

## PHARMACY IN ROME.

(A Paper by MR. H. B. MORGAN, read before the Liverpool Pharmaceutical Students' Association.)

I eagerly laid hold of an opportunity which was offered to me to spend some months in Rome, and with keen delight I looked forward to the time when I should be within the walls of that famous city. Of all the beauties of the place, the marvels of St. Peter's, the Vatican, and the museums; the wonderful buildings, some erected long before Christianity was founded, many, alas! now in ruins, but a few, such as the Pantheon, after the lapse of nearly 2,000 years, in much the same condition as St. Paul must have seen them, when led a prisoner through the streets. Of the tremendous size of the Coliseum and the gloomy labyrinths of the catacombs I must not here speak.

After driving from the station in the little cab past fountains, ancient ruins, and large modern hotels, to the pharmacy which was my destination, the first thing that struck me on arriving there was the white marble steps and marble counter and the loftiness of the shop.

In very few of the native pharmacies is there any display in the windows—a few cards, bearing such an inscription as "Oxygen," being the only decoration. Some of those which have English assistants, or aim at attracting English customers, pay some attention to the show of goods in the window; but at our pharmacy there was nothing but a couple of small carboys to draw the public, and in many pharmacies there is no window in the sense in which we understand it, all the light coming through glass panelling at the end of the shop, and in the centre of which is the door.

Directly facing, and in some distance from the door, is the counter. On this may be a pair of ornamental jars, and the balance, which is found in every pharmacy; and here, in full view of the public, the dispensing is done. The walls on each side, both before and behind the counter, are lined with the stock-bottles, often in handsome glass cases; whilst generally one or two couches, several chairs, and a table with pen and ink are at one side of the shop, the whole having a scientific and professional appearance. Of course, there are many modifications of this plan, according to the size of the business and the taste of the proprietor. Sometimes there will be a separate room for dispensing, and a counter-case of sundries just as here.

When a window is dressed there is nearly always a fair sprinkling of English articles shown. On the average, the appearance of an Italian pharmacy is superior to that of an English one.

As a rule, there is no connection between the pharmacy and the house above, the phar-

macies being generally lock-up shops, and the pharmacist does not usually reside over his shop. This system has its advantages, but there are cases where it may be disadvantageous to have a stranger living over you.

For instance, in the spring of 1893, when the Anarchists were rather lively, our pharmacy was for some time watched day and night by a special guard. Not that the gentlemen of the bombs had any animus against us, but because above us lived a man holding a rather high public office, and it was feared an attempt might be made against him. Fortunately, the efforts of the police were successful.

The pharmacist's stock is partly regulated by law, and in the *Pharmacopœia* is a list of drugs, the absence of any of which renders the pharmacist liable to a fine of 10 lire (about 7s 6d.). Those named, however, by no means comprise the whole stock, and the number and variety of alkaloids, and the various synthetical remedies which are kept, are, I think, quite as great as at any pharmacy in this country. But of sundries other than really surgical goods—such as syringes and bandages—the usual stock is small.

Nearly all the articles used in dispensing English prescriptions, with the exception of galenical preparations, which we manufactured ourselves, we obtained from London, but most of the fine chemicals from Germany direct; whilst other things for general customers were got from wholesale houses in the city, and though many were much the same as we use, yet often the comparative sale was very different. Such things as mannite, for example, which I do not remember ever selling in England, are in frequent demand. *Lycopodium* is sold largely as a dusting-powder. Large quantities of S. V. R. are sold for burning, at the rate of about 1d. per oz., as methylated spirit is not made. *Limonat Roze*, the French purgative lemonade, is also frequently wanted. *Mag. sulph.* is constantly asked for under the name of *Sale Anglaise* (English salt). Pure oxygen is much used in cases of collapse, or as a last resort when a person seems on the point of death, and is sent out in bags, bearing the name of the chemist, with a tube and special mouthpiece attached. Tea is only used as a medicine, and an order for an ounce of tea and some nitre, which are taken together for a cold, is not infrequent.

Of course the only weights used for dispensing English prescriptions are the metric ones, but many still adhere to the old style of *uncia* and *libra* in buying in large quantities, but the same persons, when asking for such things as antipyrin, seldom use any terms but gramme and centigramme, and such articles as phenacetin, salicylate of quinine, valerianate of quinine, &c., which we rarely sell except in pre-