

EDITORIAL.

Correspondence and general communications, of a character suited to the objects of this JOURNAL, are invited, and will always be welcome. The writer's name should accompany his communication, but not necessarily for publication.

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OPIUM CULTURE.

The high price maintained by opium, during the last two or three years, has given a fresh impetus to the efforts of those who have been endeavouring to introduce the culture of the poppy in countries other than those from which our supply has been, heretofore, derived. In France and Germany—especially the former—the poppy has been extensively cultivated, for a length of time, for the sake of the oil contained in the seeds; but not until later years was any advantage taken of the opium, although it is said that both products might be collected from the same plants without injury to either. In 1855, M. M. Bérnard and Collas, the latter a pharmacien of Paris, bestowed considerable attention on the production of opium, and carried on extensive experiments in the department of La Somme, where about 30,000 acres were set apart for the cultivation of the poppy, for oil. It was found that the collection of opium could be carried on with considerable profit, and that the drug was, if anything, superior to that obtained from Turkey, often containing as much as 20 per cent. of morphia.

Opium culture in England, has proved anything but successful, although as early as the beginning of the present century it was shown that the enterprise might be carried on with results which were by no means discouraging. From twelve acres of land 196 pounds of opium were collected, which, at that time, realized over thirteen hundred dollars, (*Edin. Phil. Jour.*) Whether every season would turn out as profitable is very questionable, for as stated by Prof. Bentley, at a recent meeting of the British Pharmaceutical Society, "the point is not whether a specimen of fair value can be produced, but whether, on the average of summers, there is such an amount of light and heat as will enable the cultivator to grow it to commercial advantage." The climate of England does not appear to favor the production of opium, or rather of morphia; and from experiments made in different quarters of the globe, it has been demonstrated that warm and dry weather is required for the development of the more valuable alkaloid; while

a damp and cold atmosphere tends to the production of narcotine, and other less valuable principles, the quantity of morphia being proportionately diminished.

In the February number of the JOURNAL, will be found an interesting account of experiments, made by a Melbourne chemist, on the production of opium in Australia. To those interested, we refer this paper as containing many useful facts, in regard to the influence of soil, &c., on the yield of alkaloid. The poppy seems to thrive well in Australia, the plants attaining a height of five to seven feet. The amount of opium realized was from fifty to eighty four pounds per acre. Its morphia strength ranged from four to seven per cent. The subject is further alluded to in a paper which appeared in a recent number of the *Pharmaceutical Journal*, of London. The writer details the experiments made by a friend residing in the south-east portion of the colony of Victoria. A quarter of an acre was sown, in rows two feet six inches apart, from which the plants were thinned out until about nine inches apart. The capsules were punctured, or nicked, and the liquid juice was collected as it dropped from the incisions. The yield was 14 pounds of opium, of the usual consistence, and on analysis gave 9 per cent. of morphia, 4 of narcotine, and 6 of meconic acid. It is much to be regretted that neither of these writers give any estimate of the amount of labor; as on this point the profits of the undertaking materially depend.

Turning to this side of the Atlantic we find that the Americans have been trying to turn the cultivation of the poppy to profitable account; with this, our readers, are probably, familiar, as most of the published accounts have from time to time, appeared in this JOURNAL. We need not recapitulate, but may say that the general result has been favorable to the view that opium, of good quality, can be produced on this continent, at an expenditure which allows a handsome margin, far exceeding that from the culture of any of our ordinary agricultural products.

Our intention in writing this article is to draw the attention of our readers to opium culture in Canada. There is no reason, why we should be dependent on other nations for our supplies; or neglect a branch of trade which promises to be so profitable. If opium can be produced to advantage in the climate of the New England States, it appears reasonable that the same might be done here—at least in this Western Province. We are not aware that the attempt has been made, but hope that some of our readers who are fond of agricultural pursuits, will take up the subject and let us know the result of their experience. We shall be pleased to give any information in our power, in regard to the mode of cultivation, or any other details with which we may be acquainted.

LEGAL DECISION IN REGARD TO THE PHARMACY ACT.

At a late meeting of the Society, a lengthy discussion took place on the powers of the Provisional Council named in the Act. Some members maintained that the official duties of that body commenced at the time of the passing of the Act, while others held that as the first meeting was to take place in July, the council were not vested with any power until that period. In view of this difference of opinion, it was decided that the matter should be referred to legal authority; and, accordingly, a few questions, embodying the points at issue, were proposed by the meeting, and directed to be forwarded to Mr. J. G. Scott, of the Attorney General's office. The reply of that gentleman has been received, and the following extract handed to us for publication:

"In accordance with your request I give below answers to the following questions:—

1. Has the Provisional Council of the Ontario College of Pharmacy power to hold meetings before the 1st July, 1871?

Had it not been that I am informed that it is utterly impossible to carry out the provisions of the Act, respecting certificates, I would have considered that the first meeting of the Council, with rights of executing their functions as such body, could not have been held before this date, although, of course, there could have been no possible objections to meetings of the members of the Council for preliminary purposes. However, in view of the fact before mentioned, I should advise that the Council might be called together for the purpose of doing such acts as are absolutely necessary, for carrying their act of incorporation into effect. One of these would be the adoption of a corporate seal, with which the registrar would seal the certificates authorized—I would, however, advise that upon the meeting of 1st July, all previous acts be adopted and confirmed.

2. Has the Registrar power to grant certificates before the 1st July?

The Certificates are, I understand it to be, under the seal of the College. If so, the adoption of the seal is an act preliminary to the issue of such certificates. Immediately a seal is adopted the Registrar may issue certificates.

3. Does Section 30 come into effect upon the passing of the Act?

Yes."

In regard to this latter question, we may explain that section 30th, is that respecting the old law for the sale of poisons, and the point to be settled was whether the new law came into force February last, or is to do so next July. Mr. Scott confirms the opinion advanced, some time ago, in the JOURNAL, that the old law was abolished at the time of the passing of the Act.