

Pharmacy in England.

The New Preliminary Examination and Minor Fee—Journalistic Rivalry and Opposition—Serum Therapeutics—Indefinite Thyroid Preparations—Vinolia Limited.

(By our own Correspondent.)

As I was able to announce in your December issue, the alteration of the preliminary examination practically amounts to its abolition, and the recognition after 1,900 of certificates such as would satisfy the General Medical Council for its Entrance Examination will bring pharmacy into line with the medical and dental professions. This is a great step in the right direction and in years to come will prove of more value in eliminating the unfit and improving the professional status of pharmacy than all the increased severity of the qualifying examinations will ever do. The council of the Pharmaceutical Society deserved the credit of having tackled the subject in the proper spirit, as no tinkering with the old examination would have been satisfactory. The only mild wonder that one feels is why on earth it has been left for the next century to see such a desirable reform inaugurated. The explanation of this is not very clear, but it appears that in certain circles there was an indefinite opinion that the council had no power to alter its examinations without a fresh Act of Parliament. In some respects this is probably true, but the Privy Council can be relied upon not to sanction anything that is *ultra vires*. If it had not been for this august assembly numerous badly needed reforms would have been long ago carried out in pharmacy, such as the establishment of a definite curriculum of study as exists in the medical examination system, the insistence of passing the Entrance Examination before apprenticeship and the inclusion of carbolic acid amongst the scheduled poisons. But the Privy Council is not swayed by considerations of the fitness of things; it has only regard to the proper carrying out of certain Acts of Parliament, and if you want more than comes within the four corners of your Acts you are politely informed that you must get your Act amended.

With the abolition of the old preliminary or first examination the council has suggested the raising of the fee for the qualifying examination from \$21 to \$42. This has caused a bitter attack on the part of one of the trade journals—the *Chemist and Druggist*—which does not hesitate to say that the money is required to run the *Pharmaceutical Journal*. I must confess that I am glad to see that there is spirit left in the *Chemist and Druggist*, but it has chosen a subject on which to fight where it is unquestionably handicapped. In the first place the fee is moderate enough considering that it gives the successful candidate not only the right to set up in business and to use the title of chemist and druggist, but also assists in attacking the unqualified poachers on pharmaceutical preserves and

maintains the legal register that is required by Act of Parliament. It is no answer to all this to say the examinations do not cost the society \$42 per candidate and the fact that the *Pharmaceutical Journal* is run at a loss should not deserve especial attack any more than the fact that the school of pharmacy, instituted and supported by the society, has never paid its way. Most of all it does not look well for the editor of one drug-trade journal to attack another and naturally most people regard it as stimulated by something akin to jealousy. Of recent years the society has been almost feverish in its activity in prosecuting unqualified sellers of poisons and no journal has urged on the society in this matter so much as the *Chemist and Druggist*. Law costs, as every one knows, are very expensive and the registered man, whether connected by membership to the society or not, reaps all the benefit.

The progress of what has been called "serum therapeutics" is slow, but at least it appears to be founded upon a more scientific basis than the administration of many animal organic extracts. By this time the evil effect of the Paris school in teaching that extracts of the various animal organic substances were suitable for diseases of the particular part—that is, ovarian diseases were to be cured with ovarian tissue—has nearly passed away. It must not be thought that these extracts are deficient in therapeutic properties; on the contrary, several of them have such powerful action that they require careful administration. This is notably the case with the extract or powder from the thyroid glands, which has received most attention and has been found very successful in the treatment of myxedema, psoriasis, and obesity. But the progress of serum treatment is based really upon the practical development of Pasteur's teaching as demonstrated by Koch, Ehrlich, Fraser, Roux, and Calmette. Three forms of serum have attracted most attention since Koch's tuberculin has been relegated to veterinary therapeutics as a diagnostic agent, these are antiphtheritic serum, antistreptococcal serum, and antivenomous serum. The diphtheritic remedy has established itself to a certain extent, although there are fierce opponents to it. But its success has been engulfed by statistics, and everybody knows the official description of statistics—positive, lies; comparative, lies; superlative, statistics. Marmorek's antistreptococcal serum would possibly be more successful if it had a shorter title. It has been used in the large hospitals in France and Germany as a remedial agent in those diseases, primarily introduced by the activity of streptococci, such as erysipelas, puerperal fever, etc. Antivenomous serum is of greatest interest in those countries like India where a large number of lives are annually lost through snake bites.

Dr. Fraser, of Edinburgh, the exploiter of strophanthus, if not its discoverer, has

done much to enlarge our knowledge of the value of this serum. Calmette claims to have first made the discovery that the snake venom, under suitable treatment, may yield a serum of high value. He inoculated rabbits and guinea pigs with attenuated doses of the poison, gradually increasing the strength until a serum was obtained that injected after a fatal dose of the poison had been administered saved the life of the animal. At present these serums are very costly, that is, the usual dose is about ten c.c., and for this quantity the charge is about \$1.

Writing about thyroid preparations reminds me that considerable disparity exists in the strength of the various specimens in the market. For instance, Messrs. Burroughs, Wellcome & Co., take the fresh thyroid, and having noted the weight, dry and powder, and reduce to the original weight by means of a harmless diluent, such as sugar of milk. So that five grains of their powder or tablet are equivalent to five grains of a fresh gland. Messrs. Armour & Co. put the thyroid through the same process but do not reduce the powdered dry gland, except when compressing it, then they say that a five grain tablet contains two grains of the dried powder. There are various liquid preparations such as glycerine extracts and elixirs where the indefiniteness is still more marked.

So vinolia, after all, and in spite of contradictions, is to be floated as a limited liability concern. It is freely stated that the capital will be five million dollars, but this must surely include the American business. It will be interesting to learn how the American business has prospered, because, if they have succeeded in spite of the tariff and keen competition in the States the proprietors deserve congratulation. Vinolia was started about ten years ago by Dr. Burroughs, who came over from the States to assist and travel for Messrs. Burroughs, Wellcome & Co. It was soon after the late Dr. Alder Wright had published his Cantor lectures on soap that Dr. Burroughs took up that mark of the civilization of nations. The first venture was vinolia cream, a delicately scented emollient zinc preparation that was very useful in acne, eczema, etc. Then he got Mr. Hills Hartridge to join him. Mr. Hartridge had been manager for many years of Messrs. Corbyn Stacey & Co's west end branch, and brought his experience of good toilet preparations into play. They also secured the principal assistant of Dr. Alder Wright—Mr. Thompson—who took the soap analysis in hand and led to the startling statements about solidified water, bad fats, resins, silica, etc., with which common toilet soaps were adulterated. The word "superfatted" was run for all it was worth, and as vinolia soap was really a good article and genuine value, it promptly caught on. Since then the progress must have been by leaps and bounds, and the advertising account must closely resemble that celebrated by Pears.