

## IGNORANT LEGISLATION.

It is not at all uncommon to find on our statute books laws the nature of which is bountiful evidence that the men who enacted them were either ignorant of what they did or had no regard, not only for the rights, but for the necessities of their fellow men. It is a pity that every constituency is not represented by a thoroughly able man. It is still more a subject for regret that the men who compose governments do not always appreciate—or, at all events, do not always heed—the facts of the case for legislation. Perhaps, of the two, ignorance is rather to be excused than carelessness in such matters as these.

A case very much in point is that of the Pharmacy Act of Ontario and with it, and in relation to it, might be mentioned the License Act. By legislation enacted at the session of the Ontario Legislature in the early months of 1897 the druggists and chemists were placed in a very awkward position, notwithstanding that the Government had been remonstrated with on the floor of the House before the bill became an Act. Such strong representations were made by druggists to the Government upon the state of the new laws that the Government at the recent session decided upon amendment to allow the licensed pharmacist that liberty which he properly should have in the sale of liquor under reasonable restrictions.

The amendments as finally crystallized into law were somewhat different from the original draft of the changes which was printed, submitted to the House, and undoubtedly would have been passed had not such strong arguments been put before the Government that they found they would be in a most ridiculous position did they restrict from general sale all medicines or preparations containing over seventeen per cent. of alcohol. To the work of Dr. G. S. Howard, of Carlton Place, is in no small degree due the changes brought about which show that the Government have been at last induced to listen to reason.

The law bore more harshly, perhaps, on the sale of those medicines which might properly be classed as household remedies and necessities, and upon homeopathic remedies. The ground of action was that these decoctions might be used for beverages and sold for that use. The druggists secured the privileges they asked for themselves but they were hardly as careful to secure the rights of certain other sections of the community. Let us look into the subject and see what the case is.

Alcohol eighty-eight per cent. is known as rectified spirit. Alcohol fifty per cent. is called proof spirit. Alcohol 100 per cent. is termed absolute alcohol. When any preparation, medicinal or otherwise, contains high percentages of alcohol there is no danger of it becoming a beverage. Instead of the danger being that a preparatory medicine of high alcoholic proportions might be a mere concealment for an intoxicating beverage, it would appear rather that the medicine containing a comparatively small quantity of alcohol is far more likely to become mysteriously popular with tipplers.

First-class rye whiskey is plenty strong enough for the majority, even of those who are accustomed to the use of ardent spirits. Yet this same whiskey contains no more than twenty per cent. under proof spirit, and as proof spirit is but fifty per cent. alcohol, the proportion of alcohol in good whiskey is not very great. This estimate is a maximum

estimate for the very best rye whiskey and it should be remembered that the rye whiskey commonly sold is, on an average, about forty per cent. under proof. This disposes effectually of the idea that medicines of high alcoholic parts are at all likely to be intended for beverages.

Now let us turn to the other feature of the case. Under the law, as the Government in all seriousness proposed to pass it, the sale of the simplest essences and tinctures, which every housewife uses, would have been confined to drug stores. This seems scarcely credible, but it is, nevertheless, a fact. The Government had actually not looked into the facts until Dr. Howard laid them before them. Here is a table dealing with some of the common preparations with which we all are familiar:

TINCTURES.	Proportion of drug used	Proportion of alcohol used per volume.	Alcoholic strength per Vol. proof spirit.	Alcoholic strength per Vol. of 100 parts.	Specific gravity estimated by 100 atoms of water.
			Per cent.	Per cent.	
Arnica, flowers.....	1	20	.....	88	.838
Aloes.....	1	40	.....	88	.838
Anise Seed.....	1	5	.....	88	.838
Asafoetida.....	1	8	.....	88	.838
Orange Peel.....	1	10	.....	88	.838
Benzoin, Co.....	1	10	.....	88	.838
(Friars Balsam)	1	10	.....	88	.838
Bryonin.....	1	10	52	.....	.920
Ruchu.....	1	8	52	.....	.920
Calendula.....	1	5	52	.....	.920
(Marigolds).....	1	5	52	.....	.920
Calumba.....	1	8	52	.....	.920
Capsicum.....	1	27	.....	88	.838
Cardamom seeds.....	1	10	52	.....	.920
Cinnamon.....	1	8	.....	88	.838
Cinchona Co.....	1	10	52	.....	.920
Rhubarb.....	1	10	52	.....	.920
Tolu Balsam.....	1	8	.....	88	.838
Valerian.....	1	8	52	.....	.920
Ginger.....	1	8	.....	88	.838
SPIRITS.					
Camphor.....	1	10	.....	88	.838
ESSENCES.					
Anise seed.....	1	4	.....	88	.838
Ginger (strong).....	1	2	.....	88	.838
Peppermint.....	1	5	.....	88	.838
Rosmary.....	1	50	.....	88	.838

These tinctures and essences are commonly sold by the grocers and every general store throughout the country carries a stock of them, as they are all used in almost every family for medicine or to flavor food. Had the Act been passed as was at first proposed farmers would have had to drive long distances to secure their supplies of these things. Just one instance in point to show what would have been the state of affairs which was happily averted: In the large county of Carleton there is not a drug store outside of the city of Ottawa. It is forty miles from Arnprior to Ottawa with not a single drug store between these two points. You can see what a hardship it would be to farmers and people of the little villages if they could not obtain their domestic drugs and medicines such as tinctures, pain killers, and the like, at close hand as would be the case if the proposed legislation had become law. We are glad that the Government owned their mistake and corrected it in time to prevent injustice and expense to hundreds of people.

It is not easy to understand why a Government anxious to enact fair laws could not have secured elementary information about this matter. The first step in law-making would appear to be knowledge of what was required, and the facili-