

Pharmacy in England.

The Widow's Clause in the Pharmacy Act—Itrosyl, for the Preparation of Spts. Ether Nit.—Sanmetto—Chlorobrom in Seasickness—Pure Chloroform—The Chemical Market.

(By Our Own Correspondent.)

The president of the Pharmaceutical Society is always springing new surprises upon his supporters. Some few years ago he went for the curriculum scheme with all his heart and soul, and actually induced the council to embody it in a bill before parliament, but its career was short. Next, he evolved some improved method of conducting the examinations with the assistance of outside professors, which the Council adopted, and now seems sorry for it. For one of the first professors appointed was Professor Green, who holds the chair of Botany in the society's school of pharmacy. This unfortunate selection has raised a small hornet's nest, as it is thought that the unimpeachable fairness of the examinations cannot be maintained if a professor of one school of pharmacy is on the board of examiners, whilst all the rest of the schools throughout the country are unrepresented. Now, Mr. Carteighs has started a crusade against the widow's clause in the Pharmacy Act. By this clause, a chemist's widow is permitted to continue the business if she engages a qualified assistant as manager. For some unexplained reason, except that this beneficent provision for the widow and fatherless is an anomaly, we are called upon to sacrifice this clause, and for what? Apparently to assist in closing a few businesses in the country, where competition is getting so keen. But in this absurd outcry against an institution which has certainly never proved a grievance—rather the reverse—the president forgets that, as the law stands, even if the widow clause were repealed, all that she has to do is to turn the business into a limited liability company, and she can carry on the business just as before. From this it will be seen that any agitation on the subject is farcical, and that no surrender of the widow's privilege would effect any alteration in pharmacy unless the companies' immunity is also broken down.

Itrosyl.—Under this cabalistic word, Messrs. Fletcher, Fletcher & Co. have introduced a concentrated spirit of nitrous ether. Indeed, it is so highly concentrated that they claim 1 part mixed with 19 parts of rectified spirit will instantly produce the pharmacopoeial spirit of sweet nitre. From an examination of it, I am inclined to believe that it is a solution of ethyl nitrite in absolute alcohol, with a small quantity of aldehyde. The solution is probably prepared by the double decomposition method from sodium nitrite in a freezing mixture, as recommended some few years ago by Professor Dunstan. It is supplied only in sealed glass capsules holding one fluid ounce, with the idea of preserving the fluid without any loss of gas, one of which is to be broken and mixed with the rectified spirit as re-

quired. As one of the bugbears of pharmacy is the preservation of spirit of nitrous ether at its full strength, this method may be of some advantage. The price of the capsules is twenty-four cents each, which makes the preparation somewhat dearer than the ordinary article.

Sanmetto.—This is the latest American candidate for medical favor which has reached this side. It is apparently a fluid extract flavored so as to be rather agreeable, and of a reddish color. It has been suggested that it is an extract of the saw palmetto. Some considerable expense has already been incurred by the proprietors, the Od Chemical Manufacturing Company, by mailing all our registered physicians a free sample, with literature. From the latter I gather it is recommended particularly for cystitis, pyelitis, prostatitis, and pre-senility—whatever that may mean. Apropos of new remedies of this class, I may mention that I had an opportunity of seeing it prescribed the other day by one of our leading West-end physicians. It was for a young woman who, I learned afterwards, was suffering from tuberculosis of the kidney. The prescription was followed in a few days with another calling for Dusart's syrup of the hypophosphites, next a course of Stearn's wine of cod-liver oil, and, finally, Scott's emulsion. Then I lost sight of the patient, but I could not help reflecting on the apparent advantages possessed by our enterprising cousins, who had so effectually captured this physician that nothing in the pharmacopoeia, or even manufactured in England, was good enough for him.

Chlorobrom.—This preparation, first suggested by Dr. Charteris, Professor of Materia Medica and Therapeutics at Glasgow University, is being boomed by the proprietors, Messrs. Burgoyne & Co. It is a pleasant mixture of an elixir nature, containing chloralamide and bromide of potassium. Dr. Charteris specially recommended it as a remedy for seasickness, and some remarkable evidence of its success in preventing or abating attacks of this distressing malady has been produced. Messrs. Burgoyne are now pushing the remedy as an ideal sedative and hypnotic. They claim that it can be safely administered even to children, whilst the combination with chloralamide prevents the depressing action of the bromide from being asserted. In connection with its success as a remedy for seasickness, it should be borne in mind that Dr. Charteris insists on the passenger taking an anti-bilious pill, or three-grains tabloids of calomel, for two nights previous to embarking. When on board, a dose of chlorobrom, either 4 or 6 drachms, should be taken, and the passenger should retire to his berth and assume the recumbent attitude. In over one hundred cases only one unsuccessful result was obtained, and this was explained as being due to an excessive dose.

Pure Chloroform.—For some time past the purity of chloroform has been a sub-

ject of speculation and experiment. Whatever the cause may be, it is an undoubted fact that more deaths from chloroform have occurred in recent years than formerly. Physiologists are inclined to put the onus upon the chloroform manufacturers, and suggest that as chloroform is now prepared from acetone, methylated spirits, etc., impurities are much more probably present than when it was only prepared from pure alcohol. Some such opinion is also held by Squibb, although he admits that pure chloroform is the same thing, no matter what it is made from. Messrs. Macfarlan, of Edinburgh, who are very large makers of this article, have from time to time communicated to the pharmaceutical press their experience in the matter. Whilst advocating more stringent tests to be applied for the detection of impurities, they are perfectly convinced that, with ordinary care, there need be no impurities, but state that the bleaching powder employed is a more prolific source of impurity than acetone, methylated spirits, etc. They have placed upon the market an absolutely pure chloroform for anæsthetic purposes, which extended experience has shown can be safely kept for a year or more without decomposition. Makers of chloroform are naturally rather inclined to saddle anæsthetists with the responsibility of most of the accidents that have happened. They state, with some show of reason, that many a hundred minor operations are now performed under chloroform which used to be performed without anæsthetics, and that this has rendered surgeons careless of the idiosyncrasies and cardiac weakness of patients who are not suitable subjects for chloroform inhalation.

The market at the close of the year is always more quiet, very little business being transacted. Chemicals remain, for the most part, unaltered, and there have been no drug sales since the 15th. Some excitement has been caused among the export drug houses by the county council threatening to summon all who have metric weights and measures on their premises for purposes of trade. As many of the South American indentors require their goods to be supplied by the kilogramme or litre, this is very awkward; and it appears that, as the law stands, it is illegal for chemists here to dispense foreign prescriptions with metric weights. This matter appears all the more ridiculous, inasmuch as the new British Pharmacopoeia is to recognize the metric system more fully. Some conjoint action of the Pharmaceutical Society and Chambers of Commerce is spoken about.

December is the most fatal month in the year for asthma.

The number of persons born blind is sixty-five to the million.

Mrs. Shaw, the whistler, says that one of the best cures for indigestion is whistling for about half an hour after eating.