

THE SALE OF COCAINE.

MR. G. HERBERT DOWTHEWAITE, M.R.C.S.Eng., L.R.C.P. & S.Edin. (Sunderland), writes: A few days ago I was hurriedly called to see a woman, whom I found to be in an apparently dangerous condition. Her whole body seemed to be convulsed, she was unconscious, the pupils being greatly dilated, and her eyes possessed for the time being a peculiar stare. On her regaining consciousness I asked the patient (who had at one time acted as hospital nurse) several questions, and I ascertained that she had taken about 16 grains of hydrochlorate of cocaine. She had, I learnt, been in the habit of injecting small quantities of this substance into her system in order to relieve the pain of sciatica. On ascertaining at what shop she had obtained the drug, I went and saw the proprietor. He was an unqualified druggist and a patent medicine vendor. On my mentioning the matter to him he bluntly informed me that cocaine was not a scheduled poison, and therefore he should continue to sell it as freely as before. Of course, that being the case, I felt helpless to interfere. Could not something be done at least to regulate the sale of this dangerous drug, especially by unqualified men?

UNQUALIFIED ASSISTANTS.

SINE DIPLOMA writes: "A Member," writing in the JOURNAL of September 14th concerning unqualified assistants, brings four distinct charges against them, namely, that they are frequently "drunken" and "dishonest," that they are "incapable of diagnosis," and "incompetent to prescribe!" I suppose I must here add "frequently." He also hashes up an old tale, which every medical man must remember having heard in his student days; the gentleman, however, to give it piquancy relates it as a fact—an American one, we conclude. Of course, any remarks I may make in refutation only apply to ourselves *versus* the "newly fledged" *diplome*. If he be a medical man of some years' standing, the fact of his wishing to take a qualified assistantship speaks for itself—"drunken, dishonest, or incapable." I think a consensus of opinion, taken from medical men who have assistants, would be that so far as "drunkenness and dishonesty" are concerned, "tis six of one and half-a-dozen of the other;" and the opinion of the public at large that "drunkenness" is not "a complaint" confined to the assistant only. As to the capabilities of the two—fledgling and unqualified—in "diagnosis and prescribing," the "sine diploma" man, who at any rate must have had practical experience as apprentice or pupil, is the better of the two; in this will be found the reason why we are still marketable goods, and obtain, in some cases, almost equivalent salaries.

Granted the originality of "A Member's" piquant dish, during a few years' experience as unqualified assistant I have myself seen the theoretically qualified man in quandary. One, a case of hour-glass contraction of uterus, which was not diagnosed, and when explained I was requested to undertake myself. Another, and this the case of a self-reliant individual, inguinal hernia, patient, a boy, aged 15 years, almost moribund from extreme exhaustion through excessive vomiting. The lad had been treated for two days for the sickness only, the real cause never being ascertained, and ultimately "given up." I reduced the rupture without much difficulty, and the patient soon rallied.

Yet one other. I went out one night with a M.R.C.S., L.S.A., to see an old woman who had been taken suddenly ill—a fit, they thought. On entering the house our clever apothecary, taking a seat by the patient with great professional air, gently feeling the pulse in the meanwhile, said:—"Awh! has the patient ever been taken like this before?" One of the many neighbours standing round, some even grinning at such a time as this, replied, "Oh, no, sir, she be dead, and has been this 'alf hour." Tableau!

In conclusion, I can only add that were it not that one cannot and the other can sign a death certificate, we should command as large a salary as the newly qualified man, and be certainly preferred by the patients. "A Member," I think, forgets when he brings charges that many of that class he despises are not only men that read but also think, and are as much *sans peur et sans reproche*, as their more fortunate "certified to kill" brethren, only, unluckily, they are also men *sans argent*, oftentimes the only cause of their being *sans diplome*.

DUKE'S RAPID UTERINE DILATOR.

DR. ALEXANDER DUKE (Dublin) writes: In justice to myself will you kindly allow me to state that several of the rapid uterine dilators bearing my name and now on sale are not faithful copies of my pattern? They are not reliable, cannot give satisfaction, and would bring discredit on a useful instrument. The original makers are Messrs. Arnold and Sons, Smithfield; and any of the dilators purporting to be the same (that I have seen) were utterly worthless imitations, as they could not bear the necessary strain.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

OUR correspondents are reminded that prolixity is a great bar to publication, and, with the constant pressure upon every department of the JOURNAL, brevity of style and conciseness of statement greatly facilitate early insertion. We are compelled to return and hold over a great number of communications, chiefly by reason of their unnecessary length.

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BOOKS, ETC., RECEIVED.

An Elementary Treatise on Human Anatomy. By Joseph Leidy, M.D., LL.D. Second Edition, rewritten. London: Smith, Elder, and Co. 1889.

On the Causes, Treatment, and Cure of Stammering. By A. G. Bernard M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P. London: J. and A. Churchill.

On the Principles and Exact Conditions to be Observed in the Artificial Feeding of Infants. By W. B. Cheadle, M.A., M.D.Cantab., F.R.C.P. London: Smith, Elder, and Co. 1889.

A Textbook of Physiology. By M. Foster, M.A., M.D., LL.D., F.R.S. With Illustrations. Fifth Edition, largely revised. Part II, comprising Book II. London: Macmillan and Co. 1889.

Handbook of Practical Botany. By E. Strasburger. Edited from the German by W. Hillhouse, M.A., F.L.S. London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co. 1889.

The Various Manifestations of the Rheumatic State. Lectures delivered before the Harveian Society of London. By W. B. Cheadle, M.D. London: Smith, Elder, and Co. 1889.

On Static Electricity in Medicine and Apostoli's Methods in the Treatment of Uterine and Peri-uterine Disease. By Henry McClure, M.D. London: H. Renshaw. 1889.

An Epitome of the Synthetic Philosophy. By F. Howard Collins. With a Preface by Herbert Spencer. London: Williams and Norgate. 1889.

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