

As a matter of fact, the actual quantity is not now much greater. Radium banks have been established in Paris and London for the purpose of lending radium at a price. As much as \$200 has been charged for the use of 100 milligrammes for a single day.—*Sc. Am.*

WHAT IS AGAR-AGAR?—*The Physicians' Drug News* gives the following description of this substance, which has recently come into prominence in the treatment of constipation. Agar-agar, also known as vegetable gelatine and gelosine, is a gelatine-like substance obtained in the East Indies from several species of sea weeds. It is obtainable largely in China, but the best product is said to come from Japan. The product is extracted from the sea weeds with hot water, evaporated and dried. It is obtained in bundles of shreds about two feet long, in sticks a foot long and an inch wide or in thin sheets or small cakes. Agar-agar jelly is prepared by dissolving one part of agar powder in 29 parts of water, using a water bath for the purpose, and adding to the resulting solution 1 per cent. of bicarbonate of soda to neutralize the slight acidity of the solution. In a paper on agar-agar in the treatment of constipation in children, by Dr. J. L. Morse (*Journal A. M. A.*), we find the following in reference to the properties and methods of use: Agar-agar has the property not only of absorbing water, but also of retaining it in its passage through the intestinal canal. It thus increases the bulk of the feces and prevents the formation of hard, fecal masses. This peculiarity, together with its resistance to bacterial decomposition, suggests its use in the treatment of that form of constipation which is due to complete digestion of the food and to complete absorption of the water from the intestinal tract, the stools being as the result small and very dry. The doses given have varied from $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 ounce daily. Owing to the nature of its action, no habit is produced and it is not necessary to increase the dose. In fact, it is usually possible to diminish the dose and in some instances to entirely discontinue it. In spite of the fact that agar-agar alters the character of the feces, it does not always induce a spontaneous evacuation of the bowels. This is because it does not exert an irritant action on the intestinal wall as do the products of putrefaction usually formed in the intestine. Schmidt called attention to this fact and added a small quantity of the extract of cascara to the agar-agar in order to supply this chemical irritant. A preparation of this sort is sold under the name of "regulin." This is made with one of the tasteless forms of cascara and is both taste-