

NEW ZEALAND, long considered fair game by the quick pill-vendor, introduced a somewhat desperate measure known as the Medical Advertisements Act (1942) in an endeavour to reduce the racket to manageable proportions.

Hoardings, newspapers, magazines and radio all combined to probe the luckless John Citizen's innards and display them before his horrified gaze as being in varying stages of decay and disrepair. Glib-tongued advertising men hastened to utter an awful warning of the results consequent

By Salamander.

upon neglecting the simple precaution of consuming vast quantities of Smiths Lung Linctus—or Brown's Pills for Pimpley People—or even Robinson's Elixir, which was guaranteed to shift anything from leprosy to housemaid's knee.

New names for diseases unknown to medical science were coined, fast and furious, and the citizenry was treated to anatomical details which left them aghast. «B.O.» and your «best friends won't tell you» jostled and jockeyed for position against even more startling revelations of the ills to which, the advertising men noisily insisted, mankind was peculiarly subject. The frenzied populace crowded the chemists' shops everywhere and clamoured for whichever particular draught they fancied that would save



«He's discovered a cure for which there is no known disease.»

The Patent Medicine Racket

them from instant social and physical oblivion. In the meantime, the makers rubbed their hands and shovelled the takings with glee.

When the fad for the little-known glandular products swept the seething multitude of artificial hypochondriacs, the manufacturers abandoned all shame and rushed headlong to cash in on the new craze which resulted in an orgy of quackery of the most ludicrous kind. No part of the body was neglected and the nostrums, gaudily packaged, distressingly expensive and mostly quite useless, were foisted on the afflicted public by the wagon-load.

To be sure, far too many people will gladly dose themselves with all manner of concoctions before consulting a qualified physician. Fortunately half their ailments are largely imaginary but the rest who are really suffering from a genuine disease arrive on the doctor's doorstep in a condition which often defies expert treatment.

Yet the public are not altogether to blame. Quite unknowingly, the medical profession itself does much to foster the layman's insatiable thirst for a branded medicine by actually prescribing it. Many products marketed by reputable firms of manufacturing chemists are, in themselves, excellent physics and based in the first place on a medical man's prescription. Others are, of course, the result of deep research in the companies' laboratories, and these firms nearly always stipulate that such products should only be taken on the physician's advice.

But this by no means compensates the increasing quantity of worthless medicaments bearing resounding but meaningless names