

ciations from conscientious physicians ; but we speak of a multitude of other preparations besides them, which, without being so dangerous to public morality, are the cause of a host of the chronic diseases to which our population is subject. There is not a medical man but has encountered in the course of his practice, cases of the nature referred to, amongst that class of persons who have ruined their constitutions by a prolonged use of these medicaments.

We are at the present time attending a young lady, who, by the recommendation of a midwife, took a certain kind of drastic pills that were advertised in the newspapers, during nearly the whole time of her pregnancy. Fortunately they were followed by no immediate accident ; but the gastric and intestinal mucous membrane were thereby irritated to such a degree, that a return to her former state of health is doubtful. And this is but one example among thousands that might be cited, were the observations of our professional brethren consulted.

Among the dangerous remedies, also, we may class the numberless narcotic preparations designed to quiet children, which though sold under different names, all produce similar effects by the opium they contain in greater or less quantities. These drugs are vended everywhere, by both grocers and druggists, and their consumption is immense. We know from reliable information, that one druggist alone in Montreal sold 30,000 bottles of one of these preparations in a single year !

Now if the extreme susceptibility of children to the action of opium, and the profound changes it produces in all the functions of their organism, are considered, we cannot be surprised that numerous diseases and even death, result from a prolonged administration, or from too large doses of this powerful remedy, when it is thus entrusted to inexperienced hands. Inquests upon children poisoned by the use of these narcotic preparations are very common in England ; and how many cases of this kind must escape the vigilance of the authorities ?

Thirdly, supposing these remedies to be indifferent (or neutral), that is, incapable of producing disease of themselves, they are still liable to become the cause of a great deal of evil, by inducing the sick to confide in their virtues until disease has become so deeply rooted in their systems,

that cure may be almost impossible. And such cases as these are frequent enough in practice.

The least of the evils produced by them is the occasional expenditure, by their unfortunate patrons, of a good round sum of money upon the treatment of a disease, which they might have got rid of for an insignificant trifle, had they at once consulted a physician.

* * * * *

Errors in the application of patent medicines are sufficiently frequent, and in most cases injurious to the individual's health. Hence it is our duty, as guardians of the public health, to warn the public of the dangers to which they expose themselves by trusting to these remedies ; for whether they are good, bad, or indifferent in themselves, they are all capable of producing injurious effects by being improperly applied.

We may remark still further, that most of these secret remedies are nothing but vile compounds, and owe their popularity to the ingenious ways in which they are advertised by every possible means. In this respect, the press, the mission of which ought to be to instruct and enlighten, is, for pecuniary considerations, made the instrument by whose agency any imposter may bring a dangerous remedy into public notoriety. And even the most immoral advertisements are not refused ; so that journals, otherwise respectable, contain descriptions of diseases, which any prudent father of a family would hesitate to place before the eyes of his children. It may be, that the proprietors of newspapers, etc., are ignorant of the pernicious consequences of these immoral advertisements, and follow, without reflection many times, the example given them by the press of the neighboring Republic. The evil exists, nevertheless, and is worthy of our most serious attention.

To reach this difficulty in an effective manner, the law should prohibit the advertising and sale of every secret remedy, whether it is without virtue, or whether it is injurious to the health and even dangerous to life, or whether it may be useful in relieving the sick. For, in the first two cases, it is the duty of the legislature to prevent charlatanism from imposing a tax upon credulity, and from occasioning fatal accidents ; and in the last, the good of society demands that it should promulgate every means useful in the art of healing, and favor its adoption.