

efforts of the uterus continuing feeble, I gave ergot, and was obliged to push it as far as I dared, before the uretus could be stimulated sufficiently to expel its contents. About four hours after the first dose of ergot was given, I discerned, in one of my examinations, that the vagina was completely filled with a soft mass, which, readily breaking up under pressure, I took to be a clot, but, on removing a portion, discovered I had got a case of hydatids, as much to my surprise as to the patient's. I removed, in the course of half an hour, about two quarts of this substance, which resembled exactly the mass that Mr. Ley speaks of in his case. It was composed of hundreds of watery vesicles, some quite minute, others as large as the end of the finger, united by a substance resembling the body of a placenta, but as readily breaking down under pressure as clots. The womb contracted well after its contents were expelled. There was not as much hemorrhage as is usual during an abortion at five months. On the third day there was a slight secretion of milk. The lochial discharge continued about as long as after ordinary cases of labor. The patient made a rapid recovery.

CARELESSNESS IN THE COLLECTION OF DRUGS.

By J. M. MAISCII.

CAREFUL pharmacists will always subject new lots of drugs to the process of garbling. When large quantities of different drugs are dried at the same time in the drying closet or room, or when original packages are kept open side by side in the warehouse of the wholesale dealer, the drugs may become mixed to a slight extent. These chances alone, aside from all possibilities of intentional admixtures, render it incumbent upon the pharmacist to subject each parcel to a rigid examination, and separate all foreign admixtures, as well as all unofficinal parts of officinal plants.

Of late years, the quality of certain drugs has constantly assumed a lower grade. Alexandria senna, which was always more or less mixed with petioles and with leaves which, to a casual observer, might pass for senna, has gradually become adulterated with stalks to such an extent that, by garbling, fully 50 per cent. may be separated, thus enhancing the price of a passable drug to double the amount of the commercial article. While it is possible that some careless or unscrupulous persons may use these impure leaves, the majority of pharmacists probably employ the East Indian or Tinevelly senna, unless the Alexandria variety is particularly ordered.

This is only one instance; but every pharmacist will remember many others. If, in the inspection of the imported drugs at the ports of importance, the United States Pharmacopœia is taken as the guide, it is to be wondered where the drug inspectors find the authority for passing senna leaves containing half of their weight of leaf

stalks and branches, or how they can allow genuine Russian rhubarb manufactured in western Europe to enter our ports, after the true drug has been used up for years.

To a considerable extent, these evils arise from the fact that importers will limit the price of drugs when ordering them by letter from foreign countries, and dispensing pharmacists will continue to buy cheap drugs. It is for this reason that in foreign drug markets drugs are frequently considered good enough for the American market, when no apothecary would dare to keep them in his store, and no wholesale dealer would have the hardihood to offer them to a respectable pharmacist. Valerian with more than its own weight of dirt enclosed between the fibrous roots, belladonna mouldy and black by careless drying and packing, narcotic extracts containing all the chlorophyl and all the mucilaginous constituents of the plants, are thus thrown upon us, notwithstanding it is well known that by paying a fair price a fair article may be obtained in these same markets.

Most inferior crude drugs are undoubtedly in such a condition from the utter carelessness in their collection, and this is induced by the low price paid for them; but the inferior preparations are and must be produced designedly, and the fact of a too low price being obtainable only, is no excuse for a conscientious manufacturer. Still, with the drug law faithfully carried out, such worse than worthless trash could not enter from abroad.

It is, however, easy enough to preach against the unreliability and the impurities of some foreign drugs; are we not, to a certain extent at least, drifting in the same direction with our indigenous drugs?

Without intending to intimate that it is the rule, I may state that I have found *Veratrum viride* with almost 12 per cent. of worthless stalks attached (see *Am. Journ. Ph.* 1864, 99); the roots are always attached to it, although they are at least inferior to the corm, if not actually worthless. *Seneca*, and particularly *spigelia*, may be seen with several inches of the over-ground stem attached to it; elder flowers consist in the smallest proportion of the flowers—the cymes are collected with as much of the peduncles as possible; in the same manner, instead of the fruit alone, the commercial so-called (wild) carrot seeds consist of the entire umbels.

And where the leaves are officinal or the herb is ordered, it is usual to collect the *whole* herb, cut off near the ground, without regard to the inefficiency of the older portions of the stems. When the pharmacopœia orders the leaves of *Salvia officinalis*, it did not intend to have from 12 to 25 per cent. of stems mixed with them. Although directing the herb of *Mentha piperita* and other plants (the leaves and flowers are the true aromatic portions), the stout, tasteless stem was certainly not designed; the *herb* of *Lobelia inflata* does not include the root; and when *Epigæa repens* is wanted, notwithstanding it is not officinal, the astringent leaves only are intended, and not likewise the creeping woody stems, which are destitute of astringency.

Nor is this all; occasionally plants or parts of plants are brought into the market under entirely wrong names. Most readers are undoubtedly familiar with the interesting discussion on saffron at the meeting of the American Pharmaceutical Association in Boston, in 1865, when safflower (*carthamus*) was exhibited under the name of saffron. I have lately repeatedly seen what was announced as marigold, *Calendula officinalis*, and proved to be *Tagetes erecta*, the so-called African marigold. The florets of *calendula* are used chiefly on account of their bright yellow color, and it is not improbable but the florets of *Tagetes* may be used for the same purpose; but then they alone ought to be collected, without the involucre, receptacle and fruit, and, more than that, they ought to be sold under their proper name.

Our indigenous materia medica is undoubtedly scarcely explored; there may be many plants which are hardly known as remedial agents, and the future will necessarily bring to light many which have as yet attracted no attention. To create and keep up confidence in these drugs, it is indispensably necessary that sufficient care should be bestowed upon their collection and preparation for the market. To point out some of the faults in the drug gathering of our country, with the view of correcting the same, has been the object of this paper; and the writer feels assured that every conscientious pharmacist will agree with him, that even at the risk of increasing their price, it is far better that they should be collected and prepared correctly at once, than that he should devote so much of his valuable time to garbling them so as to fit them for their medicinal uses.—*Amer. Jour. of Pharmacy.*

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DISINFECTION.

THE importance of this subject is one which can hardly be over-estimated at the present day. It is occupying the attention of the leading minds in the department of pathological chemistry, and the most sanguine expectations of important accessions to our knowledge of the hidden causes and means of prevention of zymotic disease seem to be fully justified. It is, however, a subject upon which the medical profession at large is less fully informed than it should be; and there are still men among them, whose authority has stood deservedly high in times past, who regard the whole subject as little better than a means of mystifying the public, and giving them a false security in times of panic from dreaded epidemics, by making them believe that disinfecting agents actually destroy the germs of disease, while in fact they act merely as purifiers or deodorizers. Such