

PATENT MEDICINES OR QUACK REMEDIES.

LECTURES GIVEN TO THE MEDICAL STUDENTS, LOUISIANA.

BY DR. RUTH WILSON.

PART I.

THE subject chosen by me on which to speak to you this evening may seem to many of you a strange one and you may wonder of what interest such a subject can be and what bearing it can have on your lives which are about to be devoted to the serious study of medicine and surgery. It is a subject however, which possesses a great interest from more than one point of view. From the purely human standpoint, patent medicines or quack remedies afford an almost pathetic insight into human failings. On the one hand the cupidity of the manufacturers of the drugs who grow rich on the proceeds of their sales; and on the other hand we have the ignorance and foolishness of a public which seems almost to enjoy being duped and robbed. But this aspect of the subject is for the pen of the satirist and it is as students of medicine that we are concerned with it this evening.

Why should it be necessary for doctors to have some knowledge of patent medicines? First I would say as a general principle because they pursue scientific truth which the vendors of patent medicines do not. And as medical women we must be eager not only in the pursuit of truth, but we must burn with an equal zeal to communicate that truth to others. As you advance on the road of life you will find that truth is really the very last thing that people generally desire. It is easier, more comfortable and less trouble to remain immersed in falsehood or half truth. The road of truth is hard, lonely and difficult. You will find that its pursuit does not bring wordly fame or reward and this is certainly so in the particular case with which we are concerned. People will not thank you because you try to disillusion them as to the merit of their particular fancy in "cures". Nevertheless this is a task which you will have to keep in view. The usual accusation made in such cases is that the doctors are jealous and that they are afraid of losing their practice—hence their disparagement of popular medicines. Still you must go on in your endeavour to persuade men and women of the worthlessness of the vast majority of patent medicines and not merely the worthlessness but the actual harm they may do. If you have not yourselves made some study of the subject, you cannot expect to be successful in your attempts to enlighten others. You must have facts with which to face them. You must be able to prove that in most cases the employment of patent medicines is a waste of money and also a waste of time—in the sense that by so doing patients often delay seeking advice until the disease is beyond cure. This is indeed one of the very worst features of quack medicines. Not only do they do no good in themselves and sometimes even harm, but they prevent the sick man or woman from coming to a doctor who might possibly give him or her relief or cure. A patient for example, suffering from cancer, sees an advertisement in which it

is claimed that a certain ointment or lotion will cure cancer with certainty. Most people have a dread of surgical operations, and the simple application of an ointment has a great appeal. The result is that the ointment is tried at just the period when an operation might be of avail and when the patient, after failure of the vaunted remedy, seeks the surgeons advice it is only too often to be informed that the disease is now too far advanced to be operated on. Then again quack remedies may be a positive source of danger in that they claim, as some do, to prevent the spread of infection. In this connection the most disastrous are those for the cure of syphilis and gonorrhoea, the result being that the victims of these terrible diseases multiply and the diseases spread without check. Let us consider for a moment the money expended by the public on quack medicines. I have not exact figures, but the amount certainly runs into millions. What return does the public get for such an expenditure? Certainly a return out of all proportion small compared to that spent, apart altogether from the positive evil which may accrue. We frequently find too that the poorer classes are those which are in the habit of spending money most lavishly in this direction. It is part of the fault of our social system which certainly renders it easier for a poor person to ask for a bottle of medicine over the counter than to go through a long wait at an overcrowded outpatient department of a large hospital. In India on the other hand, it is the educated or the semi-educated who are attracted towards patent medicines. I have known over and over again of cases in which patients or their relatives were willing to spend and had already spent considerable sums of money on these drugs. In many cases the money can be afforded, in other cases the sacrifice made is considerable. In either case the expenditure is unjustifiable. Probably all of you have seen advertised in the newspapers at one time or another an ointment known as Zam Buk. The claims made for Zam Buk are as follows:

"Zam Buk has proved itself to be unequalled for Cuts, Bruises, Burns, Scalds, Abrasions, Festering Sores, Old Wounds, Sprains, Dog Bites, Cat Scratches, Carbuncles, Colds, Chills, Raw Chin after Shaving, Freckles, Perspiring feet, Chilblains, Soft Corns, etc., Rubbed well into the part affected, Zam Buk gives relief from Rheumatism, Lumbago, Neuralgia, and all kinds of Inflammation and Irritation".

The price of a box of it is 1-1½; the estimated cost of the ingredients is 1¼d. (or one pice) Even allowing for the cost of making, of box label, and retailer's profit, you can easily calculate the degree of profit which goes to the maker, and the degree to which the purchaser is swindled.

Clarke's World Famed Blood Mixture is another medicine which may be known to you. It makes claim to cure as follows:

"No matter what the symptoms may be, the real cause of a large proportion of all diseases is bad blood. Clarke's World Famed Blood Mixture is not recommended to cure every disease; on the contrary, there are many that it will not cure; but it is a guaranteed cure for all blood diseases. It never fails to cure Scrofula, Cancerous Ulcers, Syphilis, Piles, Rheumatism, Gout, Dropsy, Sore Eyes, Eruptions of the Skin and Blood and Skin Diseases of

every description." The price of the bottle is 2/9 (about Rs. 2) and according to the dose recommended this would last six days. The estimated cost of the ingredients is 1½d. = 1 anna 4 pies. It contains as practically the only ingredient potassium iodide, the proportion bringing the amount up to about grs. iii to the dose. This amount, I may say, is well below the dose ordinarily prescribed.

Phosferine, another widely advertised tonic costs ½d. per bottle, but the public is asked to pay 2/9 (Rs. 2.) It contains a minute quantity of quinine sulphate and sulphuric acid and a somewhat larger amount of dilute phosphoric acid. The quantities are quite insufficient to be of any use as a tonic.

One could multiply examples indefinitely. But I have said enough to indicate the ridiculous claims made by the makers of patent medicines and the absurdly high prices charged for them.

(To be continued.)

CHAMBA.

By MISS MARY MILLER.

PART II.

CHAMBA occupies two terraces. On the lower terrace is the *chowgan* or public promenade, a beautiful grassy sward of half a mile long and eighty feet wide which is almost level ground. It is used now, as in former times, for games of hockey and promenading, and on State occasions for *darbars*, etc.. At its southern end is the Residency which is most hospitably placed at the disposal of guests to the State. On the eastern side is the *hazri bagh* the family temple of the Rajah; further on are shops which go to form the chief bazaar. On the west of the terrace overlooking the river Ravi are the Telegraph Offices, the State Office and more shops. In the rear of the terrace is the Forest bungalow and to the north-east the compound of the Scotch Mission containing a church, hospital, a dispensary and two bungalows. On the upper terrace is the palace of the Rajah and at its northern extremity are the living rooms and public *darbar* halls.

The Ravi river runs round the town and to enter Chamba must be crossed by a fine suspension bridge.

Sheltered as the State is by its snow clad barrier it escaped Moslem invasion, which has swept away all monuments of old India in the Punjab, so it is rich in its treasures of ancient buildings. The temples are famous for their antiquity, their beautiful carving and lettering. There are six standing in a row on a platform near to the palace gates. They originally consisted of a single cell in which the image was placed but during recent years pavilions have been added to them and umbrella-shaped roofs have been placed around the stone which forms the top of the spiral roofs, this protects the buildings from heavy falls of snow. These temples contain much that is interesting for there are many relics of the past such as copper plate deeds (a few of these