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Toronto, May, 1868. 1-

It is unfortunate, however, that this method
cannot be employed for its purification as its
chief impurity—arsenic—would of course
sublimate with it. When heated in the air it
oxidizes rapidly, and if the heat be raised
takes fire, burning with a bluish flame, and
giving off a dense yellow smoke which con-
denses as a yellowish powder—the trioxide.

We shall reserve the consideration of the
chemical relations of bismuth for a future
paper.

THE RENEWAL OF PRESCRIPTIONS.

BY HENRY J. ROSE, TORONTO.

The medical and pharmaceutical world
south of the lakes has been agitating, for
some time past, the question as to the extent
to which the renewal of physicians' prescrip-
tions is justifiable. The question was mooted
at the meeting of the East River Medical
Association of New York in 1867, and their
views embodied in an address to the Ameri-
can Pharmaceutical Association, taking the
ground that it was unjust to the medical pro-
fession, and frequently an injury to the pub-
lic, to allow prescriptions to be repeated in-
discriminately, and calling upon the Ameri-
can Pharmaceutical Association to take
means to suppress the practice. That society
took the matter up at its last annual meet-
ing, held in Philadelphia in September last,
and showed that the practice was general of
repeating medicines for the original patient,
or any one to whom he gave the number or
distinctive mark of the prescription, and
giving copy of the original, if desired. They
held that the prescription was the property
of the patient, and that it would be impos-
sible to restrict the demand for its renewal;
while recommending the dispenser to use his
judgment in cases where the continued use
of any of the ingredients would be injurious.
Such were the leading points of the cour-
teous reply to the Medical Society.

The question has, since then, received a
fresh impetus by a melancholy accident which
occurred in Philadelphia on the 3rd Novem-
ber. A lady had obtained a prescription
from her brother—a doctor—for some pills,
containing two grains of assafoetida, which
had been repeated several times. On that
day she sent for some more, when the drug-
gist mistook assafoetida for atropia, alleging
that the prescription had become blurred.
Of course, the first dose proved fatal. This
is certainly rather a slim thread on which to
hang a demand for abolishing all renewals
of prescriptions; for a so-called druggist,
who would put two grains of atropia into a
dose of medicine, no matter how legibly
written the prescription might be, could
scarcely be looked upon as a model for a dis-

dispenser. Still, the medical press urge this as
an argument. The *Medical Record*, of New
York, among others, claims this as a deduc-
tion; and, while urging the point, gives, in
the January number, a letter from a legal
authority in Washington, in which he argues
the question as to the patient's and apothec-
ary's rights in a prescription. He draws a
distinction between the usufruct, or benefit
of using, and the formula itself, which latter
belongs to the physician, the former being
the *quid pro quo* to the patient; and looks on
a prescription as under the same legal obli-
gations as a letter, or literary document, the
absolute property of the receiver for his own,
but not for public use, without the consent
of the writer; and afterwards quotes cases
where even the publication of a letter is jus-
tifiable, when in vindication of the receiver's
own rights.

With regard to the legal obligations of the
apothecary in the case, he is at full liberty
to dispense a prescription as often as called
upon by the party owning the usufruct, but
he has no authority over the formula in the
way of using it or making it public. But to
make the prescription come under the same
law as a letter, it must have the signature in
full of the physician, and the name of the
party for whose use it is written. His recom-
mends, as the proper legal remedy, one that
will limit the right of sale of certain articles
of *materia medica*, such as mercurials, anti-
monials, narcotics, drastrics, and poisons, by
requiring a fresh order for each sale of any
prescription containing either of such articles.

Now, although we may, and no doubt do,
recognize an injustice to the physician in the
the indiscriminate repeating of prescriptions,
there is not sufficient proof that the practice
is carried to such an extent as to warrant
the passing of a law as stringent as the one
mentioned. The case of the accident quoted
is entirely baseless as an argument, except in
favor of a higher standard of ability behind
the dispensing counter. Any and every law-
ful attempt in this direction will meet with
the approval of every real pharmacist, and
is the prime object of the society to which
we belong.

The proper remedy for the injustice to the
physician is to be obtained, not in hamper-
ing the druggists by legislative restrictions
—means tending more to create than allay
an opposition of interests, which ought never
to arise—but could be fully secured by mutual
understanding between them. A physi-
cian has only to express his wish that a pre-
scription of his shall only be dispensed on his
own order, and our faith in the moral recti-
tude of nine-tenths of the druggists of On-
tario at least, is such, that we believe such
recommendation will have as much weight as