

## DISINFECTION.—SALE OF POISONS.

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disinfected by simple outward applications, it has long been felt that some ready process was needed for attacking more effectually those germs which float in the air or adhere to the walls and ceiling. For this purpose this little instrument will be found particularly efficient.

2dly. In the recent recommendations of the Commissioners on the contagious diseases among cattle of this State, the importance of thoroughly disinfecting barns and sheds is urged in order to arrest a prevailing epizootic, but it will be observed that no method is suggested for effectually carrying out such a process. I am confident that the result here desired could be most readily obtained by placing in these buildings, for twenty-four hours, two or three of the instruments here described. Other objects to which this apparatus may be applied will continually suggest themselves; as for instance, for neutralizing the offensive odor of dissecting rooms, surgical wards, for purifying the holds of emigrant ships, for disinfecting cars and carriages in which persons suffering from contagious maladies have been conveyed, or even horse or steam railroad cars to which any suspicion of such conveyance may be attached, or which need to be purified from other causes. By introducing into the bottle a solution of iodine, cannabis indica, or the like, this instrument may be substituted for the various atomizers now in use, for administering these various drugs by inhalation.

I have ventured to give the name "Eudi-pile" to this instrument, and although its construction was suggested by the old and well-known scientific toy employed in Eudiometry, it differs from the latter in several essential particulars.

Of course, the bottles to contain the disinfecting liquid may be made of different capacities, to correspond with the size of the apartment to be disinfected.

It has been estimated that a bottle holding two ounces will throw out a constant stream of vapor for about sixteen hours, at an expense not exceeding twenty cents.

#### PHARMACEUTICAL LEGISLATION ON THE SALE OF POISONS.

By C. W. STEVENS, A.B., M.D., Charlestown.

In view of the great number of cases of poisoning occurring every year, I was recently led to examine the General Statutes of Massachusetts, and, to my surprise, found the following statute:—

"CHAP. 166. SECT. 7. If an apothecary or other persons sells any arsenic, strychnine, corrosive sublimate or prussic acid, without the written prescription of a physician, he shall keep a record of the date of such sale, the article, the amount thereof sold, and the person or persons to whom delivered; and for each neglect he shall forfeit a sum not exceeding fifty dollars. Whoever purchases deadly poisons as aforesaid, and gives a false or fictitious name to the apothecary or other person, shall be punished by a fine not exceeding fifty dollars."

That is all there is in regard to the sale of poisons—no forbidding of the sale of poisons, no requirement of a special label. The only mention of the subject is in regard to four poisons, and the only condition of sale is that the same be recorded.

If we now turn to the statutes of New York, we find there is one step farther taken in the right direction. The Statutes forbid the sale of poisons, except from a prescription, unless the package contain, 1st, the name of the apothecary; 2d, his residence; 3d, the word poison; and, 4th, that the sale be registered.

An act to regulate the sale of poisons (1860) prescribes, 1st, that "No person shall sell or give any poison or poisonous substance without recording in a book to be kept for that purpose the name of the person receiving said poison, his or her residence, excepting upon the written order or prescription of some regularly authorized practising physician, whose name shall be attached to such order.."

2d. "It is farther enacted that no person shall sell, give or dispose of any poison or poisonous substance, except upon the order or prescription of a regularly authorized practising physician, without attaching to the vial, box or parcel containing such poisonous substance, a label with the name and residence of such person and the word poison, all printed upon it with red ink, together with the name of such person written or printed thereon in plain and legible characters."

"Any person infringing any of the provisions of said act shall, upon conviction, be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and shall be punished by a fine not exceeding fifty dollars."

On examining the pharmacy act of England, there is still another step taken. The purchaser must be known to the apothecary, and the label of the package must contain, 1st, the name of the apothecary; 2d, his residence; 3d, the word poison; and, 4th, the name of the article. The articles

included under the "Poison Act" are definitely given, and are furnished to every dispenser of medicines.

By turning to Germany, we find its laws peremptorily forbid the sale of poisons, unless from prescription, with the exception of vermin-killers and drugs used in the arts or trades. But these very vermin killers are the cause of a vast deal of mischief, as our toxicological annals show.

The following extracts are from a prospectus for a new pharmaceutical statute\* in Baden, on the sale and delivery of medicine:—

"ART. 60. Every patient is the possessor of the prescription written for him, and, when paid for, can demand it back, except it contain poisonous substances.

"ART. 61. Drugs which produce emesis, or can be used as poisons, drastics, and such as in small doses act violently on the human system, shall never be delivered without a prescription signed by a regular physician.

"ART. 62. Poisonous or drastic substances, used merely for the destruction of noxious animals, or for the purposes of the arts or trades, shall be delivered only to those persons well known to the apothecary as acting in good faith, and to those having a prescription signed by a regular physician. The following conditions shall be affixed to the sale:—1st. That the purchaser give a receipt, signed by himself, stating the use, quantity and quality of the poison, as well as the day and hour of the purchase. 2d. That the drug shall be labelled poison. 3d. That such drugs shall be delivered to no child, servant, or drunk-en person.

"ART. 64. The drugs mentioned in Art. 61 shall be registered in a book kept for that purpose, with the name of the poison, with the directions, and the name and address of purchaser."

I think we shall find that France, in a few words, makes the right statute, which will answer every requirement:—

"The sale of poisonous substances can be made only by apothecaries and on the prescription of a regular physician. This prescription must be signed, dated, and indicate the dose and mode of administration. The druggist shall copy said prescription on a record book kept for that purpose. Before delivering the poisonous substance, the druggist shall affix a label bearing his name and address, with directions for the use of said substance."

I have thought it might be useful to collate the statutes of some different countries on this subject, considering its great importance. The lives of our fellow-beings are frequently sacrificed by carelessness in writing prescriptions, by the blunders of apothecaries, and by the mistakes of nurses; but they might be avoided by greater care and education. Let us at least urge the adoption of laws which may avert one source of suicide and homicide. Many if not all of our druggists sell poisons, such as laudanum, oxalic acid and arsenic, without hesitation and frequently without question; as a proof of which I will briefly relate a few cases happening within my own observation. In all the following cases the drugs were purchased from apothecaries without a prescription.

CASE I.—A young woman procured from an apothecary's clerk an ounce and a half of laudanum, which she drank. She was saved by an emetic.

CASE II.—Mrs. — obtained an ounce of laudanum, which she drank, and was saved by an emetic.

CASE III.—Mr. G. obtained some oxalic acid in powder, which he purposely drank in solution, and died in half an hour.

CASE IV.—Mrs. — obtained some oxalic acid for domestic purposes. One day, desiring to take some Epsom salts, she mistook the acid for it, and died within an hour after taking the poison.

CASE V.—Mr. R. procured several times from the same apothecary arsenic, with which he poisoned a man and his wife.

CASE VI.—Mrs. — bought half an ounce of arsenic, of which she took the greater part for suicidal purposes. She was saved by emetics and antidotes.

CASE VII.—A young man called for four grains of opium in two powders, of which he gave one to a child. The child died.

CASE VIII.—Mr. S. obtained two grains of morphine, which he took suicidally, and died.

In these eight cases are six deaths. If to these eight cases I should add all the cases which have occurred in the practice of all the physicians of Massachusetts, the number would undoubtedly be very great. I consider a stringent law, prohibiting the free sale of poisons, of more importance than one that every apothecary shall have a diploma, for apothecaries with diplomas do not hesitate to sell poisons without a prescription. I call on the profession at large to state their views on this matter, and relate their experience of this lawless manner of dispensing death.

\* Entwurf eines neuen Medicinalordnung.