

I need scarcely say that the preparation known as "soap liniment" has successfully borne the test of long tried experience. "*Quod primum est verum est*" is true of many things pharmaceutical, and I shall not, I feel sure, be thought to be assailing a time-honoured prescription in my humble desire to point out the way of rendering it more accessible and efficient where circumstances deny to it the exact composition to which the sanction of authority has been accorded.

In the Pharmacopœias of 1824 and 1836 the liniment was presented to us as a soft gelatinous mass. To the conscientious pharmacist this at once suggested a difficulty which it was not easy to overcome. It arose from an alteration which had been made in the spirit of rosemary from the strength of proof spirit to that of rectified spirit, which caused the gelatinization of the soap when dissolved in it by the aid of heat. Complaints were made and suggestions offered to remedy this defect, and accordingly in the next Pharmacopœia, that of 1851, the soap was reduced in quantity and water was added to the spirit. This, however, did not prove effectual. In all the Pharmacopœias the colleges had ordered the soap *to be dissolved*. This seemed sufficiently correct, otherwise a smaller quantity might have been named for the purpose intended. The expressions used to indicate this intention was as follows: Ph. 1746, "*dum solutus sit*;" Ph. 1788, "*donec solvatur*;" Ph. 1809, "*macera balneo arenæ donec liquetur*;" Ph. 1836, "*macera leni calore donec liquetur*;" and Ph. 1851, "*macera subinde agitans donec liquentur*." It was abundantly clear, therefore, that the soap was intended to be dissolved, and it was this circumstance rather than the exact proportions of the ingredients composing the liniment which, in reality, was the cause of the trouble referred to. Here I ought to say that we are indebted to the researches of the late Mr. Deane for an elucidation of the whole subject. He found that the gelatinization was due to the presence of margarate of soda, which was dissolved from the soap when the temperature was above 70° Fahrenheit. He, therefore, recommended that in the process of making the liniment this temperature should not be exceeded. Accordingly, on the appearance of the British Pharmacopœia in 1864 we find this provision introduced, though the error respecting the solution of the soap is perpetuated,* "Digest" (say the instructions appended to the formula in this work) "at a temperature not exceeding 70°, with occasional agitation until all are dissolved." This was very misleading, since "at a temperature not exceeding 70°" the soap resisted all efforts, however extended in duration, to bring it to this condition. It was not, therefore, until the publication of the revised

*This error is still present in the minds of many pharmacists, who not unfrequently overlook the important alteration in the instructions now given. Hence an impression prevails that, as formerly, there is "a difficulty" connected with this preparation.