

tive paper on the 'Division of Mercury,' read before this Society by our noble founder and esteemed friend, the late Mr. Jacob Bell, from which I extract the following as the conclusion at which he arrived :

"The preparations under consideration, *i. e.*, Grey Powder, Blue Pill, and Blue Ointment, are dependent for their efficacy on the impalpably minute division of the mercury, and if any oxide exist in them, the circumstance is accidental, and the quantity so small as to be unimportant."

Professor Attfield, commenting upon the same preparations, writes—"Their therapeutic effects are probably due to the black and red oxide of mercury which occur in them through the action of the oxygen of the air upon the finely divided metal."

Dr. Pereira, under the head of Hyd. c. Creta, writes—"This preparation is a mechanical mixture. It is an exceedingly mild but valuable mercurial."

Some sixteen years ago Professor Redwood favoured us at one of these evening meetings with the gratification of listening to a paper on "Grey Powder." It was one of those valuable contributions to pharmacy, for which we as pharmacists have been upon very many occasions indebted to him. It is printed in the *Pharmaceutical Journal* [2], vol. 1., p. 504. He therein shows, as the result of his examination of six samples of grey powder, that five of them contain oxides in abnormal excess, and suggests the use of sugar of milk as a probable preventive of this tendency to oxidation (a suggestion which appears to have been adopted by our transatlantic cousins), and concludes with a promise to return to this subject hereafter. May I venture to hope that he will deem the opportunity I have now afforded him a fitting occasion to do so ?

It has appeared to me that minute subdivision, and not oxidation of the metal, has been the intention of the pharmacopœia process, and that this result is capable of being obtained by a strict adherence thereto ; but the process is uninteresting, monotonous and wearisome. I can recall to mind a time when I as an apprentice was first set to make this preparation, and that I looked upon it as a punishment worthy of the inquisition.

In modern times it is, I believe, exceptional to find it made on a comparatively small scale by the pharmacist for the requirements of his own establishment ; as a matter of convenience he purchases it from the wholesale houses, by whom it is made in large quantities, and to this I have for a long time past been led to attribute very much of the variation in the condition of the mercury found in different samples of the powder. The quantities directed in the British Pharmacopœia can be prepared with a result containing a very small percentage of mercurous oxide, and a mere trace, if any, of the mercuric ; but when made on a large scale by steam power the heat eliminated by the friction and pressure of heavy stones, favours in a marked degree metallic oxidation, and the powder so prepared