since the old apprenticeship days are gone, for now many men may qualify without much practical acquaintance with the British Pharmacopœia and a very limited theoretical acquaintance also, a circumstance which they always afterwards regret.

It may be argued that materia medica and practical pharmacy are the province of the qualified pharmacist. Granted this to be the case, speaking on the lines of perfection, but we nevertheless have to deal with what *is*, and so long as the great bulk of general practitioners continue to do their own dispensing I submit that the medical schools ought not to relax their teaching in these subjects in the way which is so evident on all sides.

Professor Schäfer goes on to say: "A scientific acquaintance with the action of drugs under both normal and abnormal conditions is quite another story and pharmacology must in future have its due position in the medical curriculum." The student, then, is to know all about the action and uses of drugs without necessarily being acquainted with their physical characters. This savours very much to my mind of mechanical empiricism. I prefer the workman who not only knows how to *use* his tools but knows all about the tools he is using.

In conclusion, let me say that in my opinion this inefficient knowledge of materia medica and pharmacy on the part of many members of our profession is very largely responsible for the reprehensible practice now so prevalent of prescribing and recommending so many proprietary nostrums. If the B.P. is not q.s. along with an addendum, say, such as Martindale's, it *ought* to be, and it becomes a serious reflection on the Pharmacopœia Committee if it be not kept up to date. But this modern practice of prescribing So-and-so's liquid extract and So-and-so's "oids"—very often merely as the result of an interview with an eloquent commercial traveller—is the outcome and the evidence of a most deplorable ignorance which should not prevail.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Horbury, Wakefield, Oct. 10th, 1903. WALTER ASTEN.

THE VISION OF MYOPES.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The fact recorded by Mr. E. Donaldson in his interesting letter in THE LANCET of Oct. 17th, p. 1118, that vision can be improved in a myopic eye by drawing upon the outer canthus with the finger especially appeals to me as being in accord with a theory I propounded some years ago that the external ocular muscles were coördinates that had to be taken into account in considering the so-called static refraction of the eye (vide *Ophthalmic Review*, 1900, p. 211). In that article I mentioned that a myope's sight could usually be improved for the time being by pressing the globe backwards with the finger through the upper lid. I made use of the fact to support some heretical views with regard to polar pressure mechanically making the eye less myopic. Mr. Donaldson's method would have the same effect on the globe and he gives the orthodox explanation that dragging on the outer canthus enables the lid to cut off the diffusion circles, but may it not be that the dragging also causes pressure on the eye, the result of which is that it is somewhat flattened? I do not deny that a diaphragm renders objects clearer by cutting off diffusion circles but in the instance in question I think the fact that dragging the canthus outwards causes diplopia (an observation which can easily be tested) shows that pressure is exerted on the eye.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Bath, Oct. 18th, 1903. W. M. BEAUMONT.

THE HATCHING OF CHICKENS FROM PRESERVED EGGS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In an annotation on the above subject which appeared in THE LANCET of May 16th, 1903, p. 1393, reference was made to a statement that chickens had been hatched out from eggs which had been preserved for 12 months by immersion in a 10 per cent. solution of sodium silicate. The result indicated seemed so remarkable as to make it worth while to repeat the experiment. Some friends of mine kindly undertook to carry out the following experiment. Twelve eggs were collected in June and immediately placed in a 10 per cent. solution of sodium silicate and completely covered by the solution. On Sept. 5th four eggs were taken from the solution and marked and with nine other newly laid eggs were placed under a hen. All the newly laid eggs hatched out within three weeks but the four preserved eggs did not hatch. One of these eggs was boiled and was quite fresh; the other three were broken and the yelk fell out separately from the white. The whites were whipped up and became quite stiff. This is stated to be the best test of a fresh egg. It is of interest to note that these preserved eggs, even when they had been incubated for three weeks, still remained perfectly fresh, seeming to indicate that the shells were still impermeable to external influences.

Assuming that the remarkable preserving effect of the sodium silicate is due to the formation of an insoluble glass with the lime salts of the substance of the shell it is curious that it has been possible to hatch out a chicken without first making the shell again permeable to air. The experiment is one which should be repeated after the shell has by some method again been rendered permeable, for it seems improbable that the hatching of such preserved eggs can take place if the shell remains impermeable to air.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Oct. 20th, 1903. FREDERICK E. BATTEN.

THE M.D. DEGREE OF BRUSSELS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Dr. P. A. Nightingale states in THE LANCET of Oct. 17th, p. 1119, that the M.D. Brux. confers no right to practise in Belgium and, secondly, that the Belgians take the "State degree" which, in the words of Dr. Nightingale, is "quite another matter." While in Brussels I made inquiries on both these points and was assured that the degree *does* confer the right of practising there after certain legal formalities are gone through and this is evidenced by the fact that two or three Englishmen are now practising there. Moreover, I was given to understand that the examination for foreign candidates is identical in every respect with that of the Belgian students.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Westcliff-on-Sea, Oct. 18th, 1903. N. LEONARD.

THE MEDICAL REGISTER.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I beg to thank you for your courtesy in complying with my request to draw the attention of members of the profession to the importance of accuracy of address. We have had about 300 communications in the past three days and five persons whose names would have been erased at the end of the year under the operation of Section XIV. have saved themselves, so that the result may be considered very satisfactory. I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

H. E. ALLEN,

Oxford-street, W., Oct. 14th, 1903. Registrar.

A BIOLOGICAL THEORY OF THE ORIGIN OF NEOPLASMS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—As the study of the origins of neoplasms is com manding a great deal of attention at present, I would like to suggest a natural origin for these tumours. I think rather too much attention has been paid to the heredity of the entire organism and too little to the special hereditary tendencies of the cells themselves which enter into the growth In the endeavour to obtain an idea of these hereditary properties we must necessarily start at the period when all organisms were in the unicellular state; then study the causes that lead to increased proliferation of cells—first, in the protozoa of unicellular type, and, secondly, in the multicellular organisations where the daughter cells do not separate from the parent except to form the foundation of a new colony. In the unicellular group we find that when the normal cell has not sufficient excess of vitality left to continue reproduction by dividing it resorts to coalescence with another cell and from the stimulation derived there results a great output of daughter cells. In the multicellular organisms of a primitive kind we find that although there is already an attempt made to limit the reproductive functions to certain cells, still that the ordinary tissue cells can take on this function and do.

Remembering the above facts, on looking at that great multicellular organism the human body, we find that certain cells are set apart for the reproductive functions and the