

Pharmacy in England.

The History of Aconitine, by Dr. Freund—Ainol—An Iodoform Substitute—A Dyeing Soap Novelty—Hospital Ship for Ashanti—Ointments of the B.P.—Artistic Labels for Specialties.

(By Our Own Correspondent.)

The aconitine controversy is by no means over. Those who have followed carefully the evidence in favor of either Dunstan or Freund have long ago concluded that the last word has yet to be said. But it is also manifestly clear that it will have to be uttered by neither Dunstan nor Freund. In this country we regretfully admit that since Dr. Alder Wright's decease we have no sufficiently careful investigator capable of taking up the matters now in dispute and setting them at rest forever. The latest contribution to the question is by Dr. Martin Freund, who writes the history of aconitine, as viewed by Martin Freund. Soon, no doubt, a reply will be forthcoming from Dunstan denying Freund's charges and reiterating the correctness of the research laboratory's figures and conclusions that Freund so seriously impugns. In the interests of science it is to be hoped that an independent observer, whose ability and freedom from bias should be unquestionable, may speedily arise and determine the correctness of the much-disputed formula of aconitine. Should Professor Dunstan's work be corroborated, a banquet in his honor would be none too small a recognition of the manner in which he has fought the question against an extremely bitter opponent. If, on the other hand, Dr. Freund's conclusions are confirmed, the Pharmaceutical Society had better close forever the page on the aconitine research and undertake something less ambitious and more likely to yield correct and useful results.

Ainol, the latest iodoform substitute hailing from the Fatherland, is receiving considerable attention in medical quarters just now. The *British Medical Journal* had a favorable notice of it only last week, and the London agents are sending a neat brochure to all the members of the medical profession and to pharmacists. Ainol is an iodo-bismuth preparation in combination with gallic acid. It is a grayish-green powder, very light and voluminous, free from odor and taste and insoluble in alcohol, ether, water, etc. Its advantages over iodoform, dermatol, and similar substitutes are stated to be: It contains iodine in an active but harmless condition; it liberates iodine and gallic acid gradually in the presence of the serous liquids of wounds; it leaves a basic bismuth residue as a protective to the wound; it combines the antiseptic advantages of iodine, the astringent property of gallic acid and the dessicated action of bismuth. Experiments have shown that it is free from toxic or irritant characters, whilst owing to its extreme lightness in comparison to iodoform, it is relatively cheaper. The objections can be summed up as chiefly concerned with its price and also as to its superiority to this form. The

latter is cheaper, and so far has received a fairly satisfactory amount of attention. In spite of all, however, in the large hospital practices iodoform holds its own, although its objectionable odor is painfully recognized by both physician and patient.

A novel soap is about to be introduced to the public for the purpose of dyeing garments, ribbons, etc. This soap is the patent of a Belgium chemist and contains the dye incorporated in the soap, so that by merely washing the article sufficiently with the acid of the soap the particular dye is obtained. The principal objection to amateur or home dyeing is also removed, as it is claimed that this peculiar combination prevents the dye from acting on the skin of the operator. The soap will be shortly placed in the hands of the retail druggists, and if the claim is correct it will probably prove a popular article, as the price is only 8 cents per tablet to the public. I have not had an opportunity of examining the soap, but am assured by those who have done so that it fully bears out the claim of the inventor. Of course the soap will be procurable in all the principal shades, including some of the most recent and fashionable.

The expedition to Ashanti has caused the authorities of the army medical department to requisition one of the P. and O. steamers, the *Coromandel*, as a hospital ship. She is now lying in the Royal Albert Docks and is being fitted up for the purpose with the necessary hospital appliances by Messrs. Savory and Moore, of New Bond street, London. A regular dispensary is being arranged, as well as special surgical and sick wards. The hospital ship will form a base for the treatment of the more seriously wounded where special operations have to be performed, and particular attention is being paid to antiseptic precautions, so that the surgeons will be operating under the most favorable circumstances that recent discoveries can suggest. Some remark has been caused that the work of fitting up the ship has not been given to the present contractors for the supply of drugs, etc., to the army. But the work is more in the nature of supplying special fittings and appliances, and Messrs. Savory & Moore appear to have held this position to the army for some time. Their military panniers, field dressings, hospital haversacks and pharmacy wagons have been adopted by the army medical authorities for very many years.

Some very practical notes on the B.P. ointment are now being published in the *Pharmaceutical Journal*. Dispensers and manufacturers have had more reason to complain about ointment than perhaps any other class of preparations in the B.P. Some are too hard and some too soft, whilst no provision is made for the variation of temperature. The formulae of some of them, such as carbolic acid, iodoform, eucalyptus, etc., are so unsatisfactory that strict adhesion has long been abandoned in many pharmacies. In the

paper referred to on ointments, alternative formulae are suggested, and most of them are a distinct improvement on the official. Iodoform ointment, however, is recommended with basis of wax, oil and simple ointment. I have not tried this, but the experience of several years has shown me that when vaseline is substituted for the benzoated lard of the present official formulae, a product is obtained that is perfect both as regards appearance and keeping properties. In hot weather the addition of a little hard paraffin for a portion of the vaseline is advisable. It was recommended some time ago that lanoline ointment was a capital basis for this preparation, but such a complete alteration in the formulae would be hardly justifiable without the prescriber's consent, whilst its general acceptance is unlikely unless lanoline descends considerably in price. As to its keeping properties when so made I can certainly testify in its favor.

At a recent exhibition I remember noticing that a certain manufacturer of proprietary preparations had displayed a framed parti-colored picture that on a closer examination proved to be a collection of his labels. They were all exquisitely designed in gold and colors and had a very attractive appearance. It struck me that pharmacists too often overlook the effect that a really artistic label has upon the public. Without any lavish expenditure of money it is possible to obtain labels, printed only in black and white, of very tasteful appearance when taken from a copper plate. Many pharmacists who would scorn to send out a mixture from their dispensary department not finished off with a pleated cap seem quite satisfied that their specialties should bear even less adornment and a severely plain label. Art in advertising is recognized as productive of good results, and what is the label but an advertisement if properly arranged.

Treatment of Customers.

Do not let customers remain in your store unattended longer than possible; find out what they want and ask them to be seated. They will then willingly wait a few moments if you are too busy to serve them immediately. At the same time, you must not forget to wait upon customers in the order in which they enter the store. Give the child or poorly dressed person the same attention you would bestow upon the sage or millionaire. Each one is justly entitled to such attention, irrespective of the money he may leave with you. Honorable dealing of this character soon gets to be known in your neighborhood, and the knowledge of it gives you added dignity in the eyes of your friends.

To preserve hydrogen peroxide, add to each liter of the solution one gramme of naphthalene.