

Pharmacy In England.

A Hitch in the Matter of the "Imperial" Pharmacopœia—The Epidemic of Influenza—Proprietary Remedies and their Names—Exposure of a Nostrom—Trouble in the Research Laboratory of the Pharmaceutical Society—Death of S. M. Burroughs.

(From Our Own Correspondent.)

Already there are indications of a revolt amongst pharmacists against the methods adopted by the General Medical Council to secure a revision of the pharmacopœia. The appointment of Professor Atfield as editor is postponed, and every one anticipates that the upshot will be the association of one or two therapeutists with Professor Atfield. At the Edinburgh meeting of the Pharmaceutical Society, the qualification of Professor Atfield to judge botanical questions was openly challenged, and it was plainly stated that pharmacists do all the work, whilst others reap the reward. So far, the only attempt to make a start has been the usual complimentary letter from Sir Richard Quain to the President of the Pharmaceutical Society, inviting the assistance of the Council and members, and pharmacists generally, in the production of a new pharmacopœia. The council evidently did not regard the matter very seriously, as they merely nominated the same committee again as assisted in the production of the Addendum, 1890. It is true they actually invited one new pharmacist, Mr. P. W. Squire, to join them, but, of course, Mr. Squire would not consent. I have repeatedly pointed out in these columns that if the work of revision is to be undertaken in earnest, a far larger committee than the half-dozen men above mentioned will be absolutely necessary. As it is, most of the members of this committee do little or no actual work, but relegate it to their assistants or the managers of their laboratories. In the production of the miserably deficient addendum, this committee took nearly eighteen months, and groaned over the work. There is some tendency in medical ranks at a concerted attempt to introduce concise therapeutic notes about each drug, or its preparation, although Dr. Lauder Brunton's scheme to make it a prescriber's companion has been generally derided. Incompatible and solubilities might well be stated, but hints upon the proper combinations for a prescription are surely out of place.

Influenza, or la grippe, has begun to pay us its annual visit, somewhat delayed, but undoubtedly rendered more severe by the prolonged frost. Already the death rate has doubled, jumping in three weeks from seventeen to thirty five per thousand. There has been a steady rush for ammoniated tincture of quinine and other recognized remedies, but eucalyptus oil appears to have lost its value in the eyes of the majority of the public. As a general disinfectant and prophylactic, it was unquestionably overrated during the 1890 scare, but in the first stages of the epidemic, when the coryza is severe and the fauces swollen and painful, inhala-

tions of eucalyptus oil with steam are very useful, and afford rapid relief. Doctors and chemists have been very busy ever since the frost broke up, and the development of coughs and colds by the public has been wonderful. Soon we shall have the convalescent period with its cod liver oil emulsion, syrup of the hypophosphites, and other recognized remedies.

Why do manufacturers of proprietary preparations so often saddle their specialties with uncouth and unpronounceable names? It was bad business for the proprietors to cling to the title, "Gérandel's Pastilles," as it is not a pastille at all, but a compressed pellet or tablet. The way the public, in obedience to the extensive advertising, have tried to grasp M. Gérandel's name is most amusing. Now a new soap has been launched, with the highly euphonious title of "Myrospermum." One can easily imagine Mary Jane coming into the shop for a cake of Myra's-journal soap! If proprietors would only grasp the elementary fact, which would be forced on their notice a dozen times a day if they were behind the retail counter, that they often suffer from the absolute inability of the public to grasp and remember their extraordinary titles, they would be more careful in future. Be distinctive, by all means, but do not let the word be long, or capable of about two dozen different methods of pronunciation.

Writing about proprietary preparations reminds me very forcibly that they have their Nemesis. Occasionally it is a trade journal that offers a formula which is stated to produce exactly the same article as that on which a proprietor may have spent much money and time before completion. Against that form of Nemesis, I have not much to say except that it is hardly an honorable proceeding. But we have in London a journal, called *Science Siftings*, that has thrown down its gauntlet against quackery. It assisted in the exposé which took place a couple of years ago of Harness and his confrères, who were selling so-called electric belts ingeniously contrived so that even the smallest quantity of electricity could *not* pass to the wearer. This journal has turned its attention to proprietary preparations, and this week announces an exposure of "Koko" for the hair. This is a comparatively young proprietary, but has been extensively boomed, and, during a discussion at the Chemical Society on the subject of analytical reports, it came in for some criticism. On that occasion the report of a well-known analyst was quoted, and from the carefully-guarded language in which the report was framed it was stated that the preparation might consist of distilled water. Now we understand the reason for this, as *Science Siftings* finds the composition to be, glycerine 60.6 grains, borax 15.35 grains, in each six ounces. A small quantity of rose water is present to give a little odor, but the bulk of the preparation is water. There was an impression abroad that it contained pilocarpine, but, as *Science Siftings* points out,

this alkaloid is exceedingly dear just now, so perhaps this accounts for its absence. There was the usual highfalutin reference to a tribe of Indians, the Coco-Maricopas, who had discovered this extraordinary remedy, and who were never known to go bald, etc. It will be interesting to learn the sequel. Harness attempted to put the law in motion on the question of libel, but was unsuccessful. We might almost safely presume that Koko is doomed, and those who have large advertisement contracts running had better gather in the shekels.

What looks like a concerted attack by the trade journals here upon the Research Laboratory of the Pharmaceutical Society has taken place this week. Both journals attack the director, Professor Dunstan, rather viciously, and directly charge him with committing the unpardonable sin of *suppressio veri*. There is also an artful alliteration concerning priority priggling. But Professor Dunstan is perfectly capable of taking care of himself, and if he condescends to notice the attacks, and it is to be hoped he will, as they call for answers, will probably hit out straight. His reply to a criticism of Mr. P. W. Squire on the melting point of aconitine was a masterpiece, and his sweet suggestion that, as Mr. Squire had no acquaintance with elementary research work, his blunders were therefore pardonable, was specially delightful to those who know the pompous manner of Mr. Squire. Someway or other, however, there appears a hitch in the work of the laboratory, as since March of last year we have had no communication on the aconite investigation.

The death of S. M. Burroughs, of the enterprising firm of Burroughs, Wellcome & Co., is a severe loss for pharmacy in this country. His energetic support and aid was ever ready for all schemes intended to benefit druggists and their assistants. His philanthropy was also well known, and it is only a short time ago that he gave \$5,000 to found a cottage hospital in the little town of Dartford, where the firm's works are established. The progress of the firm is a remarkable illustration of the value of persistent and large advertising. So much success have they achieved that nine medical men out of ten use the registered trade mark of the firm, "tabloid," in preference to the English word, tablet, when they want to describe compressed goods. The firm seem to have been perpetually hankering after something new, and it is well known that they will go to any expense and trouble in perfecting the ideas of medical men. But as to their exact value to pharmacists as a class, there is no mistaking the fact that they have done more mischief than a dozen ordinary proprietary manufacturers. They calmly suggest to doctors that they should prescribe their compressed tabloids, and the chemist will only have to soak off the ordinary label and fix on one with the proper dose and the thing is done. This is reducing the art of dispensing to its lowest depths.