

trade principles had come into vogue, the duty on the fresh bulb and dried squama is equal, for the sake of economy squill was always imported in the dried state. I think that medicine, especially if it has to make a sacrifice of some of its virtues, ought not thus to bow to commerce, and as I now believe both are admitted free of duty, we could easily, by making our request known, be supplied with the fresh bulbs. I have made frequent inquiries for them, but have always been informed that the fresh bulbs do not now come into the London market. I took the trouble, when in Paris three years ago, to get two procured for me. One of them I noticed put forth a shoot last year, and I think both are yet possessed of life. I obtained them with the intention of trying to make the preparations I have suggested, but a fitting opportunity did not then occur. As many of the outer scales have become dry, I fear they will not now yield much expressed juice, but I intend trying them.

*Oxymel Scilla.*—The directions for making this preparation are concise and definite, but not very practicable—"Mix and evaporate by a water-bath until the product, when cold, shall have a specific gravity of 1.32." The plan generally adopted in making it is, to make the acetum with half the quantity of diluted acetic acid, using it one-half stronger than B. P. This thoroughly exhausts the squill if the "mark" be well pressed. One pint of the acetum, where two of the other are ordered in the formula, added to the honey, requires little evaporation to bring the oxymel to a proper consistence. If it be true that part of the medicinal property of squill is volatile, will not this preparation be much impaired by the long-continued application of heat? What advantage is there in evaporating the honey and acetum mixed together? In the London Pharmacopœia, 1851 the acetum was ordered to be concentrated by evaporation, and the honey added afterwards. This is more reasonable, although, on account of the difference in consistency of honey the oxymel produced would vary a little in this respect.

If made with a strong acetum, prepared from the fresh bulbs as I have suggested, concentration would be unnecessary.

*Tinctura Aurantii.*—This is directed to be made by macerating dried, bitter orange-peel in proof spirit. As it is a flavouring agent, and seems that fresh peel is so much superior to the dried in this respect, it has been suggested that the tincture should be prepared from it. No housewife thinks of preparing marmalade from dried orange-peel, nor should pharmacists be directed to prepare a tincture from it, seeing that a certain season of the year Seville oranges can be had at nearly every village shop in the kingdom. The fresh peel yields a tincture which, when diluted with water, still remains clear, not like the present tincture, as it, on account of some of the aromatic principles having become resinous, and therefore insoluble in aqueous fluids, on the addition of water forms a milky mixture. If made with the fresh peel rectified spirit should be used; the juice contained in the peel will bring the tincture down to about the same strength of spirit as that of the present tincture.

*Unguentum Hydrargyri Ammoniati.*—This preparation containing one part of white precipitate in eight of the ointment, is unnecessarily strong, it is, in fact, dangerously so, when it has been freely used for any length

of time, such application being necessary in some skin diseases. If made with one-twelfth the quantity of white precipitate even, the precaution being taken to levigate it carefully with a little oil previous to the addition of the lard, it is, according to Dr. Tilbury Fox, of sufficient strength for nearly all cases where its application is desirable.

*Plasters.*—This group of preparations are rarely "home made," and as a rule their appearance, rather than their utility, is the point most considered in the wholesale trade. There seems to be a great redundancy of them in the Pharmacopœia. The same ingredients with the proportions varied, are contained in emplastrum saponis. My experience of these plasters leads me to believe that in any case where they are used, their application might be replaced with advantage by the simple lead plaster, provided it be properly made. Lead plaster has not then the much admired opaque whiteness, which is preferred in the trade. The Pharmacopœia directions for its preparation are not sufficiently definite; nothing is said about the glycerine that is formed in the process, whether it is to be separated, or evaporated away—the plaster to be allowed to absorb as much of it as possible, or to be washed out by the "pulling" operation under water, which it generally undergoes to give it the saleable appearance. My experiments with this and other preparations are not yet completed; on some future occasion I hope to be able to publish the results.

Among the other plasters two are likewise very redundant in composition,—*emplastrum picis* and *emplastrum calefaciens*. In the latter formula, quantities of simples will have to be meted out no less than nineteen times. The effect of this redundancy is that nostrums, much simpler in composition, meet with a much larger sale—*Poor Man's Plaster*, for example. One likes to know "the reason why" there should be such exuberance in their composition. I, in my teaching, am continually asked this question, and rightly so; if the formula are what they ought to be, they must be consistent with reason.

*Dosology.*—Are the doses given meant for the guidance of the dispenser as well as the prescriber? If so, is a dispenser justified in refusing to compound prescriptions ordering medicines in larger doses? It is desirable to give the smallest dose of medicine that will have the required effect, still the maximum doses stated are frequently much too small. For example, the dose of gallic acid is given, at 2 to 10 grains. I have not dispensed a less dose than 10 grains for years, and at times as much as 60-grain doses for albuminuria. Of *extractum filicis liquidum*, the dose given is 15 to 30 minims; I more frequently dispense 60 minims for a dose. *Tinctura ferri perchloridi*, 10 to 30 minims, it is given in 60-minim doses. *Potassii iodidum*, 2 to 10 grains, often 30-grain doses are administered.

The effect of this is often mischievous, as in the following instance. A few years ago, before the present Pharmacopœia was published, and when bromide of potassium was coming into use as a remedy for epilepsy, a physician wrote a prescription for a case ordering 20 grains in the mixture, to be taken three times a day. The patient took it to a chemist, who refused to dispense it, and neglecting the fact he ought to have shown, he sent the patient back to the physician to ask him if there was not some mistake. It afterwards came to an establishment

with which I was connected, and was dispensed without the least hesitation, as it had become with us an every-day prescription.

If the doses of the preparations must be stated, there ought to be three given,—the minimum, the maximum, and the poisonous dose,—to avoid the possibility of cases of this kind occurring.

In conclusion, I think the subject is so broad, that before another edition of the Pharmacopœia is published, the formulæ and preparations should be discussed here *seriatim*, like the clauses of a bill before a Committee of the House of Commons: Those that are good would meet with our approval, those that are capable of it would be amended, and those that are bad and obsolete, would be condemned, as they only cumber the ground of the Pharmacopœia, our pharmacie and the medical student's mental capacity. From my point of view, it may be that I am connected with a medical school of whose professors the unjust remark has been made, "they have no faith in medicine," but by the performance of my duties, I am able to take a wide survey of this subject, and I am convinced that much of it has either become obsolete, or is fast becoming so. Who, in the medical profession, believes in the efficacy *per se* of such medicines as, thus, castor, expressed oil of mace, hops, myrrh, saffron, red sandal-wood, etc.? They enter into the composition of different compound formulæ, with very questionable advantage,—often to complicate them unnecessarily, and to obscure the effect of their action. Some things are almost too sacred for discussion. Among these are the Pharmacopœia, and, I should have thought, that bulwark of English liberty, trial by jury; yet I attended a debate the other evening at which youths in their teens, with all the assurance of a prime minister, condemned even this. Infallibility has been so much discussed of late, that to apply such a term to the Pharmacopœia would be more presumptuous than to the Pope, or a British sovereign, who, according to our constitution, can do no wrong. As a register of the strength of preparations, the Pharmacopœia is a necessity, and whatever deviation we may make in manipulation, we should ever be loyal in this respect.

We must not use a microscopic eye to search for little imperfections in it, but we may suggest improvements, which in the routine of our daily occupation experience has taught us are necessary. The present Pharmacopœia I consider is a marvel of correctness for such a work, taken into account the arduous task Dr. Redwood had in overcoming the prejudice each of the three kingdoms had formed against the previous edition. In this he has been eminently successful, which is some reward for his labours. I have to thank him for much information which I have always found him ready to give, and more especially for that contained in his excellent course of lectures delivered here; these form a good groundwork on which to build a Pharmacopœia.

I have sometimes noticed the want of it, and as it is our guide, I beg to propose that a copy of the Pharmacopœia be always placed on the table at these meetings.

*University College Hospital, March 2, 1870.*

*NOTE.*—After the reading of the above paper, a discussion was entered into by several members present; and as it relates to subjects in which all our readers are interested, we reprint it entire.—*Ed. PH. JOUR.*