

*To the Editor of The Canada Medical Record.*

SIR:—I had intended commencing the study of medicine this fall in the city of Montreal, but on my reaching that city I was more than mortified to find that I was unable to do so. The cause of my occupying this, to me, most unfortunate position was that I had neglected to follow the new Act, which says that the preliminary examination before the Board must be passed previous to the first year's attendance at college. This was news indeed to me, for I had intended to present myself for examination before the University examiner. I was, however, willing to go before any one, but was told there was no help for it but to wait till next spring, as the Board examinations were over. I am thus obliged to wait a whole year. It does seem to me that the Act being a new one, and its provisions not very generally known, that some provision should be made whereby a special examination might be had; indeed, I am told that in Ontario for an extra fee a special matriculation examination may be had at any time. Why not so in Quebec?

RAWDON, Q., November 5, 1877. S.

We have heard of several cases, all much like that of our correspondent. In one instance that we know of the gentlemen went to Ontario paid an extra fee, got his examination, and was successful. We think it would have been better had "S." done the same, rather than lose a whole year. We, however, agree with our correspondent that our own Board should be able to give special examinations.

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## Progress of Medical Science.

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### SOME POINTS IN THE ART OF PRESCRIBING FOR CHILDREN.

By ROBERT FARQUHARSON, M.D., F.R.C.P., Lecturer on Materia Medica at St Mary's Hospital Medical School, etc.

I venture to put before you a few practical observations on some points in the art of prescribing for children, because the subject is one which has hardly yet been treated on a sufficiently comprehensive basis. Much valuable but scattered information may be gleaned from the pages of contemporary literature, and much of what I am about to say has been said before; but it seems to me that some little service may be rendered by weaving these threads of knowledge into something of a more connected whole, and obtaining the opinion of some of those experienced physicians who have devoted themselves to the diseases of the very young.

Time, however, will not permit me to do more than touch, and that briefly, upon one point in connection with a subject which is really a large one, and to lay before you some facts and ideas on dosage; and here, again, I must once more subdivide, and take only a small section of a great therapeutical question, whose importance has only very recently begun to acquire that general appreciation which it eminently deserves. I might well be tempted to invite you to join with me in some reflections as to the comparative efficacy of the occasional large or the oft-repeated minute dose—a question which must before long become one of the most pressing in the materia medica; or it might be interesting to inquire as to the desirability or otherwise of inducing the physiological effects of drugs for the relief of pathological conditions; but at this time I mean to restrict myself simply to this proposition—the difference between children and adults in respect of the quantities of various drugs which may be taken, not only with actual impunity, but with absolute benefit.

Now, systematic works have too often not only ignored the teachings of Ringer, Fuller, and other modern investigators, but have done much to hamper and confuse our knowledge in this direction by laying down the law that children necessarily require much smaller doses of most of our active drugs than adults; and we, therefore, see in books on materia medica, as well as on children's diseases, elaborate tables setting forth the quantities to be prescribed with safety at different periods of early life. Some years ago, and possibly even now, a student would run a good chance of being afforded the opportunity of continuing his studies, were he to tell his examiners that a child can take a dose of belladonna with impunity which would probably induce physiological symptoms in the adult; and, as a natural consequence of this mode of teaching, great timidity in practice has resulted; and that this may be a positive evil requires but little reflection to show. If a dose of a particular remedy be too small to effect the purpose for which it is ordered, it is much more likely to do harm than good. Thus an insufficient purgative merely irritates the patient's bowels without giving relief; too small an opiate excites the nervous system and banishes that sleep which it was intended to attract, and numerous other instances will readily occur in illustration of a statement which hardly requires such confirmation.

Granted, then, the importance of administering our remedy in doses sufficient to produce their full remedial effect, I shall lay down, as my first and only proposition, that children require doses of many medicines quite as large as those which are commonly ordered for persons of mature age. Now, when I speak of children, I shall not refer to mere infants, whose tender organization and sensitive organs and functions require special consideration from a therapeutical point of view. Thus the yielding nature of their skulls, admitting as it must of wide differences in the proportion of cerebral blood, no less than the natural tendency to sleep at that early age, plainly indicate caution in the use of narcotics. Purgatives