The Decline in the Gum-Arabic Trade and its Lesson.

There has long been a saying to the effect that no man was absolutely indispensable, no matter how much he might appear so. There never was a man yet who understood a business so well, but that, if necessity arose, some one else could be gotten to fill his place satisfactorily, and we may add, that as a usual thing, when emergencies do arise by which such changes are rendered necessary, they result in permanent benefits that could have accrued in no other way. As with men, so with matter, and a striking instance of the truth of the principle is furnished in the case of the gum-arabic trade during the last thirteen years. The *Pharmaceutische Post* of a recent date, has the following:

"From the year 1875 to 1880, the normal prices of gum-arabic ranged, in Trieste, according to quality, from 65 to 75 Austrian florins per 100 kilograms (200 pounds), the Gehziri gum bringing from 45 to 55 florins. The immense arrivals of gum from the Soudan, in the beginning of 1882, ran prices down to 38-42 florins for the better class, and from 26 to 30 florins for Gehziri gums.

"The Egyptian insurrection again brought these prices up some 10 or 15 florins respectively and the immediately following revolt in the Soudan, and the edict forbidding exportation, at once raised the price of Soudan gums already in Europe, to 300 florins, and prices continued to advance until 600 florins per 100 kilograms was reached.

"The existing stock was soon exhausted, even at this price (about $1.50 per pound), and for a time Europe was absolutely without gum-arabic, or even of Gehziri gum. In 1885-86 the first lot of Gehziri gum arrived, via Cassana, but this source of supply was soon shut off by the Italian-Abyssinian war.

"In 1890 gum-arabic and Gehziri gum again appeared in the market, not in very considerable quantities, but sufficient to bring the price for the first down to 100-140 florins, according to class, and the latter to 50-70 florins.

"In 1892, notwithstanding the importations were not any more considerable than in the preceding year, there was a drop of 20 per cent in prices, and gums fell back to the prices of twelve years previously. The diminution of importation of all varieties (Arabic, Gehziri, Senegal, etc., which in 1881 amounted to 40,000 quintals, and averaged 30,000 quintals for years) continued, and last year but 10,000 quintals of gum, of all sorts, were imported."

This constant decrease of demand for gum-arabic is due mainly, and almost solely, to the discovery of cheaper substitutes for the gum in the arts and industries, and these substitutes have proven so satisfactory that, notwithstanding the present low prices, there is a demand for only 10,000 quintals per annum, or only one quarter of the amount of gum needed in 1881. The probability is that had the scarcity, and consequently enormously high prices, not have occurred, the world would have continued to use 40,000 or 50,000 quintals per annum, and the effective substitutes would still be unknown.—*Nat. Druggist.*

Cod Liver Oil Report.

FROM JOH. RYE HOLMBOE.

Tromsoe, Norway, Feb. 7th, 1891.

Stormy weather has continued to impede the winter fisheries, which may now be considered nearly ended with a yield of cod liver oil probably not exceeding one third of last year's production.

The Lofoden fishery has commenced with pretty satisfactory prospects. It is, however, alarming to note, that the livers are unusually poor. A catch of 600,000 codfish has only yielded 1350 hektoliters of livers against last year 1950 hekt. out of the same quantity of fish. I calculate that it will need 40 millions of cod or 10 millions more than ever caught at Lofoden to make up a total quantity of cod liver oil similar to the aggregate yield in 1893 from the Winter & Lofoden fisheries.

In spite of these facts the foreign importing markets have been slack and I have heard of sales at 60 sh. cif. I wish to see a little more of the Lofoden fishery before quoting firm, fearing if stormy weather should continue as hitherto, it will be impossible to execute orders at the above figure.

In the meantime I book orders at competitors' prices and will quote firm on enquiries by letter or wire.

Boro Salicylic Acid Solution, containing four grammes each of boric and salicylic acid in a liter, proposed by Cesaris and Carcano, has been found of such value in an Italian hospital that it completely replaced the mercuric chloride solution. The addition of the boric acid adds permanency to the salicylic acid solution; the strength of the solution can be increased so as to contain six grams salicylic acid per liter, although this solution was only occasionally used.—(*Bollet. Chim. Farm.*) *Pharm. Ztg.*

Acetic Acid for the Preparation of Extracts.—F. Hoffman proposes to replace alcohol by acetic acid in the preparation of extracts. The fluid extracts so prepared contain about 25 per cent. of extractive, 30 per cent. of acetic acid, and 45 per cent. of water. They are very aromatic, and their preparation is very economical. Experiments with nux vomica and belladonna have been very successful. The extraction is more rapid than with alcohol, and at the same time more complete, and the percentage of alkaloid is high and fairly constant, and decomposition products appear to be less frequent than when alcohol is used as the solvent.—*Repertoire de Pharmacie.*

The Decomposition of Chloroform. Erdmann, who has been investigating the action of oxidising agents on chloroform, disputes the results obtained by Emmerling and Lengyel who stated that the decomposition by means of chromic acid was as follows:

$$2CHCl_3 + 3O = 2COCl_2 + Cl_2 + H_2O.$$

Erdmann, however, states that no trace of free chlorine is to be found, but that the reaction is

$$2CHCl_3 + CrO_3 + 2O = 2COCl_2 + CrO_2Cl_2 + H_2O.$$

since he was able to distil over a brownish oil, which could be identified as chromyl chloride. —*Apotheker Zeitung.*

New Pill Excipient. Prof. Carles (*Bull. de la Soc. de Pharm. de Bordeaux*) gives the following process for preparing pills of alterable medicaments, such as potassium permanganate, silver nitrate, gold chloride, the iodides of mercury, etc., which with this excipient do not change in appearance and preserve the active principle indefinitely. Triturate, kaolin, 2; anhydrous sodium sulphate, 1, and water, 1, the mass remains plastic during 6-10 minutes, but after fifteen minutes becomes so hardened that it can be thrown on the floor without danger of breaking. With this mass the medicament in fine powder is incorporated.

Cristalline is a kind of collodion, in which the ether and alcohol employed as solvents for pyroxylin, are replaced by methyl alcohol. It differs from collodion, in that the solvent evaporates more slowly, and in forming a transparent film, which allows the part it protects to be seen and the progress of the treatment followed. An elastic cristalline can be obtained by adding 20 gm. cristalline to 5 gm. castor oil and 10 gm. Canada turpentine. Cristalline dissolves pyrogallic and salicylic acids, chrysarobin and other medicaments. The only disadvantage of its use is its odor.—(*Semaine Medicale.*)—*Amer. Journal of Pharmacy.*

Antispasmine is a remedy formed by the combination of one molecule of the sodium compound of narceine and three molecules of sodium salicylate. It contains 50 per cent. of narceine. It is a white, slightly hygroscopic powder easily soluble in water. Exposed to the air it deposits narceine, owing to the absorption of carbonic acid with the formation of sodium carbonate in which narceine is very insoluble.—*Journal de Pharmacie d' Anvers.*

In pills containing creasote, according to a correspondent of the *Pharm. Post*, the creasote should be thoroughly mixed with twice its weight in powdered liquorice root, and then adding sufficient glycerin until the desired consistency is reached. By this method a plastic mass results, in which the creasote is equally distributed.