

Original Papers.

THE COMMERCE OF MARSEILLES.

BY R. W. ELLIOT.

Read before the Pharmaceutical Society, July 7th, 1869.

Under this title a few remarks are offered on the way in which goods used in pharmacy are transported from the points of production, on the shores of the Mediterranean, to Canada, together with some facts regarding their manufacture, gleaned during a recent visit to the south of Europe.

Marseilles has a population of 300,000, and is the chief commercial city of France. Large portions have been recently rebuilt in the palatial style of Paris, and although some of their improved quarters are tainted with the odour of "boquet de guano," the city, as a whole, is well drained, paved, and lighted. The Imperial government has done much to foster and extend commercial enterprises, and at no place are the results of this policy more apparent than in the ports of Marseilles. The old port is constantly crowded with sailing vessels of every conceivable rig and build. The ports Joliet and Napoleon have been formed by the construction of breakwaters, and are used chiefly by the steam fleet. The stone of which the breakwaters are made, is a mixture of gravel and cement cast in immense oblong blocks, and thrown loosely into the sea, without any attempt at building. It is found to resist the destructive action of the waves better in this way than if built up into a solid wall.

The docks and warehouses are extensive, substantial, and, on the whole, convenient structures. There is not the use of steam power, in handling grain especially, that is common with us, and this defect in their economy arises, no doubt, from the different states of the labor market in Europe and America. It would somewhat astonish any European forwarder to see a vessel loaded with 30,000 bushels of grain, haul up to an elevator at sunrise, and before sunset, of the same day, to see the vessel empty, the grain all weighed, cleaned if necessary, and put in warehouse. The operation costing not more than \$75 or 375 francs. The bourse or exchange is a fine building, where Italians, Greeks, Germans, Turks, Persians, Egyptians, Algerines and Americans, may be daily seen transacting business through brokers who understand their language and customs. The Greeks take a very leading part in banking and the grain trade; Germans, in general merchandise. There is no English house of any standing or importance, a sad commentary on the fact, that while British youths have been translating the obscenities of pagan mythology, these Greeks and Germans have mastered the modern languages, which

give them the best positions in practical affairs.

A few years ago Canada had no direct trade with France, but in March, of the present year, there were four ships on the berth for Montreal; the "Ancestor," chartered by Lymans, Clare & Co., and Lyman, Elliot & Co.; "St. Louis," by Wm St. Laurent; "British Queen," A. Urquhart & Co., and "Deodara," Hudin & Co.; all staunch, trim, well formed vessels. Their lading consisted of wine, glassware, olive and seed oils, castile soap, corks, sponges, china, perfumery, essential oils, drugs of various kinds, tiles, liqueurs, cream tartar, argols, sulphur, ochres, nuts, lemons and sundries.

Purchases are made for cash, on the bourse, and the goods delivered by an order on the warehouse in which they are stored, or directly from the manufactory, if produced in the city. The only practical purpose to which I ever saw velocipedes applied, was in the transmission of orders for the reception and delivery of goods, between the bourse and the new dock warehouses, a distance of about two miles.

Having been obliged to wait about ten days longer than was anticipated, the time was filled up by visits to the warehouses and factories, in all of which true French urbanity was displayed, and every facility granted to inspect the details of their operations.

It is to be regretted that space does not permit of showing the connection which exists between the different branches of manufacture, a point of great importance. To make a manufacturing centre it requires a class of men capable of attaining excellence, each in his own particular line, and helping the common progress while helping himself.

I found traces of Mr. Rutherford, of Hamilton, and of orders from all the wholesale drug trade of Canada, in packages prepared for shipment in the different warehouses, and now proceed to describe the goods shipped.

Wine.—The only natural wines we get are those of France and Germany, and it would be well if the rising generation, of Canada, could be educated to appreciate them more highly than their fathers do. The popular ports, sherries, and madeiras are brandied, sugared and drugged out of all likeness to the pure juice of the grape, and are responsible for the tendency to gout and inflammatory forms of disease to which the higher classes, in England, have been subject. A pure wine never contains more than 25% of spirit, while port and sherry frequently contain from 37 to 43%.

The production of wine in France is enormous and the statement of the French census, that 3,000,000 of the population directly depend on vine culture for their living, will best illustrate the extent of the trade. It

would require a volume to accurately describe the varieties of wine which we class under the generic name of claret. At first I was very much pleased to find that about 7,000 barrels of pure wine were being shipped for Canada. It has been often remarked that in countries where wine is the common stimulant, drunkenness is unknown, and knowing that 7,000 barrels for a spring supply would represent a large proportion of the wine drunk in Canada, the inference was drawn that the popular taste had improved at a marvellous rate. All hopes for the health of my countrymen received a rude shock from the following incident: Riding in a suburb of Marseilles, this sign came in view, "Victoire Joyeuse fils aine, Fabricant de Vin," Victor Joyous' eldest son, maker of wine. But where does he get his grapes? My companion answered; it is the custom of such gentlemen to buy one cask wine, some alcohol and four empty casks. I thereupon suspected that "Fabricant de vin" was a trade not unknown in Canada, that you can get port, sherry or other wine dry, sweet, fruity, full bodied—any property you wish after the manner of the bottle-trick—all from the same cask.

Argol or Tartar, is found deposited in the wine casks and varies in color from deep red to a light gray. The quality depends on the per centage of tartaric acid. There is considerable use for the article in its natural state in dyeing, but by far the greater proportion is used in the tartaric acid and cream tartar manufactories.

Cream Tartar.—This product is one of considerable importance. Of late years the price has been low and the consumption in Canada is at present from 125 to 150 tons per annum against a fifth of that quantity some years back. Most of that brought to this country is pure, and is so sold; but what is imported in crystal is sometimes reduced by admixture with sulphate of potash; and that sold in powder is sometimes adulterated with "terra alba." The British Pharmacopœa gives the necessary tests for determining its purity.

Glassware.—The French are very tasty in the forms of bottles, and although I must confess a liking for plain simple shapes, the more showy article sells and that is the highest merit in a bottle. Manufacturers in France are not cursed with labor combinations, labor is abundant, skilful and cheap, so that the first cost of glass is much less than in England, against this the cost of freight is higher, and that is an important item in glassware. There is, however, a large quantity imported, and the trade is in the hands of those who thoroughly understand both markets. In green bottles, the Canadian factories are now masters of the situation, their prices excluding competition from every quarter.

Vinegar.—Of this article large quantities