

undertaken at the request of the General Medical Council, in which the chemists of that country were severely criticized for their disposition to enter into competition with the medical practitioner. This report has been considered by the Parliamentary and General Purposes Committee of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain; and at the last meeting of the General Council of the Society the following resolution was adopted:

"That having regard to the grave dangers attending the dispensing of medicine and the handling of poisons by unqualified persons, and to the fact that at the present time the precautionary measures imposed by Statute upon chemists and druggists do not apply in the surgeries and dispensaries of medical practitioners, the Privy Council be urged to authorize an investigation into the conditions under which the storage, compounding and dispensing of medicines, and their distribution, are carried on in various surgeries, dispensaries, and similar establishments in Great Britain."

A member of the Pharmaceutical Society, in close touch with the activities of that body in defence of its members' interests, writes that the questions at issue between the physicians and the chemists of the kingdom at this juncture were arousing the keenest interest among the members of the two professions.

"The complaint of the medical men and our counter-attack," he said, "constitute together the latest phase of a very old quarrel. For at least three hundred years there has been trouble of this kind between us in all parts of the world; and I do not suppose the Privy Council, while acting in the interests of the general public, will be able to find a satisfactory settlement of the dispute."

"The General Medical Council, it must be confessed, have secured in this report of the medical officers of health, a strong argument in support of their demand for a Royal Commission to inquire into the practice of medicine and surgery by unqualified men; but the Pharmaceutical Society was bound to protest against the strong attack upon chemists and druggists which the report contains. Not only is a general charge of prescribing made against us, but we are accused of overlooking infectious diseases in connection with the people who

come to us for advice and treatment. It is also affirmed that the faulty treatment of infant diseases by chemists has some bearing upon the rate of infant mortality."

"How do the chemists propose to meet these charges?"

"When the Privy Council sent our society a copy of the report a sub-committee of the Parliamentary Committee was appointed to consider the matter; and, as an interim recommendation, it is proposed that the Privy Council should include the methods of medical practitioners within the scope of their inquiry."

In further explanation of the chemists' point of view, it was pointed out that physicians are not adequately trained in dispensing. "As a rule," writes the chemist already quoted, "the medical student's training in pharmacy is confined to a three months' course of quite a perfunctory character; and when he starts practising his healing profession he is allowed to handle the deadliest poisons quite free from the supervision of the inspectors who are employed to keep a watchful eye on the bottles and labels of the chemists and druggists. Our ideal finds expression in the demand that all medicines should be dispensed by a registered pharmacist or under his supervision; but, in the meantime, we are on safe ground, from the public point of view, in calling for an extension of the regulations as to the storage of poisons so that they may apply to "doctors' dispensaries" as well as "chemists' shops." We have to keep our poisons quite clear of all other drugs, and securely locked up when not required; but the physician may keep his strychnine in a bottle by the side of one containing distilled water, and he may even use his discretion as to whether he employs any distinguishing label.

"Of course, if a chemist should happen to make a fatal mistake in dispensing, the subsequent coroner's inquest gives full publicity to the affair, with serious consequences to the chemist; but we have always contended that the physician is at present in possession of too many facilities for hiding his blunders. If the Privy Council accede to our demand for an inquiry into the management of the physicians' dispensaries, a strong case will probably be made out for more equal treatment as between physicians and chem-