

crystals to the most searching scrutiny, Pasteur found that there were some minute faces on the crystals of the tartrate inactive to the polarized beam, and such importance did he attribute to these little faces that he recognized that their presence relegated the substance possessing them to an entirely different class of objects from that to which belonged the substance possessing them not.

“For whilst the crystals of the inactive tartaric acid, which were destitute of these little surfaces, he found were symmetrical, the crystals of the optically active tartaric acid he found were unsymmetrical or disymmetric, as he called it. Now to the symmetric character of the crystals of the one tartaric acid he attributed the inactivity of this tartaric acid to polarized light, whilst with the disymmetric character of the crystals of the other tartaric acid he connected its action on the polarized beam.

“In studying these apparently insignificant details, Pasteur found that by crystallizing the inactive tartaric acid in a particular way he obtained two different kinds of crystals, the one set being identical with those of the active tartaric acid already known, whilst the other set were the mirror images of these, and had never been seen by the eye of man before. The young philosopher at once drew the conclusion that if the disymmetry of the known tartaric acid caused it to turn the plane of polarization to the right, the disymmetry of this new tartaric acid would turn it to the left.

“With infinite pains Pasteur picks out from the mixture the individual crystals belonging to each of the two types, and arranges them in two heaps; each of these heaps of crystals was then separately dissolved in water and the two solutions submitted to polarized light. In accordance with his anticipation, whilst the solution of the crystals of the known form was found to turn the plane of polarization to the right, the solution of the new crystals, the mirror images of the old, was found to turn the plane through precisely the same angle to the left. This might have appeared to many a trivial discovery only, but such was not Pasteur's opinion of it, for rushing from the laboratory in a fever of excitement and meeting a fellow assistant in the corridor he embraces him and exclaims, overcome with emotion, ‘*Je viens de faire une grande decouverte.*’ And such in truth it was, although almost his first discovery, and the one which has the least contributed to the general celebrity of its author, it is, nevertheless, almost impossible to over-estimate its import-