

THE
British American Journal.

MONTREAL, MARCH, 1862.

CHARLATANISM.

Every member of the profession is well acquainted with the unprincipled devices to which charlatans resort to secure their object. These are little suspected by the public, on whom they prey like vampyres. So little does the suspicion of being duped take possession of the public mind; so little does it think their pretences flimsy, that if one of the class were to indicate such or such a remedy of his own invention or discovery as a panacea for some especial ill, such as rheumatism, it would yield him the most implicit credence, even were an angel from heaven to point out the deception.

The charlatan knows well, however, that success will never crown his efforts unless he can fortify his pretensions by numberless certificates of the efficacy of the remedy which he is proposing. Accordingly no means are left untried to secure this object, and as the public is unable to judge of their genuineness, no scruples whatever are entertained as to their manufacture *pro re nata*. We therefore find every crowned head of Europe, the Brother of the sun and moon, the Imaun of Muscat, and the Tycoon of Japan, besides a host of smaller dignitaries in Church and State lugged in, to testify by certificate to the marvellous efficacy of the particular remedy. However much the profession, with a sincere desire for the public welfare, may lament this manifest wholesale perversion of truth, it cannot alter the stern reality of the fact, as the excessive gullibility of the public would seem to justify the saying of the poet, that "where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise." The following are specimens of these deceptions which have come within our own knowledge.

About the year 1850, Dr. Ayer, of Lowell, introduced to the notice of the profession, at the same time giving the formula, a very beautiful combination of remedial agents, especially adapted to pulmonic affections in certain of their stages, and called the "Cherry Pectoral." From the fact that the formula was published by the Medical Press of this whole continent, this Journal among the number, it was extensively patronized by the profession, and still is under its peculiar conditions deservedly so. Not satisfied with the cautious opinion of its merits