

PRESSED HERBS.*

BY J. U. LLOYD.

Herbs are pressed to reduce their bulk, they then are compact, require but little space for storage, and are easily handled. If I mistake not, I have named about the only advantages pressed herbs possess over loose.

My experiments teach me that they deteriorate nearly, if not quite, as rapidly when pressed as loose. In either case, they are exposed to the action of the atmosphere, and the decomposing effects of the moisture with which it is usually laden. Insects attack both. Pressed herbs, without a doubt, mould quickest. Excepting the mere matter of bulk there is no inducement for pressing herbs. Common paper bags, or even cotton sacks, will preserve them as well. The desideratum of the day is a process for preserving the delicate medicinal principles of our herbs from season to season. If this can be accomplished, in conjunction with compactness of form, so much the better, otherwise let us choose quality first, even though it be at the sacrifice of convenience in handling.

In the proceedings of the Amer. Pharmaceutical Association, 1875, we find an article from the pen of Mr. A. W. Miller, upon an improved method for preserving herbs, said improvement being the substitution of pasteboard boxes for paper. The herbs, instead of being pressed by the dealers into compact masses, as is now customary, are, by the pharmacists themselves, firmly packed into the box by hand, remaining loose enough to admit of examination at any time. In my opinion, the important point in connection with dried herbs is preservation, not convenience. Is there any advantage to be derived, in this respect, from the substitution of pasteboard boxes for our machine presses, or even paper or cotton bags? Will boxes prevent the ravages of insects, or preserve the delicate organic principles upon which many of our herbs depend for their medicinal values? This is the direct issue, not convenience in packing and the value of shelf room.

Personally, I have met with many aggravations respecting loose and pressed herbs, barks and roots, as found upon the market. Necessity has compelled me to experiment upon their preservation. The subject is very important to every druggist and pharmacist, and I feel that a brief description of the most successful of my experiments will be of interest to many readers of the "Journal." To preserve herbs with any satisfaction, I was compelled to use airtight tin cans. Gather the herb when in its prime, quickly and carefully dry it, then, by hand, press it into the can, sprinkle upon

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