

## The Prescribing Chemist and the Dispensing Doctor in France.

The Paris correspondent of the *Lancet* writes on this subject as follows: In France, as with you, the subject of the prescribing chemist comes from time to time on the *tapis* of discussion, although in this country the respective spheres of pharmacien and doctor are much more sharply defined than in England. Here the former is strictly a druggist: that is to say, he compounds and deals in drugs alone, while he relegates the retailing of tooth brushes and other toilet requisites to a personage quite apart, viz., the perfumer, whose trade is altogether another branch of industry, and as a rule, an extremely lucrative one. Consequently the pharmaceutical chemist occupies much more the position of a professional man in this country than with you, and, therefore, his social status is better. Pharmacy indeed, enjoys the dignity in Universities of France of a separate faculty, the students of which not only pass examinations, but matriculate and pursue a prolonged curriculum before obtaining the diploma in pharmacy. Distinct from the chemist, again, is the herbalist, or petty dealer in green and dried herbs, who is much more numerous as a class than in England, and to whom the lower orders—very fond of dosing themselves for everything in the first instance—have recourse invariably to their innumerable decoctions or *tisanes*. It will thus be seen that the druggist is limited in his operations to the dispensing and selling of pharmaceutical preparations. He is further restricted from suggesting or compounding any preparation for a customer unless the latter be first provided with a doctor's prescription. In other words, he is not to prescribe, and is liable to penalties if he has it proved against him that he does so. He does it however to a certain extent, but hardly in the wholesale, flagrant, over-the-counter manner which obtains in the United Kingdom. There are, of course, here as elsewhere, chemists and chemists. He who wishes to push his wares and preparations has recourse largely to advertising. He has some nostrum which he vaunts in the press throughout the country in the old worn way as the universal panacea for all the ills of which humanity is the unwilling but inevitable inheritor. There is no restriction placed on his choice of advertisement, providing he observes the legal limitation which ordains that all such preparations must be of a simple and not of a compound nature, and that it is declared accordingly. In this way he attracts the customer, who asks for a particular "elixir" or what not and on whom is thus adroitly thrown the onus of prescribing for himself. The doctor, on the other hand, save in a locality where a pharmacy may be wanting, is strictly prohibited by written and unwritten law from dispensing his own medicines; and it must be allowed that it is to a large extent owing to this salutary rule that

medicine as a profession occupies, as a whole, a higher social consideration than it does in England. The eyesore so often met with in large centres in England, of a member of a learned profession keeping open shop or so-called surgery, where hair oil and tooth brushes are offered for sale or "advice gratis, medicine a shilling," painted on a window in close proximity to the name of a registered practitioner, would not be tolerated in this country for a moment: and there are no two opinions about the public and the profession being in the long run gainers by this intolerance.

The question of medical treatment for the poor is quite beside this, as is evidenced by the fact that in France where nothing of the above objectionable nature obtains, the poor are well cared for medically, and there is little or no abuse of hospital charity. An endeavor, however, will shortly be made by a member of the Chamber of Deputies to modify the position, so far as the chemist is concerned, by bringing the following proposition before the House:

Chemists are henceforth authorized to deliver without prescription any compound medicines or drugs, but on condition that they are expressly asked for by the customer.

To this proposal the general practitioners are naturally opposed. A daily paper professes to have interviewed one of this body, who is reported to have replied as follows: "You complain, doctor, that the chemists poach on your preserves." "They not only poach," replied the doctor, "but they kill. In violation of the law, they prescribe, while the doctor rests with his arms crossed. The public does not recognize that a dispenser of drugs is incapable of writing a trustworthy prescription, and yet the study of medicine and surgery is quite another affair from that of chemistry and pharmacy. Now, the dangers," continued he, "of medicine given in this way are two: (1) on a wrong or no diagnosis; (2) it may not arrest the progress of the malady; result—delay, and the calling in of the doctor when death is inevitable. Moreover, by authorising the chemists to deliver medicines in this way many struggling practitioners in the poorer quarters will be deprived of their means of livelihood. There are doctors," he declared, "in such quarters, who, although every whit as capable as their more fortunate *confreres*, find a difficulty, owing to the exigencies of fortune, in putting together two or three thousand francs a year. They may have studied to obtain their diploma for ten years, and end by gaining with difficulty the wages of a workman; and, moreover, they are less at their ease than he, for they have to bear numerous expenses which the workman has not. It is true there are some members of the profession who accumulate large fortunes, but they are the small minority, and it is precisely to this minority, which knows little of our necessities, that appeals are made to legislate for us. And it is to be added," he went on, "that in this matter the pharmacien has always the advantage over us—as when, for

example, a workman consults us, he is generally out of work, and spends his saving on household necessities, amongst which are included the medicine. Our patient pays us not for his consultations, but he always pays the chemist!" In conclusion, he urged that he would allow the chemist in the interests of all concerned, the patient included, to do very minor surgery and simple dressings only, and even then he maintained he should hold the diploma of *officier de sante* as well as that in pharmacy. *Br. and Col. Druggist.*

## A New Method of Taking Powders.

During the course of the recent influenza epidemic, Dr. Hoffman learned a new Method of taking Powders, from a patient who himself originated it. This method seemed to offer so many advantages over the customary enveloping in wafers and capsules, that Hoffman tried it under numerous conditions and with great satisfaction.

The material is a paper of vegetable fibre, manufactured on a large scale in Japan under the name "Usego"; it is a uniform yellowish white in color, and has a silky lustre. On the one hand it is so thin and delicate that the finest mark can be seen through it, and on the other, is possessed of remarkable toughness and tenacity. The weight of a single piece (it comes into commerce in sheets 20 inches long by 14 broad) is about 30 grains, and it contains 1.05 per cent. of ash, consisting of oxide of iron, alumina and lime. Microscopically examined, it was seen to be a thick network of irregularly arranged bast fibre cells, with extraordinary thin walls. By the efforts of Dr. Uloth, the source was identified as *Wickstramia canescens* of the natural order Thymelacoe, a bushy plant which grows widely in the mountain forests of middle and south Japan.

A piece of about 4 square inches is used for an ordinary powder of 8 grains, which is shaken as much as possible towards the centre; the four corners are then taken up, and twisted together between the finger and thumb, avoiding as much as possible all unnecessary breaking of the paper. The little twisted column is then cut off, the base slightly compressed, and the whole is ready for taking. Practical experiments showed that in the stomach the packet immediately unfolds, and discharges its contents; the paper itself seems to be entirely disintegrated in its passage along the digestive tract. The author thinks that the great cheapness of the method will be a chief advantage, as well as its simplicity of application. At the same time, the Japan paper makes a much smaller packet than the ordinary wafer. He recommends that the medical man should add to his prescription the words "D. ad. chart. japonic," and that the powders should be sent out ready for taking by the pharmacist.