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CITRATE OF MAGNESIA UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

English druggists have been thrown into a state of great excitement and consternation by the recent prosecution of one of their number for selling, as citrate of magnesia, the ordinary granular effervescent salt of commerce, which, on analysis, was found to be altogether devoid of the base indicated. The circumstances are, briefly, as follows:—The Sanitary Inspector of Bermondsey called at the shop of a druggist, residing in that district, and presented an order, or prescription, for "Magnes. Cit. Effervescens, $\frac{3}{4}$ iv." The druggist, being out of the article, procured a supply from a neighbor. From this the Inspector's prescription was filled, and that functionary went on his way rejoicing to hand over the medicine to the district analyst, in order that its chemical shortcomings might be revealed. It is needless to say that analysis failed to show a trace of magnesia. The druggist was therefore summoned, under the Adulteration Act, and, after the hearing of evidence, was required to pay a penalty of ten pounds sterling, together with the costs of the analysis.

It may well be conceived that this decision has aroused British pharmacists, and also given rise to a general feeling of uncertainty and alarm throughout the drug trade. This arises not only in regard to the decision as specially applied to citrate of magnesia, but to the principle involved, that a chemist ought to be thoroughly acquainted with the character and quality of the articles in which he deals; that ignorance of the composition of any article cannot, perhaps, be urged as a plea, nor can the responsibility be placed upon the manufacturer or wholesale dealer.

At a meeting of the Pharmaceutical Society, held Nov. 5th, this case was discussed at great length in all its bearings. At that time, it did not seem probable that the Society would take action against the decision. It was thought that such a course would compromise the dignity of the organization, and bring it to the level of a Trade Protection Society.

One impression seemed general—that the name of the granular effervescent citrate of magnesia must be changed to something more nearly approximating to truth and correct nomenclature. Many names were suggested, but none finally decided on. The pharmacopœial designation, *Sodæ Citro-tartras Effervescens*, appeared to be regarded with most favor. It was very properly urged that the public would not recognize this name, and, to meet this, a note explaining the change would have to be appended to each label.

Mr. Bishop, the originator of the granular salt, was present at this meeting. He made a very satisfactory statement that though the compound sold by the defendant in the case referred to was not of his (Mr. Bishop's) manufacture, yet as he had been the originator of the preparation, he would stand by his offspring, and would see that the defendant in the suit was at no pecuniary loss. Mr. Bishop had resolved to change the name of his preparation, in all probability calling it, "Citro-tartrate of Soda with Magnesia," some salt of the latter base being present.

Such is the state of the case as it at present stands. So far as our experience extends in the use of this preparation, we must candidly say that we have seen but little good from its employment. In eight cases out of every twelve when we have prescribed it, it has proved all but inert. We have not lately looked upon it with much favor. The public, who so often look for elegance in a preparation, instead of purity, will, perhaps, still swallow it *ad libitum*, although it is now known in truth to have been a fraud, not only on the public, but on the profession. This is another of the many illustrations that, even in trade, honesty is the best policy.

MONTREAL MATERNITY HOSPITAL.

The success which has attended the establishment of this Hospital has been very great, showing the absolute necessity which existed for such an Institution. On the 1st of May it will be removed to very excellent quarters on St. Antoine Street, where the accommodation will be very greatly increased.

THE OLDEST TEACHER OF MEDICINE.

We notice by the Philadelphia *Medical Reporter*, that Dr. James McNaughton, President of the Albany Medical College, and its Professor of Practice of Medicine, is now the oldest medical lecturer in active service. He is at present engaged in delivering his fifty-third annual course of lectures,