

new quantities frequently before the observation, but we are inclined to the belief that this difficulty has been much exaggerated, and think that an hours study of the new weights, and the use of a set of French weights and measures, for even a few days, would insure, in the great majority of instances, the requisite familiarity.

We notice that the Pharmaceutical Board, of Great Britain require a knowledge of the new system, from those who come before them for examination. This may be held to imply that the next pharmacopœia will require such knowledge, and we think this more than likely. If such be the case, it is time that attention was directed to the subject, so that when our transatlantic fathers shall command, our apprentices may be found as familiar with grammes and litres, as they now are with the common denominations of the old *avoirdupois*.

In another page will be found a table of the values of the more common French weights and measures, together with a series of useful rules, for the intermutation of the two systems.

#### THE PERCENTAGE SYSTEM.

In another column will be found a communication from an esteemed correspondent in Montreal, complaining of the injustice of a system, which, though widely prevalent, is none the less to be discountenanced—we refer to the allowing of a percentage on prescriptions. That such a system exists to a large extent throughout Canada, is an undeniable fact; that it is undignified on the part of the profession; unfair when practised by the druggist; and dishonest towards the public, is equally apparent. We shall endeavour to prove this.

In the first place we hold the physician and druggist, with their respective callings, as distinct and separate; the right of one is to prescribe, that of the other to dispense; each is, or should be, capable of performing his part without colliding with the other; and should keep to that part—in the strictest sense, "minding his own business." The recent Medical Act very sharply defines the line of demarkation, over which the druggist may not pass; by enacting that "no person shall be entitled to recover any charge in any court of law for any medical or surgical advice, or for any attendance, or for the performance of any operation, or for any medicine which he shall have both supplied and prescribed, unless he shall prove upon the trial that he is registered under this Act" (i. e. unless he be a legally qualified medicine practitioner.) If then the druggist is so effectually cut off, by medical law, from any profits he might derive from prescribing, we

think the charge of "undignified" professional business may well lie at the door of the physician who tries to add to his gains by pilfering the scanty earnings of the poor apothecary.

A correspondent of the *Montreal Star*, appears to take a similar view of the subject, he says:

"Is it fair? Is it, honest? Unfortunately I am a druggist, and as such I am frequently called upon by my customers to prescribe for their little ailments. Knowing that it is not lawful in the country for druggists to prescribe, I invariably refer them to the doctor, and what return do you think I get for doing so? Why, sir, in nine cases out of ten, my customer is prescribed for by the doctor, and sent to some other store to get his prescription dispensed; and this is an every day occurrence. Now, I should like to ask the doctor, whether the druggist has any incentive to keep within the law, and not poach on the doctors' preserves?"

The only remedy which the druggists, who refuse to commit themselves to this abominable percentage system, can apply, is to open the eyes of the public to the fact, that they have a perfect right to take their prescriptions to their own family druggist, and that for a doctor to order them not to do so, is a piece of impertinence and professional humbug, which very few families in England would submit to.

When a doctor knowingly influences his patient, to leave the drug store, where he may have dealt with satisfaction for years, in order to send him elsewhere, and that for no other reason, but because he had an underhand arrangement, whereby he gets back part of the money paid to the druggist for medicines, in addition to his regular fee, it is such a self-evident breach of medical etiquette, as well as such a mean piece of injustice to druggists generally, that it is surprising, that men who are forever pitching into quackery and humbug, and who hold positions as professors of medical colleges, should be guilty of such practices."

From a perusal of the above paragraph, the *London Chemist and Druggist* is led to think that "the members of the medical profession, in Canada, do not appear to be immaculate." We are inclined, in some measure, to the same opinion, and rather think if druggists would ask a percentage from physicians to whom they recommend patients, the medical profession would stigmatize the interference with a stronger term than "undignified."

The charge of unfairness alleged against those giving a percentage, may be disposed of at the same time with that of dishonesty to the public.

It may be assumed as a law of fair trading that every article has a certain just value, which is regulated by certain known conditions, but which cannot be departed from, without doing injustice, either to the purchaser or the seller. The honest druggist calculates the average value of materials and labor; adds what he considers a just profit, and asks for his mixture a certain fixed price, allowing of no abatement, either to doctor or patient.

The result is that his prescription book is lean and famished, while that of his rival, across the street, who allows 33 per cent. to the prescriber, literally stands out with fatness. He wonders how the thing is managed, and perhaps consoles himself with thinking that his compromising opponent is playing a losing game for the sake of custom. Perhaps he is. There is another way, however, of unravelling the mystery, of which the *Montreal Witness* has got the cue. In remarking on a similar case that journal says:

"The druggist preferred by the doctor charged a higher price, and, on one occasion, through a cheap and inefficient assistant, furnished a very dangerous substitute instead of the right medicine." Cheap drugs, incompetent assistants, and high prices, reveal the secret; either this or dead loss, for we hold that no honest trade can admit of a reduction of 33 per cent. in its profits—and this we are assured is the usual percentage. This, like all other evils, will work its own cure. The public cannot long remain blind to such a flimsy artifice, and the sooner the veil is raised, the better for honest men.

#### THE COMING U. S. PHARMACOPŒIA.

We notice the announcement of a meeting, to be held at Washington, on the first Wednesday in May, 1870, for the purpose of revising the U. S. Dispensatory. Delegates, not to exceed three in number, are invited from each of the incorporated Medical Societies, and Colleges, and incorporated Colleges of Pharmacy, throughout the United States.

Although, in Canada, we are not supposed to be directly interested in the revision of an authority of a different nationality, yet we are sure that the coming volume will be looked for, here, with as much anxiety as on the other side; nor do we think the wish to have the revision as complete as possible is less sincere. We have always looked upon the U. S. P. as an admirable work, not only as furnishing good, practical formula, but as conveying an incomparable amount of information on the subjects on which it treats, acceptable to both master and pupil. Were it not for our national vanity we might institute a comparison which would be quite flattering to our American cousins; but suffice it to say, that we believe the Dispensatory to be more widely disseminated throughout Canada than any other authority, and this fact speaks for itself.

We approve of the plan pursued in reference to this work; that is the combination of the formula and directions with the materia medica, and chemistry of the different preparations. It may be argued that a bulky volume is produced, which is not so good for reference. This is to some extent