

Pharmaceutical Department.

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CHEAP DRUGS.

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In several medical journals published in the United States, very caustic and, at the same time, very true remarks have been made about the sale of inferior drugs and chemicals. Country practitioners appear to have most to say on the subject. It must not, however, be forgotten, that if there were no country practitioners to buy these cheap drugs, there would be none sold. The selling of inferior drugs to the general public is not here alluded to. One can hardly conceive a man so base as to knowingly supply a customer *unable to judge for himself* with a useless and inefficient drug. When the matter is limited to buying and selling, as between druggist and physician, one scarcely knows whom to blame most, the physician eager to buy the very lowest grade of medicine *merely because it is cheap*, or the druggist equally eager to sell it.

"An' if a man did need a poison now,
Here lives a caitiff wretch would sell it him."

There are numbers of men in the United States, poorly educated as a rule, with no technical training whatever, who embark in the drug business, allured with the prospect that "there's millions in it," firmly resolved by fair means or foul to pocket some of those *enormous profits* popularly supposed to be the druggist's perquisite. These men look upon everything they handle in a purely commercial light, and the lowest grades of drugs and chemicals are purchased by them wherever obtainable. Low prices tempt the average country practitioner and patronage soon flows in, for no other reason than because *the drugs are cheap*. The purchaser makes no enquiry as to the maker of the chemical, nor makes any examination into the purity of the drug. Price is the only object sought.

That businesses, built up on such a reputation, are stable, is open to grave doubt, but that there is a large demand for inferior drugs in every city of the American Union is only too painfully evident. Almost every price current teems with chemical and pharmaceutical preparations at prices which effectually preclude the possibility of their being up to the standard of the Pharmacopœia. Let us hope this wave of business trickery or dishonesty has not reached our fair Dominion. Reports which have occasionally appeared at the annual meetings of the Pharmaceutical Association of the United States have alluded very favorably on the whole to the class of drugs to be found in Canadian pharmacies.

A fact or two will unfortunately show that, even in Montreal, purchasers should seek more

after quality than price. A druggist of this city supplied an institution with a certain powdered bark, for which he charged the moderate price of 80 cents per lb. What was his astonishment when informed, and proof given, that a contemporary had offered an article under the same name at 25 cents per lb. A country physician ordered from town an ounce bottle of ferri et quina citras. He was charged 60 cents per ounce, including the bottle. Quinine at the time was worth \$5 per ounce. Comment is unnecessary. The remedy appears to be for practitioners who, from locality or class of practice, are obliged to furnish their own medicines, to be extremely careful in purchasing, and to invariably order all preparations *according to the British Pharmacopœia*, thus steadily setting their faces against cheap drugs and chemicals of indefinite strength and unknown manufacture. A little liberality on the part of the purchaser, and a little closer scrutiny as to quality, will soon cure the evil.

NOTES ON APPRENTICESHIP.

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Pharmacists are frequently applied to by young men of twenty to twenty-three years of age, and even older (allured doubtless by the fabulous profits with which the drug business is popularly credited), desirous of being taken as apprentices or pupils to learn the drug business.

Any one at all conversant with the immense amount of daily practical experience required to make a man an efficient pharmacist will readily be impressed with the absurdity of any one beginning to learn the art of pharmacy at such an advanced period of life. The best age to begin an apprenticeship, and all authorities agree on this point, is fifteen or at latest sixteen years, and experience has shown that a youth who commences his pharmaceutical education at this age is immensely more efficient than one beginning later in life. There is a certain enthusiasm in early youth which surmounts all the drudgery of the first two or three years in a drug store, and a young man who has not gone through the drudgery has not learned the rudiments of his occupation, and without the rudiments all after experience and theoretical knowledge is built on a false foundation. The clerk who is well ground by years of gradually acquired experience in the *practice* of pharmacy is worth double the salary of one possessed only of the theory. A man experienced in both *from early youth upwards* is the most valuable of all. In England apprentices are usually indentured at fifteen, and five years is the usual term. A premium is paid in every case, and when the apprentice resides with his employer no salary is given. In the United States and Canada, apprentices are very rarely indentured, but a