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ILLUSTRATIONS
OF THE
LITERATURE OF QUACKERY.

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[Read before the California State Medical Society at the Annual Meeting, April 15, 1874.]

That "people like to be humbugged" is a saying more practical than elegant; and it is exemplified, more than in any other way, in the universal currency given to impostors and impostures that concern the public health. Physicians are often censured for not taking more pains to separate the false from the true, the spurious from the genuine, in medicine and medical practice, so that people may discriminate between them. If the discrimination were made, it is not certain that the popular current would be turned in the right channel. There is no doubt that many persons would be more attracted, as indeed they are already, by the meretricious trappings of charlatanry than by the more sober claims of science and truth. Whether for good or for evil, I propose, on the present occasion, to give utterance to some thoughts and observations bearing on this subject.

A large proportion of the patent and secret medicines with which simple-minded people delight to experiment on their organs, have been stolen from the regular profession. A patient who believes that he has been cured by a certain prescription, grows enthusiastic in favor of the remedy, and recommends it indiscriminately. What multitudes of men and women will advise medicines, and what multitudes will



swallow them, on this primitive logic! It reminds one of the saying of Franklin, that when he considered to what bad uses human reason is often applied, he was ready to wish that Providence had bestowed on man a sensible instinct in its stead. Popular therapeutics seldom rise above the standard of the historic quack, who discovered by experience that a salt herring would cure a Scotchman of a fever, but would kill a Frenchman.

With better judgment and better opportunities, apothecaries sometimes prostitute their office and beget nostrums. Behind the counter, handling prescriptions, they have frequent means of ascertaining the effects of certain agents or combinations on certain diseases. Appropriating to their own illegitimate purposes the knowledge thus procured through the patients of the medical man who confides to them his prescriptions, they add to the already prolific spawn of secret cure-alls. Thus they become not only prescribers but quacks and nostrum-mongers. At this moment the street cars of San Francisco exhibit posters offering a thousand dollars reward for a case of whooping cough which cannot be cured by a compound prepared by one of our apothecaries.

The only female apothecary I ever knew flourished in my native town in the State of Delaware, when I was a lad. She was well educated for that day, and she educated herself still further by gathering from her customers all the information she should obtain as to the disease which the prescriptions they brought to her were designed for, and the effects. This information she recorded in a book kept for the purpose. Her ingenuity and industry were rewarded by a valuable clinical record, more complete and more practical, most likely, than any which were kept by the doctors who wrote the prescriptions. In this way she learned the art of prescribing. It so happened that my father, who was a physician, was in the habit of prescribing for the flatulent colic of infants a mixture containing oil of anise, with magnesia or chalk. The female apothecary soon discovered the value of the preparation, and forthwith engaged in the manufacture and sale of it

on her own account, announcing it as "*Dr. Gibbons's Colic Drops.*" My father detested quackery in all its phases, and I well remember his consternation when he discovered that his prescription had been converted into a nostrum and his name identified with it in this manner.

I may remark in passing that "*Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup*" owes much of its virtue to oil of anise, and that it is essentially a mixture of this oil with morphia—the latter in variable proportions, but in quantity sufficient to have proved fatal in a number of well-attested cases. In fact "*Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup*" is one of the most dangerous nostrums in the market; nevertheless it is sold by apothecaries in general, and by some even placarded conspicuously in their windows!

The senior members of the profession will recollect a long string of "*panaceas*," "*catholicons*," pulmonic balsams, and so forth, commencing with "*Swaim's Panacea*," about half a century ago. An ignorant book-binder in New York, who could not even write his name, contracted a disreputable disease, for which he was treated by Dr. Quackenboss, then an old practitioner in that city. He was cured by the aid of a preparation of sarsaparilla, similar to the French "*Sirop de Cuisinier*," the formula for which the doctor kindly gave to his patient, that he might save expense by manufacturing it for himself. Swaim removed to Philadelphia, and conceived the idea of turning his personal experience to profit. He made a quantity of the syrup and took it to the Pennsylvania Hospital, and asked permission to give it to some of the patients. The patients appeared to be benefitted, and Swaim then requested Professors Chapman and Gibson, visiting physician and surgeon of the Hospital, to give their estimate of it in writing. This they did thoughtlessly, after being apprized of the ingredients. He procured a similar certificate from Dr. Dewees, and also from Mott the eminent New York surgeon. Shortly afterwards "*Swaim's Panacea*" came out in the newspapers in flaring capitals, with the certificates of the four distinguished professors, which also

headed a pamphlet filled with certificates of wonderful cures performed by it. At once the nostrum was received into popular favor, and the sales of it soon became enormous. It was even exported in large quantities to the West Indies, South America and Europe. Swaim, who had learned to write his name in order to affix it to his labels, made a splendid fortune, and built himself a palatial residence on Chestnut Street. Both he and his distinguished endorsers have gone to their long rest—he exultant with triumph, the professors annoyed to the last by chagrin.

When I was a student, and a junior member of the Philadelphia Medical Society, a committee of that Society prepared and published an account of the quack medicines then in vogue. An analysis of Swaim's Panacea showed the presence of corrosive sublimate. About the same time a child died soon after taking a dose of "Panacea," apparently from poisoning. It was in evidence that Swaim had been in the practice of obtaining from an apothecary a large number of powders of corrosive sublimate, and the inference was that they were added to the bottles of medicine, and that the child who had taken the first dose from a bottle had swallowed the quantity intended for the whole bottle. These things having been made public, Swaim went before a notary and swore that his medicine contained no mercury, and appended the declaration to his labels from that time onward.

Swaim had a son who was my classmate in the dissecting room. He was a youth of good parts and fond of study. Whether he graduated or not, I am not informed. But his father's design in giving him a medical education was to qualify him for greater efficiency in the panacea trade. The young man was accordingly diverted from the honorable pursuit of medical science, and buried ignominiously in the cess-pool of quackery.

Some thirty years ago there lived in the southern part of New Jersey a mechanic or laboring man who suffered long from chronic diarrhea. He was cured at last by a prescription obtained from a physician residing, I think, at Port

Elizabeth. He removed to Philadelphia and transformed himself into a doctor more promptly and more economically even than doctors are wont to be made by the bastard manufactory of the man called Dr. Buchanan. And so "Dr. Jayne" and his "Carminative Balsam" had their birth. By the foolishness of advertising, the Carminative Balsam became a success. The name of Jayne acquired value as capital in trade, and was used to give currency to vermifuges, expectorants, and other preparations. And thus did the obscure and ignorant farm-hand become a doctor and a millionaire, not so much by his brains as by the accident of a bowel complaint.

If the charlatan be an ignoramus, he must employ some one to run the literary department—to write up advertisements and certificates of cure. The imagination of an adroit liar is capable of supplying the certificates. These require a professional varnish, however, and for this purpose it is customary to hire some thread-bare doctor—some child of genius and misfortune who has fallen by the wayside in the battle of life, and who sells his soul to save his body from starvation.

The "natural bone-setters" are a curious variety of the human race. They possess by nature the gift of bone-setting, handed down from the seventh son of the seventh son, or some equally valid inheritance. It was my good fortune, just after taking my degree in medicine, to fall in with "Doctor Sweet," the great natural bone-setter of that period, and to enjoy a half day's clinic at his elbow. He had come all the way from Connecticut or New York, at the solicitation of some individuals of easy faith, to manipulate a lot of cripples in my native town; and I was glad of the opportunity to accompany him and witness his performances.

The story was that Sweet, when a boy, developed a remarkable passion for twisting and manipulating the joints of domestic animals, and that he became expert in dislocating and replacing them. All the fowls, cats, dogs and pigs on his father's farm were the subjects of his daily experiment-

ation—that is to say, of the exercise of his special “gift.” With this education and experience he turned his attention to the halt and lame of his own species, just as the Preissnitz inn-keeper, a few years later, after long training in the curing of sick horses, transferred his treatment to men and founded Hydropathy. In every trouble about the joints, Sweet perceived or imagined displacement of the bones. His treatment consisted essentially in manipulation, which was sometimes preceded by frictions with a stimulating liniment. He would undertake any thing, from a gouty toe to a carious hip; knowing that success in one case out of fifty would establish and sustain his reputation. Here is the difference between the physician and the charlatan—the former being judged by his failures, the latter by his successes.

One of the patients on whom I saw him operate was an Irish gentleman, with sub-acute rheumatism of one arm, every joint from the shoulder to the extremities of the fingers being stiffened and painfully sensitive. He began with the shoulder, twisting and turning the inflamed joint forcibly in all directions, remarking —“I will soon fix it for you.”

“Doctor,” I inquired, “do you consider that joint dislocated?”

“No, it is shot,” was the answer.

“You mean it is out of joint?”

“No, I mean no such thing. It is shot.”

“Well, you mean to say the bones are not exactly in place.”

“I mean just what I say, the *joint* is shot.”

And that was the only idea of his pathology that I could gather. From the shoulder he proceeded downwards, using the same forcible movements with each joint. Reaching the fingers, he planted his thumb in the palmar surface of each and every articulation and bent the joint with violence, the poor patient roaring with agony at each successive operation and begging piteously that the delicate process be suspended long enough for him to swallow a glass of brandy. It is needless to say that injury, not benefit, followed such treatment.

Sweet was extremely ignorant, and purposely so. He knew that success in a man of no education would dazzle the vulgar; and he knew also that the term *vulgar*, in that application of it, includes people generally. He intended that his "gift" should sparkle like a diamond in a dung-hill. His pathology was embraced in the one word, "shot;" and his therapeutics in the one word "fix." He often fixed a greater number of bones than are counted in osteology. A medical student who was present on the occasion referred to, now Dr. R. R. Porter, of Delaware, asked him if he had ever examined a skeleton. He did not know the meaning of the word, but exclaimed, after a repetition of the inquiry, "Oh! you mean an *anotomy*. I seen one once but did not examine it. I had no occasion to do so. I don't want to *know* any thing more about the bones. It might interfere with my gift."

Old Californians will remember "Doctor Young," the pioneer quack of the Pacific Coast. He was an upholsterer and nothing more, until his sudden transformation into a doctor, which required but a single night. He flashed into fame and into business through the institution which graduates nearly all the quacks in the world—the newspaper press.

There was a vein of honesty in Young's character. Realizing his own inability to treat disease, he prescribed by proxy. Of this I was first apprised by the following incident. Being called in consultation in the case of a sick child, late in the evening, it became necessary to appoint an hour for another meeting with the attending physician on the day following. That gentleman was a well educated medical man, but unfortunately he had been ensnared and shorn of his locks by the *Circé* of our profession. He could meet me only before eight in the morning and after six in the evening. I was much surprised by this announcement, until he explained the reason. "I am ashamed to own it," said he, "but I am in the service of Dr. Young. I have a family and I could not see them starve. My professional pride is humbled by the position, but the case is one of necessity. Young never pre-

scribes for his patients. He sits at the desk in the reception room and arranges and receives the fees, and then refers them to me, in the private office. I pass for the doctor, and Young for my clerk. He pays me \$250 a month, and my time is his exclusively from 8 A. M. till 6 P. M."

Both these individuals have long since gone to their graves. But "Doctor Young's Institute" still lives, and his name is still employed to attract persons who are fond of certain flavors.

Twenty years ago there was a shop-boy in a dispensary in this city, who performed the duties of his office for the moderate compensation of \$40 a month. He was of European birth, well educated and of pleasant manners; attentive to business and economical. He withdrew amicably from the service of his employer, and investing his savings in the press, he came forth one morning as a newspaper graduate, a full-fledged physician and surgeon, of infinite celebrity and experience in Europe. He was the most adroit and gentlemanly of our California charlatans, and perhaps the best qualified and the most successful. Some time after his debut he announced himself as a graduate of a regular Philadelphia school. Regarding this as impossible, I wrote to the dean of the school for information, and learned that it was really so, and that he had obtained an *ad eundem* degree by exhibiting testimonials of the highest order from medical schools in Europe. The mystery was subsequently explained by the discovery that he had a brother in Philadelphia whose testimonials he had borrowed and whose character he had assumed. His career was brilliant and lucrative. In the list of treasure shipments published at the departure of the steamers, his name always appeared as a large shipper. It was ascertained, however, that he was in the practice of paying other shippers to enter their remittances in his name.

Thus "by hook and by crook" did he accumulate a fortune sufficient to warrant him in retiring from business. Shaking from his feet the dust of quackery, he mounted to a respectable position in society, and now enjoys his *otium*

cum dignitate, unmoved by needless contemplation of the hole of the pit from whence he was digged.

A smart young man with a Hibernian name, made a snug little sum of money, nearly twenty years ago, as a newspaper carrier in this city. His occupation taught him how doctors might be made by an instantaneous process; and he was carried by his newspapers into the doctorate in a single night, and became possessed of extensive knowledge and experience in medicine, without reading, study or practice.

In former years a man named Jones held forth in Washington Street, as the author and vendor of a "Lucina Cordial," which would strengthen the nerves, impart sexual vigor and cure all irregularities of females. This man sent for me to prescribe for his wife. Her case, as represented both by her and by himself, was so exactly that for which the "Cordial" was advertised as an infallible cure, that I could not avoid asking him if he had tried it on her. He answered, with a significant movement of one eye, "I don't give that in my own family."

In California, as in all other parts of the world, there are "Worm Doctors." Some man of stomach becomes a victim of parasites, and is made acquainted through a medical prescription with the virtues of Male Fern—the insecticide mostly employed by these worm-killers. Forthwith he gathers up all the tape-worms and other entozoic prodigies which cats, dogs and human beings can supply, displays them in his window, and talks and writes tape-worm, knowing that a large percentage of men and women who see and read will be converted and will come for his medicines. On this hobby has many a perfect ignoramus crawled into celebrity and affluence.

There is an old story of two fellows who embarked in a speculation in itch-ointment. One of them had the disease, and traveled through the country shaking hands most affectionately with every body. The other, who had the ointment, followed in a week or two selling the cure. A game something like this belongs to the art of quackery. The first step

is to *make* patients, and this can be done by getting people to read about disease. Pamphlets, almanacs, newspapers, distribute the infection. It requires but little knowledge of human nature to discover that reading of diseases causes persons to fancy themselves sick, and sometimes even makes them sick. Medical students are frequently surprised and alarmed, when they begin the study of pathology, to find that they are the victims of the disease under investigation. Even a long course of practice, whilst it fortifies some against morbid mental impressions, renders others sensitive to their own trifling ailments, which their fancy magnifies into dangerous maladies.

The weakest part of a man's body in this respect is the sexual apparatus. It is the easiest thing in the world to convince a man who has ever been diseased in these organs that the disease is still in his system, or to convince him that he is suffering, or will suffer, from indiscretions, however trifling, of his former life. Here are the two cords on which charlatans play with terrific success—private disease and seminal weakness. In this city, as in every large city in the world, there are at any given time hundreds if not thousands of men, who have been startled from their daily labors in the mines and fields and work-shops by reading the well-devised, sensational advertisements which pollute the columns of almost every newspaper, secular and religious. Gathering up their hard earnings, they hie them away to the city and rush into the trap. Their fears are realized; their apprehensions are fostered, and a cure is guaranteed for a fee in advance. Once in the toils, their course is onward and downward forever. Without employment, they spend their time traveling to and from the pool of infection; brooding over their thousand sufferings, fancied and real; perusing the poison literature of quackery; giving and receiving increased trouble by comparing notes with other sufferers like themselves; until, their last dollar and their last hope gone, they lie down to die in a public hospital, or spend their last days in gibbering idiocy.

It is a great mistake to suppose that quackery is a plan

which grows only on the miry soil of ignorance. On the contrary, many of the most mendacious and successful quacks are well educated men and graduates of medical institutions; and many of the best patrons of such impostors belong to the polite circle of society. There is, in this respect, an attraction of opposites—a sort of polarity, which brings together elements the most antagonistic in their general character. We have seen in this city a semi-barbarian Asiatic, but little above a brute in intellect and knowledge, patronized by the families of intelligent merchants and bankers. And the most adroit and unprincipled charlatan, perhaps, who ever flourished on the Pacific Coast, was a graduate of London.

It may be said to the credit of American graduates, notwithstanding the low standard of requirements so much complained of, that they seldom lose the sense of professional honor which attaches to their education. They are seldom guilty of high treason to the professional code. Of all the graduates of the California schools, now numbering upwards of one hundred, I do not know of one who has degenerated into an advertising quack. We are indebted to England and Ireland for most of our educated charlatans. Germany furnishes a few only, and a French quack is a rare animal.

“Anatomical Museums,” as they are called, are advertisements which conceal their real purpose. A large collection in wax exhibits the effects of disease on the organs of generation in both sexes. There is enough of anatomy and pathology in the collection to impart a scientific flavor to the otherwise corrupting and disgusting exhibition. A lecture is embraced in the programme, and this lecture is cunningly framed for the purpose of seducing credulous and imaginative hearers into the belief that they are diseased, and thus drawing them into the toils.

Several years ago I published in the *Pacific Medical and Surgical Journal* the description of an interview with a gentleman of this city had with the proprietor of the museum, and which I procured from his own lips. It was in substance

as follows: "The patient is scarcely sick—does not know whether he is sick or well—has heard a lecture at the 'Anatomical Museum,' which is part of the scheme, and which has started some apprehension in his mind. A fee of \$5 or \$10 secures a hearing. The urine must be examined while the patient waits. If he be a man of consequence in the community, the 'doctor' puts on large airs and keeps him waiting an hour or two, in the style of the Pontiff and Prince Henry. Finally, the strutting finished, and the impatient patient sufficiently impressed with the preliminary demonstrations, the mountebank sits at his side and proceeds solemnly: 'Now, Mr. Shivers, you must control your feelings and remain composed. I don't wish to alarm you, sir, but you are in a bad way. Your urine is full of animalcules. The microscope shows them plainly. Be tranquil, sir; your case is not desperate; but your blood is full of spermatozoa. Let me show you the danger, sir. (Here the artist draws on paper two parallel lines to represent a bloodvessel, and pencils a number of eels wriggling along endwise.) Now, sir, as long as the animalcules swim endwise there is no difficulty. They circulate all about the body without injury. But let one of them get crosswise, so. Don't you see the effect—to obstruct the bloodvessel instantly? And then you drop dead, sir! This is one cause of so many sudden deaths. Be calm, sir; I don't wish to alarm you. But if you were to leave my office now, and some one were to come in presently and tell me that a man had fallen dead at the corner of Stockton street, I should know it was you," and so forth. "Well, doctor, can you cure me? and on what terms?" asks Mr. Shivers. "Certainly, sir; I have two methods. One is the more speedy, but very costly. It requires a medicine which is very expensive. It will cost you \$500. The other is the more common method, and will cost \$300." If the patient is sufficiently psychologized he pays down the money, if he has it. But if he begins to argue on finance, he is told to take time to consider, and to call again. The chances are largely in favor of his returning. In one instance the in-

tended victim was on his way back with the money in his pocket, when he learned something that awakened his suspicion, and induced him to turn aside for the present and procure an examination of the urine by an honest professional man. The result was that the urine was found to be perfectly normal in every respect. In another instance, a patient having discovered the fraud after paying an enormous fee, demanded that the charlatan should refund it, and enforced the application successfully by a demonstration not altogether professional.

The Anatomical Museum is a foreign device, imported from London. It was first established in New York and Boston and then in San Francisco. When it was opened here, an attempt was made by the late Dr. Coit and myself to have it suppressed as an indecent exhibition. The case was investigated in one of the courts, and the jury was instructed to inspect it personally, by invitation of the proprietor. They were smitten by its charms, and reported it a school of virtue and of science; and it has been run from that day till now. It was not then known or suspected that it was merely a decoy for even worse purposes. The Boston branch was destroyed by the great fire in that city, and has been refused permission to rebuild.

A few years ago a certain healer of disease came down upon us like a divine presence, his feet "scarcely deigning to tread the earth"—in fact, refusing to do so for less than \$50 a visit. He advertised in the newspapers to such an extent that it was rumored that some of them had entered into partnership with him. His certificates of cure have never been equaled by any one save the man who calls himself "Doctor" Aborn. Van Eisenburg had a brilliant yet brief career, and his flight was in the night time.

Our people have not forgotten the "King of Pain," who dashed through the State in a splendid vehicle with six white horses, scattering like autumn leaves his advertisements of aconite liniment, the virtue of which he had grown acquainted with by some accident. His knowledge of the ma-

teria medica was bounded by this one article, but he was an expert card-player, and invested in gambling the proceeds of his speculation in human credulity. He traveled very fast and came to a miserable end through a greater "pain killer" than aconite.

Every phase or special dispensation of quackery finds a given portion of the community susceptible to its specific virus; and its popularity endures until the supply of material is exhausted. The itinerant charlatan luxuriates in new localities, and when his failures and blunders multiply, and his impostures are revealed so as to overshadow his certificates and pretensions, he folds up his tent and steals away in silence to other pastures. Some run their course swiftly like cholera and small pox, soon consuming the appropriate material; others become chronic and are disposed to domesticate themselves like the "seven years' itch."

The types of the printer are made to do more pure, unadulterated falsehood, with a smaller portion of truth, in the service of quackery, than in any other department of their application. No person who embarks in the career of charlatanism, or who undertakes to push a nostrum, can have the least hope of success without first throwing away his conscience, and either at once by deliberate design, or slowly by insensible gradations, selling himself to the Father of Lies.

Perhaps I should not have left the peaceful fields of medical literature to make this foray upon the bandits of society, were it not for a personal grievance. Some twelve or fifteen years ago an individual, somewhere in the mining region, dropped his pick and shovel, and came to this city to practice medicine. His medical education was accomplished whilst the earth was making a single revolution on its axis. To-day he was John Fitzgibbon—to-morrow, "Dr. J. F. Gibbon"; and the transformation was rendered available by ornamenting the walls and casks and boxes throughout the city with a handbill displaying a photograph of Esculapius, and announcing "Doctor Gibbon's Dispensary," for the cure of a certain class of diseases. At the same time the news-

papers of the Pacific coast were stocked with the same advertisement. As I had been in practice here since 1850, and had two brothers also practicing medicine in other parts of the State, the name was well known; and the imitation, in fact, the assumption of it, was too barefaced an imposture to admit of a doubt as to the motive.

From that time to the present I have been the recipient, personally and by letter, of applications for "patent French safes," and for the means of producing abortion, and for the treatment of "weaknesses" and loathsome diseases—applications made in the belief that I was the author of the filthy advertisements in question. Such things show how many persons there are in a community supposed to be intelligent, who are ignorant that the advertising of one's qualifications and cures is held to be dishonorable and disgraceful among all educated and respectable physicians; and that it is invariably a mark of incompetency or of fraudulent design, frequently of both. They also serve to illustrate the extreme loathsomeness of the business carried on by advertisers in general, and its hostility to the physical and moral interests of its dupes and victims.

The relation of this system of advertising to the practice of criminal abortion is no trifling matter. Advertisers generally manage to convey covertly to parties concerned the intimation of their readiness to perpetrate this crime. They talk of removing female obstructions, and so forth, or they resort to the trick of advising pregnant women *not* to take their medicines; and though the purport of such publications is well known, yet there are few conductors of newspapers who refuse to print and circulate them, and thus to make themselves accomplices. Thus advertisers and editors are in the daily practice of doing under cover, but knowingly, what would be felony if done openly.

Under the head of "Homœopathic Specifics," advertised extensively, there stands one item distinguished from the rest by its double price, and designated as requiring great care in its administration. And yet this cloven-footed collection of "specifics" is sold by our apothecaries in general.

I will not say that advertisers are all abortionists, but I do say that when men calling themselves "doctors" go into the advertising business, they identify themselves with impostors and abortionists, and have no claim on the respect or confidence of society. They throw their reputation on the market and sell it for gold. Their conduct demonstrates that, if they are not abortionists, it is only because the pay is less in that direction.

Certificates of cure with which charlatans bait their hooks are the weakest and most fallacious of human evidence. Never was there a pretender so ignorant, or a medicine so vile or so inert, that could not accumulate thousands of cures, from hypochondriacs, feeble-minded people, charity patients, and accommodating friends, to say nothing of downright forgery, which produces most of the published certificates.

In the concoction of the various kinds of "Bitters," there is but little else than fraud. Nothing so much as a vegetable bitter disguises the quality of inferior spirits; and nothing so much as alcohol, good or bad in quality, disguises the nature of a vegetable bitter. The veriest fool can manufacture medicinal "Bitters,"—an experiment which has been successfully tried again and again. Nature has been lavish in her distribution of bitter plants. They abound everywhere. Many of them are harmless or positively tonic, and a small proportion only contain noxious qualities. Even the poisonous bitters, such as *nux vomica*, are bitter beyond proportion to their tonic properties. It is said one grain of *strychnia* will impart a perceptible bitter taste to a hogshead of water. In the early days of California, when the demand for "Bitters," exceeded the supply, some ingenious manipulator discovered that the "Man Root," or "Wild Cucumber," of our sand-hills (*Megarrhiza Oregona*), could be made into pure Stoughton Bitters; and thirsty invalids without number drenched themselves innocently with this excellent Stoughton. And yet this root is highly acrid and really poisonous in large quantities. I have known death to result from its use, through intestinal inflammation. It grows to

an enormous size in the sand-hills within the limits of the city, sometimes nearly as large as a barrel. The name "Man-Root," was given, no doubt, on account of its size and form. There is enough of it on the Pacific Coast to manufacture all the "Bitters" of every name, which goes down the throats of the population. The same might be said of the Yarrow, which is a wholesome bitter. Besides these we have Worm-wood, Willow, Dogwood, Sneezeweed (*Helenium*), and others, abounding in all directions.

The most noxious, in fact the only noxious product of distillation, excepting always the alcohol itself, is Fusel Oil. It is difficult to separate Fusel Oil from distilled liquors, and its presence in large quantities injures their sale. Such liquors are economically applied to the manufacture of "Bitters." Indeed, there is no product of the still too vile to make "Bitters" of the first quality, in which the inferior and impure spirit is completely disguised. The process is admirably simple. Some child of toil, who has grown weary with wiping the sweat from his brow, buys a lot of the cheapest whisky which the market affords, and steeps in it one or more bitter herbs which he finds at hand. He gives the concoction a distinctive name, and calls himself "Doctor," though he has never so much as held a doctor's stirrup, or blacked a doctor's boots. If he has a religious turn, so much the better; or if he is altogether knavish, it is none the worse. He proclaims himself the monopolist of a wonderful herb procured from the Modocs or Apaches, and distributes his dilute tinctures to such amiable fools as will give him certificates. Of superior value are the certificates of clergymen—many of whom are so innocent and credulous as to serve his purpose remarkably well. A few bottles sent to an editor will pay. Perhaps he can find some doctors who will permit him to immortalize them by publishing their names. The rest is plain sailing—thanks to types and newspapers. His fortune is made, and at the same time a large number of drunkards, who have trained on whisky under a false name.

Druggists have strong inducements to engage in the man-

ufacture of "Bitters." Bitter herbs in great variety and quantity are liable to accumulate on their hands. In making tinctures and other preparations, large amounts of dregs and refuse matters collect. These sources supply the bitter element almost free of cost, and sufficient to impregnate immense quantities of alcoholic liquors to the proper standard of medicinal bitters.

The formula, then, for medicinal bitters in general, runs thus: Take of cheapest whisky, an indefinite quantity; of any bitter vegetable, herb, flower, root or bark, q. s. Mix, and flavor with anything or nothing. Put in bottles and employ an expert liar to write labels and certificates. Present a few bottles to editors and clergymen of taste. Advertise largely and sell for five hundred per cent. above cost of material.

This subject is highly important in its moral relations. Medicated bitters are not used like ordinary medicines, in occasional doses. They are repeated day after day, habitually. Composed, as they are essentially, of alcohol, they lead directly and often irresistibly to intemperance. The entire spawn of medicinal "Bitters" are little more than lures to drunkenness. It is surprising that respectable apothecaries sell and distribute them—more surprising still that they originate and invent them. The traffic in medicated "Bitters" is a fraud and a nuisance, calling for legal restraint.

A number of years ago, an individual coming overland with a company to California, served as cook for the company, and was styled "doctor" on that account. He settled in Calaveras County and labored as a miner, without much success. His attention was then turned to the medicinal qualities of the herbs growing about him, and he came to San Francisco with the idea of making and vending a preparation to be called "Indian Vegetable Bitters," and to contain no alcohol. He fell in with an enterprising druggist of this city, who saw money in the project and embarked in it. At the suggestion of the latter, the "Indian" was struck out, and as the new medicine got sour by fermentation, it

was concluded to call it "Vinegar Bitters," and to identify it with the movement against alcoholic drinks. The mountain herbs were thrust aside, and aloes, being a cheap bitter, was substituted. "Nine sick people out of ten," said the druggist, "will be cured by purging." Wherefore the aloes. So the cook became doctor, and the decoction became sour, and "Doctor Walker's Vinegar Bitters" began their career in the newspapers.

At this juncture, I one day opened a new issue of the "*Pacific Medical and Surgical Journal*," of which I was editor, and found, to my amazement and mortification, a full page advertisement of this nostrum, with all its pretensions duly set forth. The advertisement had been sent to the printing office and inserted without my knowledge. It did not appear again.

A year or more afterwards, a gentleman wrote me from St. Louis, inquiring if I had ever endorsed the nostrum, and stating that every bottle of it distributed in the valley of the Mississippi bore my recommendation. The good "Doctor" Walker, or an equally conscientious coadjutor, had copied from the discarded advertisement his own statement of the virtues of the "Bitters," and credited it to me as the editor of the *Journal*! If the traffic in nostrums is thus capable of developing fraud and forgery in men of moral and religious character, to what extremes of depravity must it reduce those who have no higher motive than worldly gain!

The truth is, the "Vinegar Bitters" is one of the vilest, if not the very vilest, of all the concoctions in the market; and it is rendered more repulsive and obnoxious by concealing its poison with the mask of temperance. That it contains alcohol there is no doubt. Even if the dregs from the tincture bottles are not appropriated in its manufacture, the fermentation which it undergoes produces alcohol. Its harsh and drastic properties have given rise to serious injury in many instances within the knowledge of myself and others. I am cognizant of the instance of a man who contracted a habit of using it so as to consume a bottle in a day. The result was an attack of acute mania, for which he was sent to

Stockton. He recovered in a short time, and is now living in San Francisco to tell the story, but not to illustrate it by drinking "temperance bitters."

Is there no way of protecting society against the array of impostors and impostures which prey on health and life? It is not my purpose to answer this question, nor would it be proper to prolong this article. Various expedients have been proposed—such as prohibiting the practice of medicine or the assumption of the title of doctor without a diploma; requiring all proprietary or patent medicines to have their ingredients printed on the label, and so forth. Hitherto, laws for the suppression of quackery have done but little good—at least in America. It is difficult to enforce them, and any attempt to do so on the part of physicians is attributed to sordid motives. But the people, not the medical faculty, have need of the protection. By creating disease and by training the minds of people to morbid action and their bodies to perpetual overdosing, quacks and quack medicines increase the demand for regular treatment. They manure the soil for the growth and accumulation of morbid products. If legislatures determine to interpose the shield of law for the protection of their constituents, certainly we shall not object. But law, alone, is impotent. The evil is too deeply rooted for that remedy. I have more hope of success against the nostrum deluge through an infusion of conscience into the "middle-men"—the druggists and apothecaries who stand between the fountain and its distribution, and irrigate the community with the poisonous flood. By their associations, publications and colleges, our pharmacists are fast elevating their business above the standard of the beer-shop, and before long it will be as disreputable for an apothecary to deal in "Bitters" and other nostrums as to sell grog. But the advertising quacks and impostors are more difficult to manage. Arrayed on their side are ignorance, prejudice, credulity, and other base elements of character in the common people, and above all, the annual subsidy of ten millions of dollars, which enables them to purchase and control the periodical press of America.

