

macist, who must always study, pass through a preparatory stage, and obtain a diploma? Apart from the expenses incurred during his studies, he must also disburse sufficient capital to buy or commence a business. Ought not all this to be repaid him? Does it count for nothing that he is obliged to reside continually at his pharmacy, and be awakened suddenly by the night-bell ringing for him to go to the aid of some drunkard or the victim of some nocturnal affray. If he should refuse to do this, people do not hesitate to be grossly abusive; and besides, when he has attended thus in the middle of the night to anybody, the nocturnal visitant is apt to depart without thanking him, and without paying for the medicaments and attentions supplied.

POPULAR ESTIMATE OF THE PHARMACIST.

In the pharmacist the public is willing to see only a simple tradesman who takes some pinches of powder from a bottle, weighs them, and sells them for three or four times their intrinsic value. They will not take account of the knowledge which he has been obliged to acquire in order to recognize and manipulate substances which are often dangerous, and without committing an error which might cost the life of his client. This knowledge and skill people do not wish to pay for, but such a position is neither just nor logical. The pharmacist is, above all, a man of science. It is from his shop and laboratory that the principal chemical discoveries of modern times have proceeded. Besides him, how many chemists are there? There are some in the academies and in the faculties, but in the country there is no one except the pharmacist to perform analyses, act as a legal expert, and undertake scientific investigations. Nevertheless, people cling to the opinion that he gains too much on what he sells, especially if the articles be specialties. Let us see, however, if it be true, as is pretended, that he does gain too much on these.

THE PROFIT ON SPECIALTIES.

A specialty is a medicinal preparation sold in large quantities, by the aid of advertisements in which the inventor extols its novel and beneficent qualities. The materials of which these specialties are composed cost next to nothing, it is frequently said, and the preparations yield a profit of some sixty per cent. In this, however, we have but gross error and prejudice. Listen to M. Bogelot on this point. He says, "here is a specialty offered at five francs. I am quite willing to admit (what is not always the fact) that it may cost the maker but two francs. Do you imagine that the difference, about three francs, goes into the pocket of the pharmacist who retails it? It should be evident that the maker will not sell at absolute cost price. He has heavy expenses to pay which raise the cost to him from two to three francs, and if he reserves a profit of twenty to twenty-five centimes, he is thus able to sell to the retailer at three francs, twenty-five centimes. Well,

it is exclaimed, there is still a good enough margin of one franc, twenty-five centimes! Yes! if the article is sold at full price; but everyone knows now that upon specialties the deduction to customers is at least twenty per cent., which reduces the actual retail price to four francs and the profit to seventy-five centimes. Then, by way of opposition, there may be a firm which sells at three francs, seventy-five centimes; a neighbor immediately reduces his price to three francs, fifty centimes, and sometimes still lower, so that ultimately the retailer only gains some three or four sous towards his general expenses, loss by breakage, and the risk of bad debts."

SCANTY REMUNERATION OF THE PHARMACIST.

See, then, to what the pretended profit of sixty per cent. really amounts. As for the wholesale manufacturer, his profit of four or five sous only becomes of importance if he makes a large number of sales, to do which he must expend large sums for advertising expenses and turn over a capital of several hundred thousand francs. Now, as the pharmacist very rarely has such a capital at his disposal, he is obliged to have recourse to sleeping partners, who take a great part of the profits. To sum up, the pharmacist, though in a sense both scientist and tradesman, does not receive the remuneration of a tradesman, and this is not just. The exorbitant profits imputed to him—the extortionate charges formerly ascribed to the old apothecaries with which he is in turn reproached—do not exist, except in the wildest imagination.

EFFECTS OF COMPETITION AND BASELESS PREJUDICE.

We exist during a period of commercial crises, of extreme competition, from which the pharmacist, wholesale or retail, does not know how to escape any more than others. The struggle to obtain a living is a reality for him as well as for all other tradesmen, and reduces him as much as them to a mere pittance. But prejudices against him persist none the less. People never visit him for diversion but only when they are ill and in the worst of tempers. That "it is better to go to the baker's than to the druggist's" is proverbial in all countries. Literature and the drama have made the pharmacist the subject of easy pleasantries, but he continues nevertheless to render considerable service to the public which abuses him, though one truly needs a special inclination nowadays to follow a career so ill remunerated. With regard to all the scandals related concerning it, what has been stated here is the real truth regarding them.

Pill-Coating.

The following is M. Faucel's method for pill-coating:—The pills are uniformly moistened with a liquid composed of one part of glycerin and two parts of strong alcohol; they are then rolled in a sufficient quantity of impalpable powder, com-

posed of saccharin, 4 p.; gum tragacanth, 2 p., and potato starch, 1 p. Remove the excess of powder by means of a sieve, and repeat the operation. To have the pills white, they are then moistened with glycerin, 1 p.; ether 2 p., and rolled in a powder composed of equal parts of talc and carbonate of calcium. The following are the author's formulas for respectively cacao and gelatin coating: I. Cacao, 2 p.; saccharin, 2 p., and gum tragacanth, 1 p. II. Gelatin, 11 p.; saccharin, 5 p.; distilled water, 24 p.—*Pharm. Weekblad, through Jour. de Pharm. d'Anvers.*

Cathartic Acid.

Genz points out that the usual results obtained in the extraction of this body from senna leaves are not correct. Kolby's experiments yielded only 2 grammes from 2 kilos. of leaves. But the amorphous substance he obtained was blackish and of uncertain action, and Stockman gives an account of a much yellower preparation. The author gives as his process the following: Two kilos of senna leaves, not powdered, are treated with hot water for 24 hours and pressed. The extract is evaporated in vacuo. The residue is mixed with an equal volume of 95 per cent. alcohol and well shaken occasionally for a day. The soluble portion is taken off, and the treatment repeated with a fresh quantity of alcohol. The filtered solution is now treated with neutral acetate of lead. The precipitate is worked well and mixed to a thin paste with alcohol, and then treated with H_2S . Excess of H_2S is driven off by exposure to the atmosphere. After drying the residue, the sulphide of lead is treated with alcohol. The alcoholic solution is filtered off and mixed with ether, which precipitates the acid as a golden yellow powder. After drying this, it is re-dissolved in alcohol, filtered off, and dried once more at $50^\circ C$. If further purification is needed, it can be dissolved in 40 per cent. alcohol and precipitated again with ether. Thus obtained, in an apparently pure state, the yield is 12 to 15 grammes from the two kilos. It is an amorphous powder, of a yellow color, soluble with difficulty in cold, but easily in hot water, and easily so in 30 per cent. alcohol. It is insoluble in ether, benzene, chloroform, and petroleum ether. It leaves no ash, and an elementary analysis assigns to it the formula $C_{10}H_6NO_{15}$. The author puts forward this formula, however, with reserve, and admits the possibility of the body being obtained in the future in a crystalline, and therefore purer state.—*Pharm. Post.*

CLAY AS AN EXCIPIENT FOR TAR PILLS.

—The *Semaine Medicale*, of May 13th, gives a process for preparing tar pills containing the maximum quantity of active ingredient. It is due to Ivanoff. He uses clay as the excipient, of which a very small quantity is sufficient to give the pill a proper consistency. Small pilules can be thus obtained containing almost two grains of tar. They are preserved in licorice powder.