

Pharmacy in England.

The Aconitine Squabble Ended—The Council Election—Pink Pills Analyzed—Are Plasters Going out of Fashion?—Pharmacopœia Additions and Omissions Recommended The B. P. 1900.

(From Our Own Correspondent.)

It speaks much for the credit of the Council of the Pharmaceutical Society that, without stultifying themselves, the members have found a way out of the difficulty created by Dr. Paul's attack on Professor Dunstan. The council have privately expressed displeasure at Dr. Paul's excess of zeal, and have snubbed Professor Dunstan by passing a resolution which calls for the reconsideration of the Research Laboratory programme. This unique way of settling the matter has the advantage of meeting with the approval of the majority of pharmacists, who are tired of the fuss, although it can hardly be satisfactory to either of the principals concerned. Professor Dunstan has broken the silence he has long preserved and replied to his critics in the official organ of the Chemical Society. It is quite certain that the duel between Herr Freund and Professor Dunstan as to the exact formulae for aconitine, aconine, etc., will be of interest. At present the Professor is careful not to assert too much his confidence in his own figures, whilst he emphatically declines to accept those of Freund. Those who want to know the rights of the matter in dispute between the Research Laboratory Committee and the editor of the *Pharmaceutical Journal* cannot do better than carefully read the judicial leading article on the subject published in the *Chemist and Druggist* of May 11th.

The annual meeting of the society took place this week, and some very strong remarks were made by a prominent member, but the general feeling is in favor of burying the hatchet. At the election for the new council all the old members were returned, Mr. Martindale heading the poll. The two new members are Mr. Savory, of Savory & Moore, the well-known London firm, and Mr. Corder, a retired examiner, who has a drug business of long-standing in Norwich.

The annual dinner passed off with considerable enthusiasm, amongst the speakers being the Right Hon. J. Bryce (Board of Trade), Dr. Thorne Thorne, C. B. (Local Government Board), Professor M. Foster (Royal Society), Sir R. Quain (General Medical Council), Mr. Christopher Heath (Royal College of Surgeons), Mr. Vernon Harcourt, F.R.S. (Chemical Society), etc.

The holdness of *Science Siftings* in investigating the composition of proprietary preparations is astounding. It was only last month that I reported what their analyst stated to be the composition of Radam's Microbe Killer. Now Pink Pills have come in for a condemnatory report. Says this journal: "These pills are coated with an aniline dye. Beneath this pink coloring matter is a thick layer of white sugar, amounting to half the weight of the

pill. The interior portion consists of mineral and vegetable constituents in about equal weights, the mineral comprising iron, potash, and magnesium, with sulphuric as the acid radical. The vegetable part is stated to be liquorice. It is not easy to grasp the exact composition, as the analyst reports the iron to be in an insoluble form. A little more interest than usual is imported into this case as the analysis is published of a Dr. Selkirk Jones, in 1893, who found that aloes was the principal ingredient then. Last week this indefatigable journal examined Rose's Lime Juice Cordial and was apparently much surprised to find no salicylic was employed as a preservative. No mention is made if the preparation was examined for sulphurous acid, as this is a common preservative for this class of liquids. Mrs. Winslow's Syrup comes in for a special rap this week, a good deal being made of the statement, at a recent inquest, that one grain of morphine was found in each ounce, although only one-eighth of a grain was stated to be present according to the label. I should much like to know the reason why the drug journals in England have unanimously refrained from noticing the results of *Science Siftings*, although they have a direct bearing on pharmacy and are of considerable interest to those who retail these proprietaries, and who are frequently called upon to express an opinion on their composition and value.

Are plasters going out of fashion? This question was prompted by the statement of the head dispenser at one of our largest hospitals that they no longer used half the old-fashioned plasters, such as emp. roborans, picis, galbani co., calefaciens, etc. His suggestion that the reason why they have been discarded may be due to the new-fangled rubber combinations so much in vogue with American plaster manufacturers does not strike me as at all probable. But at the same time I must confess that plasters are fast disappearing from medical prescriptions, and in that respect have followed the old-fashioned blister. This, for some time past, I have found to be generally attributed to the custom of prescribing ready-made plasters. A patient is told to obtain a porous belladonna plaster from the druggist rather than the physician will take the trouble to signify it in the prescription. Retail pharmacists and wholesale alike to whom I have mentioned the subject have agreed that it really looks as if plasters are following poultices, and that very soon the plaster-iron will be placed upon the shelf.

The fact is medicine and pharmacy are in a transitional state, and a new epoch is dawning, especially as regards the rational use of drugs. We have advanced beyond the stage when it was thought proper to administer sugar to the diabetic patient in order to replace that which was passing in large quantity from the system! There is a little more method in medical madness at all events now, and this is mainly attributable to the increase in our

knowledge of diseases. There is also a healthy scepticism in the value of so called specifics, and when a physician gives diuretics in dropsy he wants to see if he obtains the direct physiological effect—the increase in the amount of urine passed—which will most probably lead to the desired result. Yet it would be impossible to deny that there exists a fashion in medicine, as in many other mundane callings, or why is it necessary to write an article on the passing of the compressed tablet craze?

The Pharmacopœia Committee of the society has just made a report upon the subject of omissions and additions for the next British Pharmacopœia. No less than 220 articles and preparations are recommended to be omitted, whilst only 78 additions are advised. This would be a very suitable occasion, when these lists are published, for Canadian pharmacists to assist in the compilation of the next edition of the Pharmacopœia by discussing the value of these recommendations. From a cursory perusal of the list, I am inclined to think the committee has only kept British pharmacy in view, nor would this be altogether surprising should it turn out to be the case. The report is essentially a British report, and so far the official Canadian reply has not reached England. Australia and India have plainly stated some of their requirements, yet Canada remains silent. It would certainly be useful and interesting if all pharmacists who disagree with these recommendations should plainly intimate it as soon as possible, and also give their reasons. There is no doubt that criticisms will soon appear on this side; but probably it will take the position of defending more or less vigorously some of the articles doomed to be omitted.

The subject will shortly be made still more interesting, as Professor Attfield has replied from some 7,000 medical men upon the same subject. How far pharmacists and medical men are agreed upon the fundamental principle as to what should be added to, and what left out of, the next edition of the Pharmacopœia will soon be seen. There is then the revising of those preparations which will still stand, and the experimental work in devising formulae for the new preparations, all of which will have to be done by pharmacists. Indeed, when this is clearly recognized, the probable date for the appearance of the Imperial Pharmacopœia is much more likely to be 1900 than 1895.

GLYCERIN A PLANT FOOD.—Glycerin is stated by E. Assfahl to afford nutrition to plants when employed in solution of 0.2 per cent. to 0.5 per cent. strength. Weak or stronger solutions do not produce any appreciable alimentary effects.

HYDROGEN PEROXIDE IN GREEN PLANTS.—A. Bach found hydrogen peroxide in the leaves of 18 out of 25 species of green plants. Potassium bichromate and aniline were used as reagents.