

From the Front of the Counter.

In opening his presidential address to the Liverpool Chemists' Association last week, Dr. Symes gave a happy indication of a characteristic which would go some way to account for the success and general popularity which he has attained. In the early days of his business career, he said, he would sometimes place himself in front of his counter and take a look round from a customer's point of view. He would then see little details, empty bottles, small things out of place, or some confusion, which might escape his attention so long as he kept to his usual side of the counter. We do not know why Dr. Symes limited this very sensible proceeding to his "early days," or whether he has really abandoned it in these latter times; but we know enough of his habit of mind to believe that his customers, and, whenever he has any, his opponents in pharmaceutical politics can rely on his occasionally looking at things from their point of view. We venture to recommend the practice alluded to, both actually and metaphorically, to the consideration of other pharmacists.

We have the impression that we have seen chemists' shops the principles of which can never have looked at them with the eye of a critical customer; and we have a vague memory of having met pharmacists who seemed quite unable to regard any question or any interest from any other point of view but their own. The faculty of keeping a single eye on one's own affairs is often a valuable one in the attainment of success, but the exact appreciation of an opponent's position is essential to an argument with him, and still more is it desirable to ascertain with precision the condition of mind of the customers on whom we depend. To regard them in any sense as enemies whom we have to overcome and spoil to the utmost extent of our ability is a method of treatment which is, of course, so unreasonable as to be unworthy of serious mention, if it were not that it is in practice, though not in intent, the rock whereon tradesmen have before this wrecked their businesses. A more common error is, we imagine, the too frequent attempt to sell a customer an article other than that he really wants. We have correspondents who pride themselves on their skill in this respect. We do not question that skill, and everyone must exercise his own judgment as to how far it may be exercised with advantage. In the large majority of cases the transaction between a customer and a tradesman is a perfectly simple exchange of a piece of coin for a certain commodity. The former fully expects that the latter should get a reasonable benefit on the transfer, and he has not, as a rule, the least objection thereto. If the article supplied requires some special manipulation or preparation, involving a certain amount of trained skill, nine customers out of ten are ready to pay the proper fee for

such service. Occasionally, too, they obviously want some guidance in regard to the particular article they propose to purchase. They can then appreciate intelligent and disinterested advice. But when they know what they want and ask for it, the cleverness of persuading them to take something else is, to say the least, questionable. Most of them perfectly well understand the game that is being played, and ultimate success is not always assured because no murmur is made.

In pointing the moral of Dr. Symes's illustration, therefore, our purpose is to show that the best policy for any trader to adopt is to so order his establishment and his business procedure as to fulfil as exactly as he can the fair and honest requirements of his customers, with more regard to permanent association than to immediate profit. A shilling gained and a customer lost is a poor sort of bargain, but it is sometimes the result of injudicious smartness. At the same time, we do not forget that a qualified chemist is expected to be something more than a mere distributor of goods, at times. The faculty of discerning opportunities and of making proper use of them is a characteristic of sound judgment, and it is this which is one of the chief factors of success.—Chemist and Druggist.

Dispensing Powders.

Writing in the American Journal of Pharmacy on this subject, Mr. T. S. Wiegand states that where morphine, arsenious acid, or corrosive sublimate are ordered, the division of any of these is secured by the use of a triturate of the active remedy with sugar of milk, using 8 grains of the triturate to represent 1 grain of the remedy; these triturates are frequently kept on hand, thus making the diffusion eight times more certain. The order in which the materials are put into the mortar is quite important, and the kind of mortar used is also to be regarded; a close-grained porcelain mortar free from any uneven places, or little flaws or holes, should always be selected for the purpose. A small portion of sugar of milk or the mildest ingredient is triturated in the mortar to prevent the active ingredient from adhering to the surface; after this the most active remedy is added, and rubbed with that already in the mortar until thoroughly mixed, when the other active ingredients are to be added, each being well-mixed with the others, and, lastly, the remainder of the least active material is added and thoroughly mixed. We may point out here what is forcibly discussed in "The Art of Dispensing," that the manner in which powders are mixed has a decided influence upon the miscibility of the finished product. Very little rubbing should be indulged in; indeed, it is better to mix powders lightly with a spatula and sift, rather than to mix by rubbing in a mortar. As to the division of powders Mr. Wiegand recommends the method of spread-

ing the powder upon a ground-glass plate, arranging it into a parallelogram of even thickness, and marking off the number of parts into which it should be divided with a straight-edge spatula across the plate. Greater accuracy can be attained by using a glass slab, to the underside of which has been pasted a piece of letter-paper ruled into small squares. It is said that, working in this way, powders can be divided to within a fraction of a grain, but it is as well to note that in the case of potent medicines the only accurate and safe method is to weigh each powder.

Antipyrine Incompatibles.

A short time since M. Carles drew attention to the precipitate which is formed by mixing solutions of antipyrine and extract of cinchona. M. Ollivier, who has been making further experiments, says (Bull. Com. June, p. 278) that all the active constituents are precipitated together, and that there remain in the liquid hardly perceptible traces of alkaloids or antipyrine. According to M. Carles, however, the precipitate is readily soluble in weak acids, so that it might dissolve in the gastric juice, and the mixture, though unsightly, might not be inert.

(While this mixture might be perfectly safe to dispense, might not the more poisonous alkaloids be precipitated by antipyrine, which on separating would be given in large enough doses to produce serious results? A. B. S.)

Another apparent incompatibility has been recorded by M. Blainville, who, having occasion to mix 4 gm. of antipyrine and 5 gm. of choral hydrate in 15 gm. of water, observed that the mixture assumed a milky appearance, and upon clearing deposited an oleaginous liquid. After decantation, this liquid soon crystallized, and then no longer possessed the taste of antipyrine or choral, but a flavor rather resembling that of coriander seeds. Attention is called to the inconvenience that may result from the prescribing of complex substances that may change their physiological action altogether, and it is recommended that as far as possible when ordering them, simple formulæ in which only distilled water and a simple flavoring agent enter, should be adopted.—Am. Dr. 1889, p. 170.

Ferric Bromide.—It is almost impossible to keep a solution of ferric bromide pure. According to L. L. De Koninck, a solution containing excess of bromine begins to show the presence of a ferrous salt as soon as the excess of bromine has been expelled by boiling. Ferric bromide, free from bromine and from ferrous salt, can only be obtained by passing air through the solution in the cold. The excess of bromine is very tenaciously retained.

A feather duster disperses but does not remove the dust from the store