

through the mails, will be forwarded upon application. Should an object be too large for transmission by mail the sender is requested, before shipping it, to notify the institution, in order that a proper authorization for its shipment may be made out.

Respectfully,
(Signed) S. P. LANGLEY,
Secretary.

INSTRUCTIONS RELATIVE TO MEDICINAL PLANTS.

The Pan-American Medical Congress, at its meeting held in the City of Mexico in November, 1896, took steps to institute a systematic study of the American medicinal flora, through the medium of a general commission and of special sub-commissions, the latter to be organized in the several countries. The sub-commission for the United States has been formed, and consists of Dr. Valery Havard, U.S.A., chairman; Mr. Frederick V. Colville, Botanist of the United States Department of Agriculture; Dr. C. F. Mills-paugh, Curator of the Botanical Department of the Field Columbian Museum, Chicago; Dr. Charles Mohr, State Botanist of Alabama; Dr. W. P. Wilson, Director of the Philadelphia Commercial Museum; and Prof. H. H. Rusby, of the New York College of Pharmacy. This sub-commission solicits information concerning the medicinal plants of the United States from everyone in a position to accord it. The principal points of study are as follows:

- (1) Local names.
- (2) Local uses, together with historical facts.
- (3) Geographical distribution and degrees of abundance in the wild state.
- (4) Is the plant collected for market, and if so, (a) At what season of the year? (b) To how great an extent? (c) How prepared for market? (d) What is the effect of such collection upon the wild supply? (e) What price does it bring? (f) Is the industry profitable?
- (5) Is the plant, or has it ever been, cultivated, and if so give all information on the subject, particularly as to whether such supplies are of superior quality, and whether the industry has proved profitable?
- (6) If not cultivated, present facts concerning the life history of the plant which might aid in determining methods of cultivation.
- (7) Is the drug subjected to substitution or adulteration, and if so, give information as to the plants used for this purpose.

While it is not expected that many persons will be able to contribute information on all these points concerning any plant, it is hoped that a large number of persons will be willing to communicate such partial knowledge as they possess.

It is not the important or standard drugs alone concerning which information is sought. The Sub-Commission desires to compile a complete list of the plants which have been used medicinally, however trivial such use may be. It also

desires to collect all obtainable information, historical, scientific and economic, concerning our native and naturalized plants of this class, and, to that end, invites the co-operation of all persons interested. Poisonous plants of all kinds come within the scope of our inquiry, whether producing dangerous symptoms in man, or simply skin inflammation, or, as "loco-weeds," deleterious to horses, cattle and sheep. In this respect, the general reputation of a plant is not so much desired as the particulars of cases of poisoning actually seen, or heard from reliable observers. It is believed that much interesting knowledge can be obtained from Indians, Mexicans and half-breeds, and that, consequently, Indian agencies and reservations are particularly favourable fields for our investigation. Such knowledge will be most acceptable when based upon known facts or experiments.

In order to assist in the study of the habits, properties and uses of medicinal plants, the Sub-Commission undertake to furnish the name of any plant specimen received, together with any desired information available.

Owing to the diversity in the common names of many plants it will be necessary for reports, when not furnished by botanists or others qualified to state the botanical names with certainty, to accompany the same with some specimen of the plant sufficient for its identification. While the Sub-Commission will endeavor to determine the plant from any portion of it which may be sent, it should be appreciated that the labour of identification is very greatly decreased, and its usefulness increased, by the possession of complete material, that is, leaf, flower and fruit, and in the case of small plants, the underground portion also. It is best to dry such specimens thoroughly, in a flat condition under pressure, before mailing. While any convenient means for accomplishing this result may be employed, the following procedure is recommended. Select a flowering or fruiting branch, as the case may be, which when pressed shall not exceed 16 inches in length by 10 inches in width. If the plant be a herb 2 or 3 feet high, it may be doubled to bring it within these measurements. If it possess root leaves, some of these should be included. Lay the specimen flat in a fold of newspaper and place this in a pile of newspapers, carpet felting, or some other form of paper which readily absorbs moisture, and place the pile in a dry place under a pressure of about 20 to 30 pounds, sufficient to keep the leaves from wrinkling as they dry. If a number of specimens are pressed at the same time, each is to be separated from the others by three or four folded newspapers or an equivalent in other kinds of paper. In 12 or 24 hours these papers will be found saturated with the absorbed moisture and the fold containing the specimen should be transferred to dry ones. This change should be repeated for from two to five days according to the state of the weather,

the place where the drying is done, the fleshiness of the specimens, etc. The best way to secure the required pressure is by means of a pair of strong straps, though weights will do. The best place for drying is beside a hot kitchen range. When dry the specimens should be nailed between cardboards or some other light but stiff materials which would not bend in transit.

It is a most important matter that the name and address of the sender should be attached to the package, and that the specimens, if more than one, should be numbered, the sender retaining also specimens bearing the same number, to facilitate any correspondence which may follow. The Sub-Commission requests that, so far as practicable, all plants sent be represented by at least four specimens.

(Signed) H. H. RUSBY, M.D.,
Chairman of the General Commission,
New York College of Pharmacy.

VALERY HAVARD, M.D.,
Chairman of the Sub-Commission,
Fort Sticum, David's Island, New York.

How Children's Eyes Should be Tested.

The means to be provided must be accessible to the masses, easy of application, considerate of popular prejudice, and effective of results. Such a plan has been suggested and put in practice by the writer. It consists in the training of school principals in the detection of eye disorders and in a system of notification to the parents of discovered defects carrying with it the suggestion that a competent authority should be consulted.

In the city of Minneapolis, with the earnest co-operation of Prof. C. M. Jordan, superintendent of the public schools of that city, the eyes of 23,049 school children have been satisfactorily examined by the principals, after due instruction by the superintending oculist. Among this number, 7,293 defects have been found and largely beneficial results have a ready following.

The method is, briefly, as follows: An oculist is to be appointed by the board of education, whose duty it shall be to lecture to the principals upon the elementary facts in ocular anatomy, physiology, and hygiene, and upon the uses and application of the test types, etc., making a practical demonstration of the method upon some fifty pupils.

The principals shall thereafter annually report their work to the superintending oculist, who shall submit such statements, with his conclusions, to the board of education. A Snellen test card is provided for every building, with some accompanying printed matter.

They involve but slight expense, which should not exceed seventy-five dollars in a city of two hundred thousand people.—From "Defective Eyesight in American Children," by Dr. Frank Allport, in *June Review of Reviews*.