

Ye Automatic Pharmacy.

BY OUR ARTIST, A. D. 1950.

Passing through one of our large northern towns the other day, my eye was arrested by a curious overhanging sign bearing the inscription, "Ye Automatic Pharmacy." I glanced within the door, and a strange sight presented itself. Stood about were numerous odd-looking cases and machines, the walls were lined with a series of cases filled with all manner of drugs. A solemn stillness reigned around; no anxious, careworn pharmacist presented his head under the glowing lamps of the electric light; no pale-faced obsequious assistant came nimbly forward to know my pleasure. Filled with curiosity, I stepped across the marble floor, still no sounds, only the uncanny objects hemming me in on every side.

After a few minutes spent in looking round I discovered the meaning of the sign without. It was a genuine pharmacy, only arranged on an entirely automatic principle. The first machine I investigated was that for dispensing prescriptions. Happening to have a prescription for influenza in my pocket I followed the directions, and in a few minutes after the ringing of the bell I found in drawer No. 2 my prescription neatly dispensed. As I had not sullied my soul by visiting the stores I could not practically test the adjacent instrument, but I spent some time in examining its complicated mechanism. Stepping back I nearly put my foot into a most peculiar looking piece of apparatus; it was labelled automatic dog poisoner. I much admired its ingenuity, which deserves a detailed description. According to the directions, after placing the requisite fee in the slot, a steel loop opens, at same time exposing a beef lozenge fixed to a little pedestal. The dog naturally making for the lozenge, puts his head through the loop, which clasps his neck firmly, making him yawn somewhat. Half an ounce of prussic acid is discharged into his gaping mouth. At the same moment the body disappears through a trap door. A bell summons you a little later to take from a small drawer the handful of white ashes which is all that remains of poor doggie.

Poisons for the human race are dispensed with far more caution. Whilst signing the register you unconsciously press a hidden spring, which connected with an instantaneous camera takes a portrait of the purchaser. The poison being asked for verbally, the voice is thus registered in the phonograph, and on placing the money in the slot and pulling the lever, out drops the necessary article.

Casting my eye along the walls, I found glass fronted shoots filled with every description of drugs, already bottled and papered for delivery upon the money being placed in the slot. I avoided with a shudder the beckoning hand "To the Tooth Extractor," but stopped at a modest-looking erection which I had previously taken for a letter box, but now found would supply advice on any subject, which

pharmacists are generally called upon to answer. So I asked "When does the next express leave — for London?" and finding from the tiny time-table supplied that I must be off if I wished to catch my train, I made a hasty departure much impressed and delighted with all I had seen in this most unique pharmacy. — *British and Colonial Druggist.*

Preparation of Ointment of Potassium Iodide.

M. Raes, pharmacist, at Jemoppes, writes to *Le Monde Pharmaceutique* as follows:

Every pharmacist knows how difficult it is to incorporate potassium iodide with lard, to say nothing about vaselin, with which it is twice as refractory. I have found a method, however, which permits me to prepare the ointment rapidly and homogeneously. It is as follows:

Pulverize the iodide and dissolve it in two or three times its weight of boiling glycerin. Both lard and vaselin mix readily with the solution.

In pharmacies where there is much demand for this ointment it will save time to prepare in advance a titrated solution of the iodide in glycerin, 1 part of iodide to 2 parts of glycerin. Three parts (by weight) of this solution represent 1 part of potassium iodide. By means of it unguentum potassii iodidi can be made in the vessel which is to act as an ultimate container, without the use of the mortar or other apparatus, since the solution unites with the fats by simple stirring.

Crystallized Chloroform.

The *British Medical Journal* states that it has received from Mr. Martindale, New Cavendish Street, a specimen of the chloroform prepared by Pictet's new method of crystallizing, suggested by Professor Oscar Liebreich. It is crystallized at a low temperature, the mother liquor is separated, and the crystals on liquefaction produce a body which has a much more uniform boiling-point than that prepared by the ordinary methods. The specific gravity is not quite up to the promised point of 1510, but it appears to be about 1488, which probably indicates that a small addition of alcohol has been made to preserve it. It is, however, apparently a preparation of chloroform which is pure, and has a more uniform boiling-point than those which have hitherto been presented in commerce. No doubt this will be found an interesting product for medical use and for clinical investigation; and it is to be hoped that its use may be accompanied with less risk, but as to this nothing can at present be said.

Attention has recently been called to the fact that the want of uniformity in the boiling-point of the chloroforms, which are at present supplied for medical use, is a subject which apparently deserves considerable attention, and may prove to be of some practical importance. At any rate, in view of the numerous

deaths which it has been our painful duty to chronicle during the past year, it will certainly induce particular attention to every point, whether in the composition of chloroform or in the mode of administration which can reduce the number of such fatalities. As has been already mentioned, special attention has been given to this subject by the Anaesthetics Committee recently appointed at the suggestion of the Section of Therapeutics at the meeting of the British Medical Association at Bournemouth, and meantime administrators of chloroform will, in our opinion, certainly do well to pay especial attention to the boiling-point of the chloroform which they are using. The boiling-point of pure and homogeneous chloroform is usually stated at 143.6° F. Of course allowances must be made for variation of pressure according to temperature. It will probably be found, when attention is given to this matter, that the variations in boiling-point extend over a wider range than might have been expected.

Guaicol Biniodide, a New Aristol.

Dr. Vicario proposes guaicol biniodide as a probable pulmonary antiseptic. It is prepared from guaicol sodium by the action of iodine in potassium iodide solution. The guaicol is treated with an excess of caustic soda, which produces a whitish mass gradually becoming greenish and violet. The guaicol sodium is obtained in a pure and crystalline state by recrystallization from guaicol. The guaicol can be recovered by distillation. The crystalline compound is dissolved in water and to this is added a solution of iodine in potassium iodide as long as precipitation takes place. The precipitate is of a reddish brown color possessing the odor of iodine, readily decomposable on heating, fusible on a water bath and soluble in alcohol and fixed oils.—*American Journal of Pharmacy.*

Source of Bay Rum.

It was not known until of late years from what plant bay rum was prepared, but it is now ascertained, says the *Bulletin of the Jamaica Botanical Department*, that it is manufactured in Dominica from the dried leaves of *Pimenta acris*, W. & A. Bay rum is procured by distillation, and this in a very simple manner. The leaves are picked from the trees and then dried; in this state they are placed in the retort, which is then filled with water, and the process of distillation is carried on. The vapor is then condensed in the usual way, and forms what is known as "bay oil." The manufacture is carried on at the northern end of Dominica, and proves a very lucrative business to those engaged in it, as the plants are plentiful in this district.—*Garden and Forest.*

"Give me a tooth-brush, if you please; one that has done moulting," was the request of a customer at a drug store lately.