and it would be well for us to put forth our strongest efforts to obtain similar acts from our legislature.

If we are not quite satisfied that the time has fully arrived for the suppression of all these secret remedies that are kept on hand ready prepared, and recommended for the cure of so many diseases, we ought, at least, to deprive them of their mysterious character, as it is from this, chiefly, that most of their popularity arises. The *Medical and Surgical Reporter* of Philadelphia has for a long time past, been publishing formulas of these medicines, which were obtained either from analysis, or from the patent office. To those acquainted with the nature of these compounds, it is scarcely conceivable how men can be such fools as to go to the trouble of obtaining patents under different names, for mixtures of which the composition is, generally, so nearly alike. Parties who do so must have their minds made up to obtain their living by imposture, or else they must be woolly ignorant of the simplest rudiments of the science of medicine. We will suppose, for charity sake, that most of them are in the latter condition,

Those having seen some of their friends restored to health under the use of some particular remedy—it may have been either by its influence, or by the *vis medicatrix nature*—at once suppose that they have made a grand discovery, and really deceive themselves, while they are deceiving others in respect to it.

The only argument of any weight that can be brought forward in defence of our actual system is, that it may be convenient for families, and especially those which are situated at a distance from centres of population, to have a variety of simple remedies within reach, to which they can easily have recourse in sudden attacks of disease.

We admit this to be true, but at the same time affirm, that *patent medicines* fulfil that requirement very imperfectly indeed. For, in the first place, it is extremely difficult to make a judicious choice among them, on account of their all being proclaimed sovereign remedies for nearly all diseases, with a view of increasing their sale; and in the next place it is uncertain and indemonstrable whether they possess the powers attributed to them or not, because their composition is unknown. All unknown medical compounds are potentially dangerous, and therefore the community should be protected against them.

If we cannot deprive people of the privilege of buying such remedies, we might at least compel the manufacturers of them, to place the names of the ingredients, of which they are composed, upon their labels. Public opinion would, by this means, be enabled to exercise such a degree of control over them, that the entirely useless and injurious ones would ultimately disappear.

Persons who are in the habit of physicking themselves with these sort of remedies, and persons living in retired places who believe it necessary to have such at hand, would not be deprived of them by the foregoing arrangement.

Those who are fond of *friction* could have *friction* still, with Radway's Relief or Pain Killer.

Were the possibility of obtaining patents for their pretended discoveries taken from those parties, whose branch of industry is speculating in the ills of humanity, as it should be, they could still avail themselves of their trade-marks to protect their merchandise. Of course this measure would be unpalatable to such gentlemen, inasmuch as it would notably diminish the amount of their profits.