

MATERIA MEDICA

Materia Medica is so wide a term that it is difficult to define. It includes the following:

(a) **Materia Medica proper**, sometimes called Pharmacognosy. This is the knowledge of the natural history, physical characters, and chemical properties of drugs.

(b) **Pharmacy**.—This is the science and art of the preparation and combination of drugs, so as to render them fit for administration.

(c) **Pharmacology**. This is the science which treats of the actions of drugs on the body both in health and disease. A subdivision of it is Pharmacodynamics, which is the science of the physiological action of drugs in health. The science which studies the effects of doses large enough to endanger life is **Toxicology**.

(d) **Therapeutics** is the science and art of alleviating or curing disease. Many authors do not include this under the term *Materia Medica*. Therapeutics is either

(1) **Rational**, when we have sufficient knowledge of the disease and the pharmacological action of the remedy to know why it should be of benefit, *e.g.* The use of digitalis for mitral disease.