

Pharmacy in England.

The Preliminary Examination Altered. Death of Mr. A. H. Mason. Colored Podophyllin. Celloidin—A New Aseptic Syringe—Buttermilk Soap—British-made Cameras.

(By Our Own Correspondent.)

It has been authoritatively announced that the council of the Pharmaceutical Society have at length decided to alter the requirements of the preliminary or first examination. For over twenty years, in spite of the progress of general education and the increase of subjects in the qualifying examination, the preliminary has remained unaltered. It is true that in consequence of the representations of the council the College of Preceptors, who conduct the examination, have raised the number of marks required for a pass, but the subjects have still remained the same in spite of repeated remonstrances on the part of those who believe that progress in pharmacy is synonymous with increased education. It is idle to attempt to defend the policy of masterly inactivity that at last appears about to be altered. During these years the medical, legal, and veterinary professions have vastly increased the scope and stringency of their preliminary examinations, which in most cases approximate closely to the matriculation of the London University. Nothing has been definitely settled regarding the new pharmaceutical preliminary, but I have excellent reasons for stating that the council favor the scheme of abolition of the examination *per se*, and accepting the certificates of such bodies as the Oxford and Cambridge local examinations, etc., provided that Latin, mathematics, and one modern foreign language are included amongst the subjects for which the certificate has been granted in addition to the ordinary school subjects.

The sudden death of Mr. A. H. Mason, whose name was familiar to pharmacists in England, Canada, and the United States, came as a shock to his many friends. Although not a pharmacist, Mr. Mason was closely identified with numerous pharmaceutical institutions, and his genial nature endeared him to all who met him. To a quiet manner he added a large amount of energy and business acumen, but it is doubtful if he was really strong enough for the high-pressure work required in New York. He was a constant visitor, when in England, to the meetings of the British Pharmaceutical Conference, and was a member of the Pharmacy Club, and on his leaving for New York, only two years ago, he received a very enthusiastic ovation from his friends.

Lately podophyllin has occurred on the market of a yellowish-green color, instead of the yellowish-brown article to which we were accustomed. As its brighter appearance was rather more attractive little attention was bestowed upon it, especially since the statement has been circulated that it was due to precipitating the resin in the presence of alum, and

that it was just as pure. But E. Merck has recently sent a circular round to the wholesale trade warning them against the greenish-yellow podophyllin, and plainly stating that the color is obtained either by foreign substances, or from the resin being obtained from other rhizomes than podophyllin pellatum. The latter explanation is, I believe, in most cases the true one, and the root that has been used is probably the Indian podophyllin emodi. On the authority of Professor Dunstan, the resin obtained from this root does not differ from that obtained from the American drug, whilst the yield is larger. It is quite possible, therefore, that in the new B.P. this source of podophyllin will be recognized, and indeed it is not actually forbidden now, as when properly prepared it answers the B.P. tests. Care should be taken, however, to examine highly-colored samples of podophyllin, as Merck suggests, to ensure that they are perfectly soluble, 1 in 10 of alcohol and about 1 in 100 of ammonia.

Celloidin is the name given to Schering's Patent Pyroxylin that has several advantages over ordinary pyroxylin, especially for photography. It occurs as a horny substance, not unlike gelatine in appearance, and dissolves in a mixture of absolute alcohol and ether, always presenting a uniform, clear, neutral collodion, that may be iodized without change of color, or without filtering. It is not explosive or dangerous, and burns, when ignited, only like paper. The solution of a strength about one or two per cent. is chiefly used in photography, but microscopists employ an eight per cent. solution for coating specimens that are afterwards to be cut on a freezing microtome. It may be of interest to record here that picrate of ammonium is not half so explosive as it is generally assumed. Quite recently, to test the matter, I have ignited it, boiled it, and ground it in a mortar without the slightest sign of explosion. It burns with a bright, smoky flame, not unlike picric acid, is much more soluble in hot water than cold; indeed, it is impossible to make a solution in the cold stronger than one or two per cent.

Chemists who are asked about aseptic syringes, in these days of serum injections, should bear in mind the advantages of Luer's patent aseptic syringe. It is made entirely of crystal, both cylinder and piston rod, and there are no packings of piston to get foul. Sterilization is easily effected, either by rinsing with absolute alcohol, or by dry heat up to 125° C. The syringes are supplied by Messrs. J. Gray & Son, of the Truss Works, Sheffield, England, and vary in size from one cubic centimetre up to seven ccs. in capacity, each syringe being supplied with two steel needles in a velvet-lined leather case, or metal aseptic case, from \$3 to \$8, according to size—platinum needles, that are recommended by some medical men, as they can easily be quickly sterilized by passing them through the flame of a spirit lamp.

Buttermilk soap is the latest craze in toilet soap, and is being boomed for all it is worth. It probably holds its fashionable position to the tale that Mrs. Langtry, or some other beautiful woman, attributes her fair complexion to the virtues of a milk bath. Most people would find this rather an expensive luxury, so the soap-boiler steps in and practically says, why spend money on milk for the complexion when a cake of buttermilk soap will do as well? Since the introduction of Vinolia soap there has been a steadily increasing demand for superfatted soaps, and chemists who have good connections have found it profitable to introduce their own brand. Nearly all the principal soap-makers have one or more varieties of superfatted and milled soaps, and, although these are not cheap, they are far superior to the ordinary products of the dry goods stores. During the winter months many chemists in London push the sale of a cold-cream soap as specially suitable for the period of chaps and chilblains. One word before dismissing this subject: Do not spare any trouble or reasonable expense in obtaining good labels and pretty boxes. The sale is half effected if the general get-up is satisfactory, and nowadays the public is very exacting on this score. The purest soap on earth would not sell half so well as plain curd soap, if it were wrapped in plain paper in a common box. One of the neatest boxes that I have seen, and yet presenting a thoroughly good appearance, is covered with very dark green glazed paper, with a narrow gold edge, and the name of the soap and chemist stamped on the lid in fancy block type. The effect is almost that of a leather box, whilst a pleasing contrast is to have the box lined a delicate salmon pink color. Violet powder looks well in a similar colored box, only the edge and lettering should be aluminium.

The reduction in tariff is causing some of our manufacturers to turn their attention again to Canada, particularly as there is some prospect of the United States raising theirs again. The photographic boom has been followed by the cycle boom, and now the motor car is having its turn; still the amateur photographer is well worth looking after, and British-made cameras and accessories stand deservedly high in the estimation of all devotees to the fascinating art.

London, Nov. 27, 1896.

Recent Patents.

Amongst the patents recently granted to Canadian inventors, the following are of interest to our readers:

W. N. Peay, improvements in liquid disinfecting distributors; A. K. Lydia, composition for removing false membrane in diphtheria and croup; A. Pine, yellow ointment; D. B. March, apparatus for examining the heart and lungs, etc.