

whose business it is to study drugs. The first is that too many people endeavor to diagnose their own troubles from the patent medicine advertisement and fly to the medicine whether it is suited or not to their complaint. And the other good reason is the companion of the first, in that the general public and the average grocer are not acquainted with the composition of the medicines bought and sold. Yet many of them contain active drugs and chemicals, which should never be prescribed except by a physician acquainted with the idiosyncracies of the patient, e.g., strychnine and morphine. As an illustration of the danger attending an unrestricted sale of patent medicines, I may mention the case of a "kidney" preparation that had a run some years ago. It was a harsh "cheap" preparation of saltpetre, selling at a dollar a bottle, and unquestionably did much harm. Its composition was exposed in the drug journals. Another more recent case was that of a "fattening" preparation, which consisted of glucose alone. By the efforts of the American druggists its sale was suppressed by the United States courts.

But you are probably not aware that the movement for the unrestricted sale of patent medicines in this province has behind it the further demand of the unrestricted sale of all drugs whatsoever. And if the legislative sanction is given in the one case on the ground that everybody is competent to judge of patent medicines, it is difficult to see how it can be refused in the other case. It might, of course, be necessary to supplement such legislation by introducing brief courses on materia medica and pharmacy into the elementary and intermediate schools of the province. These courses, in addition to the chemistry already taught, would doubtless soon render it unnecessary to have any drug stores other than those which could be set up in the corner of every grocery. But if, on the other hand, it is recognized that the specializing tendency of the age works in the direction of greater competence, skill and economy of the general effort, it might be better to give (as is increasingly the fact in France, Belgium and Germany) the druggists the chance to live and to develop their work to a higher position.

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Richmond, December 27th, 1898.

One notable exception is *La Minerve*, which in its issue of Jan. 21st devoted two columns to an able statement of the reasons why the amendments should not be adopted.

## A REVIEW OF PHARMACY DURING THE YEAR 1898.

In looking back over the events of the past year, the most striking are the publication of the British Pharmacopœia, which has brought out a large number of criticisms and suggestions; the organization of a new association of retail druggists in the U. S.; the improvement in the condition of naval apothecaries, brought about by the action of the A. Ph.A.; and nearer home, the attempt to modify the Quebec Pharmacy Act, in which department stores and grocers joined hands.

### THE BRITISH PHARMACOPŒIA, 1898.

The Pharmacopœia Committee in publishing this work adopted a few modern ideas, but in one at least the adoption was only half-hearted, that is the metric system, which is now used side by side with the imperial system in all the preparations, while it is the only one utilized in the paragraphs on testing. We suppose that the committee was actuated by motives of prudence, that with the conservatism so characteristic of English methods it was feared that the total adoption of the decimal system would be too great a shock; and, perhaps the committee was right in so doing. The adoption of assay methods for a number of preparations was a step in the right direction, although it is also a little short. Several others should have been included with belladonna, cinchona, ipecacuanha, nux vomica and opium, for instance, strophanthus, a most important drug, stramonium, coca, hyoscyamus and others. Several drug friends of our youth have been cast into oblivion and replaced by new comers, with advantage.

Of the preparations, it would appear that the book was published more for the benefit of prescribers than of dispensers. The innovations introduced in the strengths for the purpose of uniformity of doses has produced no end of changes in the proportion for tinctures and solid extracts particularly, while the processes for extracts, liquid extracts, syrups and tinctures in many instances leave much to be desired. The new concentrated liquors, as a rule, are anything but satisfactory from the pharmacist's point of view, both as regards the methods of preparation and keeping qualities; the former we find cumbersome and wasteful, and as for the latter, within a short while after being made, a heavy sediment forms in almost all of them.

The greatest improvement, however, has been in the description of the tests and characters of the drugs and chemicals, which are brought fully up to date, the greatest complaint being that several of them demand greater purity in the chemicals than is obtainable unless much higher prices are paid for the goods. Several criticism of this part of the work have been published in the English journals by