

brain; also there is an appendix of cases giving (shortly) particulars of clinical and post mortem observations in over forty cases. I have a few reprints of this article, and will be happy to forward a copy to any of your readers who are interested in the subject.

#### MISTAKES IN DISPENSING.

Mr. J. EDWARDS (unqualified assistant) North Wales, writes: There have appeared in the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL communications concerning the errors made in dispensing, and attributing the same to us unqualified assistants. As I cannot find any reason why one class of men should have to suffer for the wrongs of another, I beg leave to say a few words on the subject.

The errors in dispensing have, as a rule, been made by young qualified assistants, who, by the aid of their money, have gone straight from a grammar-school to college, and have obtained a qualification, whilst their profession is only known unto them as words are to a parrot. When such men come to the surgeries (which, I am sorry to say, is far too often) they are only a disgrace to themselves and their employers, their M.B. and C.M. meaning no more than care missing, and blunders made. The way they substitute one drug for another is this. Breaking the neck of the liquor strychnine bottle, they pour the drug into another, in which had previously been kept chloroform water, and finding it too much trouble to scrape off that label, they stick the liquor strychnine label on the chloroform water label, which, being naturally dry, absorbs the liquid gum from the other, causing it in a few days to drop off, leaving the liquor strychnine labelled chloroform water, which will now be used as such. That the art of dispensing is not acquired by reading books, and that a qualification is, are two undeniable facts. Therefore, how can a qualification be the point of distinction by which we are to find out a good and accurate dispenser?

Again, if qualified assistants know all they ought to know about surgery duties, why should they advertise for situations with "salary no object?" Is it because they dislike money? No; it is because they want to become the possessors of what is already possessed by the experienced unqualified assistants. What is a qualification then? From what has been said in the JOURNAL, it is a tail in which you are able to hide your head from every law. Act as you will, all the law can do to you is to nip off the tip of your tail, which, in a few weeks, is to grow much longer than ever. But the poor unqualified assistant, owing to the want of money to buy a tail, must sacrifice his head; he must be sent to prison.

If there is one man to be more responsible for his acts than another, it is the qualified assistant; for he, when making a mistake, not only does harm to his patient, but also throws a cloud of shame over the names of those who were at one time his examiners.

To stop the errors in dispensing does not mean to do away with the unqualified assistants, but to compel those sons of gentlemen to serve their time as apprentices before they enter upon their professional studies, so that they may know in the meantime the meaning of what they do read. Unqualified assistants, I greatly hope that, at the sound of my trumpet, you will all come into the field and fight for your rights as heroes. Let us remind those medical men of now-a-days that are forgetting the head whilst admiring the tail of their professional brothers "that truth is straight, and judges crooked."

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#### BOOKS, etc., RECEIVED.

Practical Pathology: an Introduction to the Practical Study of Morbid Anatomy and Histology. By J. L. Steven, M.D. Glasgow: James Maclehoose and Sons. 1887.

Diseases of the Digestive Organs in Infancy and Childhood. By Louis Starr, M.D. Edinburgh: Young J. Pentland. 1886.

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