

Mr. Chevallier, in a recent article in the *Journal de Chimie*, tome vi. p. 608, commences by observing that at several times he had related in the *Journal de Chimie*, various accidents produced by the consumption of sugar confectionery, colored by mineral poisons—of these he particularizes the *schweinfurt green*, a compound of arsenic acid (arsenic) and copper, the *chromate of lead*, and the *sulphuret of mercury*.—Lastly; he enumerates *Gamboge*, a drastic purgative, and consequently an active irritant poison. Despite of the notification of this dangerous practice, made in nearly all the journals, literary, political, and medical, this mode of coloring was persevered in, till at length the Council of Health was consulted on the subject. This body lost no time in investigating it as it deserved, and the result was, an ordinance of police for the suppression of the nuisance.—The following document, which led to the ordinance, is well worth attention:—

*Report addressed by Mr. Andral to the Prefect of Police, on the dangers which may result from the use of colored sugar confectionery.*

“M. le Prefect, you have instructed the Council of Health to report to you, on the danger which may result from the consumption of colored confectionery, and on the measures necessary to be adopted to prevent the manufacture and sale of any such pernicious articles. The delegates of the Council have the honor to submit to you the following propositions:—

“1. It will be important to specify in the ordinance, what are the coloring substances which should be prohibited. These are, in the first place, all those derived from the mineral kingdom, except the oxides of iron, ferruginous lakes, or Prussian blue, all of which may be safely employed. Of vegetable substances *gamboge* should be severely proscribed, as being a drastic cathartic, which even in minute doses, necessarily occasions violent intestinal irritation. *Litmus* should be equally prohibited, as well on account of its being occasionally incorporated with putrified urine,—as that some manufacturers mix it with common *arsenic* and the peroxide of *mercury*.

#### Observation.

“The most diversified colors may be obtained by the confectioners from totally harmless compounds. Thus from the lakes of cochineal and carmine, they can prepare all the reds; the lakes of logwood will afford them the violet; the lakes of dyer's broom (*genista tinctoria*) will give the yellow, the lakes of Persian grain (*polygonum Persicaria*), with Prussian blue, forms a more beautiful green than any mineral can produce; finally, by the mixture of these harmless colors all the intermediate tints and shades will be obtained.

“2. The papers used for wrapping up sugar confectionery should also be strictly attended to, since they are colored with the same poisonous materials, and children will invariably suck or eat these papers, from which it is evident the most fatal accidents may occur. A member of the Council of Health, a short time since, snatched a colored paper of this description from an infant's mouth, and by analysis obtained from it both *Arsenic* and *Copper*.

“3. The delegates of the Council are of opinion that to ensure the observance of the ordinance, you should determine M. le Prefect, that a committee be appointed to visit the workshops of the manufactories of this species of confectionery: all the poisoned articles should be seized and

their vendors fined. Lastly the delegates of the Council recommend as a measure of great utility, that on the day following the seizure, the names of the confectioners should be published in all the journals and placarded over the walls of the city.

In conclusion, the delegates of the Council believe that an ordinance, founded on the principles thus pointed out, will prove of essential service, by suppressing a practice so pernicious to the public health.”

The immediate result of this pointed and satisfactory report was the issuing of an ordinance from the prefecture of police, dated the 10th of December 1830, and signed by the Comte Treillard, in which the practice is denounced in the most energetic terms, the poisonous ingredients specified, the harmless enumerated, and in addition to the proposals of M. Andral, orders were given that no confectionery should be sold, unless wrapped up in paper, stamped with the name and address of the confectioner. Further by this edict, the vendors are held responsible for all accidents occasioned by the confectionery or liqueurs sold in their establishments.

“Pursuant to these resolutions, the visits were made, and several poisoned specimens were destroyed. Generally speaking, the confectioners gladly banished from their laboratories the pernicious materials, and availed themselves of the harmless substitutes recommended in the report. Lastly, M. Chevallier describes the mode in which the sulphuret of mercury (vermillion), the chromate of lead, and the arsenite of copper (*schweinfurt green*), may be detected by chemical analysis.

“The preceding abstract, sanctioned by the name of Mr. Chevallier, and of that illustrious pathologist M. Andral, is amply sufficient to entitle me to the attention of the public, while I describe the extent to which the practice of using poisonous colors is carried in London, and thence disseminated over the United Kingdom, and its foreign colonies and possessions.

“On the subsequent day to that on which I perused the article just alluded to, I purchased, in company with my friend Dr. Green, at several shops, different specimens of colored confectionery, and of colorless articles, wrapped in stained paper. Of the colored articles, the greater number (class 1) were sold expressly for eating, some (class 2) cast into small figures of cards, &c., were apparently rather intended for ornament, but were sold without restriction, and lastly, some (class 3) were expressly designed for ornament alone. Of the first class, I examined about thirty different kinds, and found the reds tinted as follows:—

#### Ten specimens of Red Comfits, &c.

- 1 Minium, or red oxide of lead.
- 2 Red sulphuret of mercury (vermillion).
- 1 Mixture of both the former.
- 2 Of a yellowish or orange tint, chromate of lead, and a vegetable lake of lime.
- 2 Cochineal, with a trace of vermillion.
- 2 Vegetable lakes of alumina and lime.

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“It is here seen, that of the ten specimens of comfits sold for eating expressly, six contained mineral poison; all these specimens, with one exception, were only colored externally.

“Of the yellows, class 1, seven specimens of different forms and tints. Four *Gamboge*, colored externally; one Colored throughout, a vegetable lake of lime; one Colored throughout, oxide of lead, and traces of antimony, or Naples yellow. Six of the seven consequently contained deleterious substances.

“Of the greens, class 1, several specimens, all were colored by Prussian blue and a vegetable yellow lake of alumina, mixed with the sulphate of lime, except one specimen of which I had only two comfits, and which gave me a mixture of copper and lime.