

The Unsatisfactory Canadian Patent Medicine Act.

A careful perusal of the new Canadian Act respecting proprietary and patent medicines will leave the impression that the law has been framed with a view rather to appeasing public clamor than to furnishing public protection. The law defines "proprietary or patent medicine," in the sense in which the terms are used in the statute, as any artificial remedy or prescription whose name, composition or definition is not to be found in the various pharmacopeias or approved formularies or—and herein lies "joker" number one—which has not the "true formula or list of medicinal ingredients, which must not contain cocain," printed on the label or wrapper. This would seem to mean that nostrums of the most dangerous and objectionable type would not come under the jurisdiction of the new act, providing they contained no cocain, and their ingredients were published on the label. That is to say, such nostrums as Peruna and Orangeine, whose manufacturers claim to publish the "formulas," would not be "patent medicines" within the meaning of the new Canadian law! Nor is this the only weakness in the new statute. A poison schedule is given and any "patent medicine" containing one of the scheduled drugs must have the name of such drug—nothing is said of the quantity—"conspicuously printed" on the label and wrapper. Provided, however—"joker" number two—that if the manufacturer tells the authorities the quantity of any such scheduled drug his nostrum contains he may be permitted to sell his "patent medicine" without printing the name of this drug on the label "if it appears to the minister that the proportion of the drug used is not dangerous to health"! The potentiality for harm of this provision is limited only by the judgment of the man to whom is entrusted the enforcement of the act. It would seem that the new law will actually protect the Canadian public against cocain-containing nostrums; but from the innumerable other vicious forms of self-administered medicaments the act seems to offer tempting opportunities for the unscrupulous manufacturer to profit at the expense of the people. It may be that if the law is broadly interpreted and wisely administered our northern neighbors may obtain that measure of protection which they evidently desired; should it be enforced, however, with that slavish adherence to the letter, rather than to the spirit, that too often characterizes the execution of laws, we fear that Canadians will soon awaken to the fact that their representatives have handed them a legislative "gold-brick."—Editorial, *J. A. M. A.*