

The General Apothecaries Company, (limited).

Contributors

General Apothecaries Company (London, England)
Royal College of Surgeons of England

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(7.)



The General Apothecaries' Company,

(LIMITED.)

CAPITAL, £100,000, IN SHARES OF £10 EACH.

Office, Laboratories, and Wholesale and Retail Depot,
49, BERNERS-STREET, OXFORD-STREET, LONDON,
AND
APOTHECARIES' HALL, COLQUIT STREET, LIVERPOOL.

THIS Company has been established to supply the Medical Profession and the Public with pure drugs, unadulterated chemicals, invalids' food, &c., and to prepare all medicinal compounds with scientific accuracy. It further proposes to give a new impetus to the practice of medicine by publishing an account of all new remedies, new applications or improvements of those already known, and to keep the profession acquainted with all progress made in the medical sciences.

JOHN JAMES RIDGE, M.D., J.P., CHAIRMAN.
JOHN GARDNER, M.D., MANAGING DIRECTOR.

OPINIONS OF THE METROPOLITAN PRESS.

From the "MORNING CHRONICLE," October 17th.

THE GENERAL APOTHECARIES' COMPANY.—We had an opportunity on Wednesday of inspecting the extensive plant, machinery, laboratories, crushing and grinding mills for drugs, warehouses, utensils, and other appliances of the General Apothecaries' Company in Berners-street, Oxford-street. The directors being anxious to give publicity to the results of their organization, very judiciously determined upon inviting the members of the metropolitan press, and a considerable gathering took place. They were met by Dr. Ridge, the Chairman of the Company; Dr. Gardner, the Managing Director, and several other members of the board, and the Resident Chemical Professor. The visitors were in the first instance shown over the dispensing repository or shop. Here the most valuable or remarkable drugs and medicines were exhibited, and their peculiar properties, both in their simpler forms and under various combinations, explained by Dr. Ridge. The doctor strongly impressed upon his hearers the very earnest care exercised by the establishment in obtaining every article in its most pure and genuine condition. The tinctures were prepared with the most scrupulous attention, to secure equality in their specific gravities, whatever liquid might be employed in their composition. He explained that, for medicinal use, it is not always the most costly article that is best, but the profession and public are entitled to have exactly what they wish to purchase under its own name at the proper market price. Thus English rhubarb, which fetches but 2s. or 3s. per lb., is nearly if not quite equal in efficacy to the very finest specimens of Turkey rhubarb at 12s. to 16s. per lb. He then referred to the extreme difficulty of obtaining many things in a satisfactory state; drugs are subjected, even at the foreign ports of shipment, to adulteration; and he showed by what tests, all which were constantly at hand in an adjoining room occupied by the Resident Chemist, the Company was enabled to detect such spurious compounds. Among the new remedies which the Company would sell, he pointed

out some sublimed naphthaline, recently discovered to be of great benefit in some chronic diseases. This is a distillation from coal. Dr. Ridge took the opportunity of explaining, that this association was in no respect antagonistic to the existing Apothecaries' Company, an ancient and valuable corporation, but restricted by the terms of its charter, both as to its locality and, to some extent, the character of the medicines it sold. The College did not issue their pharmacopœia more than once in every ten or twelve years, nor did their pharmacopœia include any new remedial medicines or drugs, until after the experience of many years of trial was considered to have authorised their insertion. Thus, although new remedies were being constantly discovered, a knowledge of them could not reach the public through that work until after a very long lapse of time. After being shown various qualities of sarsaparilla, some from Vera Cruz, and other parts of America, and some fine specimens of pure cinnamon, we passed on to the analysing room. Here the Resident Chemist performed some delicate operations on strychnine, with a view of showing by what agents the colour tests can be neutralised. The processes and organization of the laboratories were next examined, with their crushing, and grinding mills worked by steam, boiling houses, pounding weights acted upon by hydraulic pressure, grindstones, &c.

The inspection abundantly proved that the Company possesses power and faculties to perform all that it promises—namely, to prepare and supply the medical profession and the public with medicines of every kind, of known strength, and perfect purity, invalids' food, and domestic chemicals. By observing good faith with the public in its operations, such a company cannot fail to inspire confidence, and accomplish far more than any corps of government inspectors. Among its arrangements may be mentioned:—1st. That no foreign or indigenous drugs are purchased, except such as are sound and genuine. 2nd. That they are crushed and ground upon the premises. 3rd. That all commercial chemicals are tested or analysed before they are sold for medicinal purposes. 4th. That the pharmaceutical and chemical laboratories are under the constant superintendence of a Resident eminent scientific Chemist, recommended by Baron Liebig and Dr. Fresenius, as eminently qualified for those duties. 5th. That the preparations ordered by the Colleges in their Pharmacopœias, are made strictly in accordance with their directions. The Directors, having taken measures to ascertain the views of the profession, find that the enterprise has elicited the cordial approbation of a very large number of practitioners of Great Britain. It was always contemplated by the Directors to make the premises in Berners-street the manufacturing and central wholesale depôt, and to open branches to suit the convenience of the public in various parts of the metropolis, and in the principal provincial cities and towns of Great Britain, for the sale of their drugs and preparations, and for dispensing prescriptions. This intention is strengthened since many profitable businesses, already established, have been offered to the Company, under the impression that it must command a very large trade, founded on public confidence. By the establishment of such branches, the Company are certain not only to secure the profits of a wholesale and manufacturing business, but will add thereto the larger proportionate profits of the retail. The public press has added another to the many important services it has rendered to society by exposing the evils arising from the prevalence of adulteration of drugs and chemicals employed in medicine, and demanding a remedy for this abuse. The directors consider that the remedy will be found in their plan, and that public confidence must be obtained by a large and respectable company, able, by its constitution and arrangements, to meet the demand for purity in medicines, and staking its existence upon maintaining good faith with the profession and the public.

At the conclusion of the inspection the party sat down to an excellent cold collation, presided over by Dr. Ridge, who, in an address of some length, explained the objects of the Company. He observed that all the gentlemen present were well aware of the universal prevalence of the adulteration of drugs

and medicines, and the manner in which the press had taken up the subject afforded the strongest proof of the necessity of a company like the present. The subject was one of vital importance to the public at large. The adulteration of drugs in London was nothing compared with the adulteration which took place in the provinces; for if the adulteration in London amounted to 50 per cent., in the country it was not less than 75 per cent.: and to show the manner in which the business was carried on, he might mention that a house in Wolverhampton had offered to supply powders of all kinds at the average price of 20s. per cwt. (hear, hear). Some articles were sold at that price, when they ought to be sold for £20 per cwt. He did not mean to assert that the druggists generally, knowingly and willingly, sold adulterated articles. They purchased from wholesale houses, and, from ignorance and inattention, sold articles which did not contain the properties which they ought to contain. People were in the habit of smiling at the profits arising from the sale of drugs, and he was willing to admit that they sometimes made almost threepence out of a shilling (laughter). If a chemist took £1 or £2 per day he did a good business, and when one party offered him rhubarb at 15s. per lb., and another at 3s., he was induced to buy the cheaper article. The adulteration in most cases took place at the wholesale houses. The purity of drugs was most essential to proper medical treatment. In his own case he had always dealt with respectable houses, but had scarcely ever trusted them in articles which he could manufacture himself. Medical men, generally speaking, had not sufficient time to analyse and test the articles which they could not manufacture, and which they obtained from wholesale houses. They were obliged to take the articles on repute, and expected to receive them tolerably pure. This rendered the art of healing very uncertain. For if the medical men did not know the exact strength of the drugs, it was impossible for them to calculate the amount of relief which would be afforded to their patients. One of the leading practitioners of the day had described drugs as the executive of the medical man, observing that with bad or inefficient drugs he was like a paralysed man, whose hands refused to obey him. Not knowing whether the articles used contained the qualities which they ought to possess, medical men were obliged to trust to chance, instead of calculating as they ought to do with mathematical certainty (hear, hear). He had the honour of being a Licentiate of the Apothecaries' Company, which had greatly raised the status of the medical profession. From that company pure drugs could be obtained, and the world was indebted to them for the great portion of the medical talent which now existed. By the Act of 1815 they became a licensing body. They supplied the Government and the East India Company, and had a fair share of the patronage of the profession. But their prices were so high that the profession generally could not deal with them. They did not seek for orders, and could not extend themselves. They would do almost anything to be able to go to the west-end of London—to Belgravia and Tyburnia—but their operations were restricted. They were certainly doing their mission, but that mission was not to extend the benefits of any discoveries in medicines to the world at large. The College of Physicians and College of Surgeons had done a great deal for science, and once in fourteen years the College of Physicians issued a new Pharmacopœia. In that long interval a variety of new medicines were introduced to public notice, but they had to run a long gauntlet before they were considered worthy of insertion in the Pharmacopœia; and consequently the public did not derive any immediate benefit from the College of Physicians, but were only taught the results of a long series of experiments. The College of Physicians were thus always behind the times. Instead of taking the lead, they brought up the rear. The College of Surgeons has done wonders. They could take off a man's leg in a better style than the operation was formerly performed, and the science of surgery was a most delightful one to contemplate (laughter), particularly since the use of chloroform had become so general. The present Company disclaimed anything antagonistic to Apothecaries' Hall; but they considered

that the time was ripe for such a Company as this—not a mere trading company, seeking a good profit—but a scientific company, whose object was to supply a want which the Apothecaries' Company could not supply. The Pharmaceutical Society was expected to be a protection to the public, but any person might purchase a chemist's shop and supply the public with drugs, and make up prescriptions without any knowledge whatever of chemistry—without knowing prussic acid from rhubarb (hear). There was nothing to hinder any person from taking one of the druggist's shops in Oxford-street, and poisoning her Majesty's subjects without let or hindrance. The Pharmaceutical Society admitted into its body any person paying £1 a year, and was chiefly occupied in producing cheap substitutes for the preparations ordered by the licensed colleges; and those who did not pay £1 a year were not pharmaceutical chemists (hear, hear). The present Company proposed to prepare and sell medicines without adulteration or substitution, and follow the order of the Colleges in all preparations; to advance the art of healing by improving the powers and preparation of medicines; to introduce new remedies; to keep the profession *au fait* in all discoveries, both abroad and at home, respecting the means of curing diseases, and to put new life and vigour into the science of medicine. It would be, therefore, a scientific as well as a trading company. Everything inferior or worthless would be rejected. Every prescription would be prepared exactly as the prescriber intends; and the public might implicitly rely on everything sold or prepared at the establishment. At the present moment prescriptions could not be made up in the same way at two shops. They varied considerably. That evil would now be remedied to a considerable extent (hear, hear). The Company did not intend to manufacture everything used for medicinal purposes. They did not propose to manufacture sulphuric acid or sulphate of magnesia, and articles of that description, which required an outlay of some £100,000 in the shape of capital; but they could obtain those articles from the best sources, and examine them carefully and test their qualities, and if they were not what they ought to be, care would be taken to improve them (hear, hear.) The Company had endeavoured to select those houses which were most celebrated for the purity of their articles, and the most eminent houses were anxious to deal with the Company (hear). The Company was a great fact, and there could be no doubt that the public and the profession would be able to get every article used in medicine pure and unadulterated (hear, hear). The Company had already put into the hands of 15,000 practitioners a pamphlet, containing a descriptive catalogue of all the more recently introduced remedies, and explaining the manner of employing them; and proposes to supply this kind of information to the profession, throughout the empire, periodically. It intended to establish branches in all the considerable towns, supplying them from the central laboratories, so that a prescription written in London may have the same ingredients if made up in the country, now almost an impossibility, since the strength of preparations varies in every shop. Branches would be established in various parts of London, in the great centres of circles. A branch was opened in Liverpool a few days ago, and similar branches would shortly be opened in Manchester, Birmingham, and other important towns, and would be governed by local directors. The profession would thus be able to obtain genuine drugs and chemicals in all parts of the kingdom. It was most important that medicines should be of uniform strength. One of the most important drugs used by the profession was laudanum. It was used more extensively than any other drug, except calomel. But it could not be obtained of the same strength at any two shops in Oxford street. The same might be said of quinine and other articles, which could never be obtained of uniform strength or purity. Many persons considered sarsaparilla wholly worthless as a medicine. Probably they had never had the drug at all, or they had had it after its virtues had been extracted by fraudulent traders. With regard to the sale of poisons, nothing poisonous was sold by the Company, except to the order of medical men, or two respectable persons, who enter their names and addresses in a book, and

explain for what purpose it is wanted. It is then sold in bottles of a peculiar colour, with yellow labels, and the words indicating its use in plain print upon it. The General Apothecaries' Company would thus supply a great desideratum of the times, and must become a great public fact (cheers).

In reply to several questions put by the guests, the Chairman said the Company were not antagonistic to the Apothecaries' Company, to the chemists or druggists, or the wholesale houses. The Apothecaries' Company was a trading and licensing body, and, as he had before remarked, had greatly raised the status of the medical profession. But they had not introduced, as this Company had already done, new remedies for the relief of disease. The wholesale houses were at this moment the best friends of the Company. The Company was not antagonistic to them, for they did not go into the country to ask to supply the chemists and druggists, nor did they propose to interfere with the business carried on in the manufacturing districts. They proposed simply to confine themselves to those articles which were calculated to relieve suffering humanity, to remove disease, and preserve health. For this purpose they intended to place the best articles within the reach of the medical profession. Chemists and druggists would not be interfered with by this Company, which did not propose to touch patent medicines, perfumery, and various articles of a similar description. The shops of the Company would be simply the old apothecaries' shops for the supply of drugs for the relief of disease, and not the ordinary chemist's shops (hear).

Dr. Gardner said the public were greatly indebted to the press for exposing the system of adulteration in drugs. The present Company was merely following the lead of the press, and endeavouring to carry out the suggestions which had been from time to time made in the public journals, and he had no doubt they would be carried out most successfully (cheers).

From the "MORNING HERALD," October 16th.

THE GENERAL APOTHECARIES' COMPANY.—A number of gentlemen connected with the medical profession and others, assembled by invitation to inspect the laboratories and to witness the general working of this Company, at their Offices, No. 49, Berners-street, Oxford-street. The Society has been recently established on the limited liability principle. It is under the direction of medical men, and its object is to "supply the profession and the public with unadulterated drugs, chemicals, and medicinal preparations; to remove the scandal of fraudulent trading attached by the parliamentary committee to dealers in medicines, and to sell in every case the article asked and paid for."

At the meeting yesterday we found about forty gentlemen prepared to test, to the best of their ability, the justice of the high pretensions of the promoters of the association; and, we believe, the inquiries thus instituted were calculated to produce on the minds of those by whom they were conducted the most favourable impressions.

Dr. Ridge, the Chairman of the Company, showed his visitors through the different rooms of the establishment, pointed out and explained to them the admirable machinery employed for the production of the finest and purest medicines, and illustrated by a variety of examples the value of the principles adopted in the management of the institution. The whole of the premises afforded a striking proof of the progress of modern scientific discovery, and the apparent purity, clearness, and even fragrance of many of the medicinal preparations were calculated very materially to mitigate that horror with which we have been accustomed to regard the sanitary compounds of the chemist.

After the inspection of the laboratories, the company sat down to a supply of those more agreeable solids and fluids devised for the sustenance and gratification of humanity in its normal condition; and when these had been disposed of with as much zest as if the fear of doctors and their drugs had never entered the world, the Chairman explained at some length the uses of

this new society. He had no difficulty in showing the many advantages to be derived by medical practitioners and their patients from the existence of an institution which would supply them at moderate prices with drugs of the most accurately-ascertained strength and purity. According to his statement, the Company meant to have Branch Establishments throughout the metropolis and in all our principal towns and cities.

We cannot pretend to determine how far the promoters of this institution may realise their own earnest professions, but we have no hesitation in expressing our belief that if they should fulfil their programme, the public will henceforward have a means of obtaining the most ample security against that adulteration of medicines, and that promiscuous and incautious sales of poisons, which have of late attracted so much notice and so much reprehension.

From the "DAILY NEWS," October 16th.

GENERAL APOTHECARIES' COMPANY.—The recent exposures of the extensive and deleterious adulterations in medicinal preparations has led to the formation of a Company, which has been established for the purpose of supplying to the public pure drugs. The Company has a laboratory in Berners-street, Oxford-street, and yesterday a number of gentlemen assembled for the purpose of inspecting it, and hearing a statement of the principles on which the Company has been founded, and the objects which it is proposed to accomplish. Dr. Ridge, one of the Directors, conducted the visitors through the laboratory, and explained the various processes, many of which are most ingenious, and science is brought to bear so as most economically and effectually to produce the desired results. The steam-engine and hydraulic pressure are brought into requisition, by means of which drugs are ground and pounded, and the juices thereof extracted and prepared for the use of the dispenser. Most of the preparations, Dr. Ridge stated, were made on the premises, but some are procured from the manufacturers; these, however, being all tested by a practical chemist, Herr Von Sicherer, a pupil of Liebig's, who performed some experiments, one of which it may be interesting to notice. It was with respect to the colour test of the presence of strichnine. It may be in the recollection of our readers that at Palmer's trial the evidence was that the usual colour test had failed to evince the presence of strychnine, and that this was the strong point of the defence. It was, however, in evidence, that Palmer had administered to Cook a quantity of tartarised antimony, and Herr Von Sicherer showed that the presence of tartaric acid in any form neutralised the action of bi-chromate of potash, by which the violet colour would, in the absence of tartaric acid, be produced. An inkling of this is giving in Dumas's novel of Monte Christo, and it is not improbable that Palmer, from thence, was induced to saturate his victim with tartarised antimony with a view of rendering the proof of the administering of strychnine more difficult, if not impossible. After the inspection of the laboratory, the visitors dined, an operation without which it would seem that, literally speaking, nothing can "go down" in this country. Mr. Ridge presided, and after the usual loyal toasts,

The Chairman said the Company had been established to meet the urgent demand of the public for pure drugs and chemicals, and medicines prepared by the aid of the present advanced state of science. If they had given the press £10,000 to have advocated a Company of this kind, the object could not have been better accomplished than it had been without any payment whatever, by its exposition of the extensive adulteration of drugs and medicinal preparations. The *Lancet*, he believed, was the first to call attention to the universal adulteration of drugs, but the press generally had taken the subject up, and the movement had resulted in a mass of information proving the prevalence of a system of gross imposition and fraud, fraught with much evil to the public. A Committee of the House of Commons, too, had issued a report on the subject. He was told that the adulteration of

drugs in London was nothing to the adulterations which took place in the provinces; where 50 per cent. was applied in London, 75 or 90 per cent. was not uncommon in the country. At Wolverhampton a dealer had advertised to supply any powdered drug at 20s. a cwt., while they all knew that some drugs could not be supplied at 20s. a pound. He sent some to America, and it was found not to contain any of the article it professed to be. He was not prepared to say that the druggists generally, either in London or the country, willingly or knowingly adulterated their drugs. He did not believe that they did, but they from ignorance sold drugs which did not contain what they were represented to contain, and the public suffered in consequence. Medical men, not having leisure to examine what they purchased, were themselves deceived, and were obliged to judge of things by their operation rather than by their composition, and thus the art of healing was made rather a matter of chance, than, as it should be, a matter of mathematical certainty. The profession was much indebted to the Apothecaries' Company; but their prices were high, and they scarcely supplied 2 per cent. of the practitioners. This Company proposed to prepare and sell medicines without adulteration or substitution, to follow the orders of the colleges in all preparations, to keep the profession *au fait* in all discoveries both at home and abroad respecting the cure of diseases, and to put new life and vigour into the science of medicine.

Dr. Gardner and several other medical men also addressed the company, and the proceedings which were of a highly interesting character, then terminated.

From the "GLOBE," October 21st.

The alleged general adulteration of drugs has called into existence a new Company with a very proper sphere of action. The General Apothecaries' Company has been organised by some experienced scientific men to supply the public with pure drugs. The Company propose "to prepare and sell medicines without adulteration or substitution, to follow the orders of the colleges in all preparations, and to keep the profession *au fait* in all discoveries both at home and abroad respecting the cure of diseases." These are excellent purposes, and with due fidelity to them the new Company may reckon on success.

From the "MORNING STAR," October 17th.

THE GENERAL APOTHECARIES' COMPANY.—On Wednesday we availed ourselves of an invitation to inspect the Central Depôt of this Association in Berners-street. It has seldom happened to us to devote two or three hours with so much profit and instruction to such an inspection as that in which we participated yesterday, under the able and intelligent guidance of Dr. Ridge, Dr. Gardner, and the resident chemical professor. The visitors were in the first instance shown over the dispensing repository or shop. Here the most valuable or remarkable drugs, tinctures, and medicines, were exhibited, and their peculiar properties, both in their simple forms and under various combinations, explained by Dr. Ridge. The doctor strongly impressed upon his hearers the very earnest care exercised by the establishment in obtaining every article in its most pure and genuine condition. He then referred to the extreme difficulty of obtaining pure many articles. Drugs are subjected even at the foreign ports of shipment to adulteration, and he showed by what tests the company was enabled to detect such spurious components. Among the new remedies which the company would sell, he pointed out some sublimed naphthaline, recently discovered to be of great benefit in some chronic diseases. This was a distillation from coal. Dr. Ridge took that opportunity of explaining that this Association was in no respect antagonistic to the existing Apothecaries' Company,—an ancient and valuable corporation, but restricted by the terms of its charter, both as to its locality, and, to some extent, the character of the medicines it sold. The Apothecaries' Company did not issue their

Pharmacopœia more than once in every seven or ten years; nor did their Pharmacopœia include any new remedial medicines or drugs until after the experience of many years of trial was considered to have authorized their insertion. After being shown various qualities of sarsaparilla, some from Vera Cruz, and others from other parts of America, and some fine specimens of pure cinnamon, as barked in Ceylon, in juxtaposition with some specimens of Cassia, bearing much external resemblance to them, and largely substituted in commerce for genuine Cinnamon, though utterly inferior both in its flavour and properties, we passed on to the analysing room, where we found the chemical professor, a young German, the favourite pupil of Baron Leibig and Dr. Fresenius, by whom he had been most strongly recommended to this association. This gentleman gratified the company by the facility with which he manages a series of delicate tests, intended to demonstrate the agents by which the usual colour tests to detect the presence of strychnine administered in combination with antimony—could be neutralised. These experiments had a remarkable bearing on the question raised among medical authorities on the evidence of Doctor Taylor in the recent memorable trial. A minute fraction of a grain of strychnine, after the crystal had been crushed, was treated with a drop of sulphuric acid, and bichromate of potassium, and a fine violet colour produced. These simply mixed with antimony would not resist the tests for detecting strychnine; but it was demonstrated that tartrate of antimony would absolutely neutralize them.

On returning into the house, the visitors found a liberal and elegant collation prepared for them, at which Dr. Ridge presided.

The health of the Queen having been drunk,

The CHAIRMAN addressed to the meeting a brief and clear exposition of the objects proposed by the General Apothecaries' Company.

The health of the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman (Mr. Lawrence) having been proposed with all honours, and severally acknowledged, the majority of the company separated, much gratified with the day's proceedings.

From the "DAILY TELEGRAPH," October 17th.

THE GENERAL APOTHECARIES' COMPANY.—The amount of imposition to which the public is subjected in matters connected with drugs and medicinal substances, has led to the formation of a company under the Limited Liability Act, the professed object of which is to supply pure and unadulterated materials. The company's premises are situated in Berners-street, Oxford-street, where on Wednesday last, a meeting was held for the purpose of explaining the plans pursued, and the means by which it is proposed to ensure the public and the medical profession a supply of genuine chemicals.

The *matinée* commenced at two o'clock, when the company were invited to inspect the warehouses, drug-mills, laboratories, and machinery; they were accompanied by JOHN JAMES RIDGE, Esq., M.D., and HERR VON SICHERER, a chemical student, recommended as an accomplished analyst, by Liebig the great German chemist. By means of a horizontal steam-engine, of eight horse power, a variety of mechanical appliances for grinding, pounding, lifting, &c., were put in motion. The analysis and composition of various substances used in medicine were also explained, and an analysis of strychnine was performed, showing how Palmer might, by the introduction of antimony, combined with tartaric acid, have contrived to prevent the colour test of strychnine from taking effect.

The visitors having inspected all the arrangements of the Company, partook of a *déjeuner*; after which

MR. RIDGE, the Chairman, spoke at some length of the purposes and plans of the Association. He said the Company had been established to meet the urgent demand of the public for pure drugs and chemicals, and medicines prepared by the aid of the present advanced state of science. If they had expended £10,000 to advance a Company of this kind, the object could not have been better accomplished than it had been by its exposition

of the extensive adulterations of drugs and medicinal preparations. The *Lancet*, he believed, was the first to call attention to the adulteration of drugs, but the press generally had taken the subject up, and the movement had resulted in a mass of information, proving the prevalence of a system of gross imposition and fraud, fraught with much evil to the public. A Committee of the House of Commons, too, had issued a report on the subject. He was told that the adulteration of drugs in London was as nothing compared to the adulterations which took place in the provinces; where 50 per cent. was applied in London, 75 or 90 per cent. was not uncommon in the country. At Wolverhampton, a dealer had advertised to supply any powdered drug at 20s. a cwt., while they all knew that some drugs could not be supplied at 20s. a pound. He sent some to America, and it was found not to contain any of the article which it professed to represent. He was not prepared to say that the druggists generally, either in London or the country, willingly or knowingly adulterated their drugs. He did not believe that they did, but they, from ignorance, sold drugs which did not contain what they were stated to contain, and the public suffered in consequence. Medical men not having leisure to examine what they purchased, were themselves deceived, and were obliged to judge of things by their operation rather than by their composition; and thus the art of healing was made rather a matter of chance, than, as it should be, a matter of mathematical certainty. The profession was much indebted to the Apothecaries' Company; but their prices were high, and they scarcely supplied two per cent. of the practitioners. This Company proposed to prepare and sell medicines without adulteration or substitution; to follow the orders of the colleges in all preparations; to keep the profession *au fait* in all discoveries both at home and abroad respecting the cure of diseases; and to put new life and vigour into the science of medicine.

DR. GARDNER and several other medical men also addressed the Company; and the proceedings which from the commencement afforded general satisfaction, terminated in a highly agreeable manner.

From the "RAILWAY RECORD," October 18th.

THE GENERAL APOTHECARIES' COMPANY, (Limited).—It is bad enough to be deceived in the quality of our daily food—our daily bread; but it is adding insult to injury, if, when we apply to a medical man for a remedy for any evil consequences which we may experience, to be deceived a second time in the remedy as well as the disease! Yet if we place faith in the representations of the "*Lancet*," and the evidence given before a Committee of the House of Commons, this is the unfortunate condition to which we are reduced; poisoned by our butcher, our baker, our grocer, our brewer, and the whole host of traders who minister to the daily wants of a civilized community, and then doomed to be poisoned by accident or design, by a class of professional men to whom we, in our confiding simplicity, fly for relief, and in the hope of cure! Verily, humanity is made a pretty shuttlecock of! tossed about between the baker and the chemist! The fact of the adulteration of food has been proved over and over again; and no doubt can be entertained that the greatest irregularity in the supply of drugs prevails when they really are pure, and that they are of unequal strength in various shops, whilst all kinds of deteriorated *materia medica* are administered by ill-qualified and careless practitioners, who are more interested in the profit to be made, than careful of the health of their patients. Just imagine a case of tincture of opium. It will be found of its normal strength at one shop, only two-thirds at another, and only one-half or one-third the strength at others; whilst powder of opium, prescribed in great emergencies, may be scarcely operative in three grain doses at one shop, and deadly poison at another! The list might be multiplied *ad infinitum*. The chemists and druggists of the kingdom, moreover, have no certificates of qualification. Jones, the ticket-of-leave man, may set up a chemist's shop to-morrow in any part

of the metropolis, and no questions asked—without even being able to distinguish prussic acid from rhubarb! In every druggist's shop, it is gravely asserted, articles are sold under false names—the spurious being cheap substitutes for the costly article; and properly qualified medical men not having leisure to examine what they purchase, are themselves deceived! Thus the very “healing art” itself is rendered uncertain, and published facts, relative to the power of medicine, fallacious. We have Death in the Pot, and Death in the Mortar!

A great effort is now being made to remedy this frightful state of things. Before the Act of 1815—the Apothecaries' Act—apothecaries prepared and sold all medicines. But the College of Physicians and Surgeons refused the task of examining the general practitioners, and hence it was confided to the old Society of Apothecaries—a trading body, which scarcely supplies two per cent. of the practitioners of Great Britain—and out of the defective constitution of this body, has arisen the so-called chemist and druggist, to whose tender mercy the health of the people is intrusted!

If things are in this disgraceful condition in the metropolis, they are even worse in the provinces. DR. RIDGE, who presided at a meeting of gentlemen interested in the question, at the establishment of the General Apothecaries' Company, in Berners-street, on Wednesday, said that, were 50 per cent. of adulteration of drugs takes place in London, 75 or 90 per cent. is not uncommon in the country! “At Wolverhampton,” he said, “a dealer had advertised to supply any powdered drug at 20s. a cwt., while it was notorious that some drugs could not be supplied at 20s. a pound! *He had sent some to America, and it was found not to contain any of the article it professed to be.*” It is a parallel case of the chicory and coffee dodge! In Heaven's name, we are entitled to know that what we purchase is what it professes to be. The deception is bad enough in articles otherwise harmless; but, in the case of medical drugs, the traders may be classed with the *mercatores artificesque veneni* of Juvenal. They are poison vendors and poison manufacturers.

The Company to which we have referred have for some time been busily engaged in organizing an establishment for the preparation and sale of medicines without adulteration or substitution; and to follow the ordering of the Colleges in all preparations; to advance the art of healing by improving the powers and preparations of medicines; to introduce new remedies; to keep the profession *au fait* in all discoveries, both abroad and at home, *respecting the means of curing diseases*—and to put new life and vigour into the science of medicine as well as a trading company. It intends to establish branches in all the considerable towns (already one in Liverpool), supplying them from the central laboratories, so that a prescription written in London may have the same ingredients if made up in the country, now almost an impossibility, since the strength of preparations varies in every shop, as we have before noticed. In addition to the immediate object of the Company, they have already circulated a serial containing a descriptive catalogue of all the more recently introduced remedies and explaining the manner of employing them; and this will be circulated through the Empire periodically.

A copy of this is now before us, under the title of “The Record of Pharmacy and Therapeutics,” and is a very creditable undertaking.

We are glad to hear from Dr. RIDGE, a positive contradiction to the rumour that has been so industriously circulated, that this Company place themselves in antagonism to the general practitioner. The contrary is precisely the fact. They have the same object in view as every honest and intelligent Druggist. It is against the unprincipled and ignorant they make war!

From the “RAILWAY GAZETTE.”

DEATH AND THE DOCTOR.—THE GENERAL APOTHECARIES' COMPANY (Limited).—The iron cage of Louis XI., which kept gradually closing upon its inmate, until the *coup fatal* put an end to his sufferings, is a tolerably

good illustration of the situation of the inhabitants of this great city, given over to the pestilence of an infected river, by our sanitary sluggards; our daily food adulterated; our pleasant condiments mixed up with poisonous minerals; our milk, our coffee, our tea, nay the very bread we eat! We ask for bread; and they give us a substance which defies analysis! and if we are to believe the evidence before the Committee of the House of Commons on the adulteration of medical drugs, we do but jump out of the frying pan into the fire, when we fly to the chemist for a remedy or a palliation of the evils broad-cast by the fraudulent children of commerce. Life has a hard struggle to reach maturity in this great City of ours! and a dead stand must be made, if we hope to attain the assigned limit of three score years and ten! Nay, if we wish to taste the fruits of another Autumn, or to pluck the roses of another Summer—*alium decerpere ficum, aut alias tractare rosas*—we must cleanse our river, put our house in order—and our doctor's shops too!

At a very interesting re-union which took place at the establishment of the General Apothecaries' Company, 49, Berners-street, on Wednesday last, Dr Ridge exposed, with alarming truthfulness, the adulteration of *materia medica*, not in the metropolis alone but over the whole kingdom, carrying conviction to the minds of all present, that partly from ignorance, partly from carelessness, and partly from design, with an eye to profit, it was almost an impossibility for any professional man to secure the accurate preparation of a prescription. Varying in quality or differing in strength, the proportions of the different ingredients were entirely upset: and thus, not alone is the patient injured, but the whole practice of medicine becomes a fallacy in its recorded facts! Nothing can be more frightful than a disclosure like this! We might as well fall into the hands of the old Barber Chirurgeons at once, as into the hands of chemists and druggists; for all that the legislature has done to secure in men selling drugs, either qualification or character!

It would scarcely be believed, yet such is the fact, that the whole population is given over for the supply of drugs, to a class of men over whom no control is exercised by any qualified body! Any man may open a chemist's shop! and when we reflect that nine tenths of the people get all their medical advice and their drugs from such places, it is almost impossible to exaggerate the magnitude and gravity of this opening of the flood-gate of poison! Every now and then, society is startled by the fact of a mistake ending in death, from the ignorance of a boy, who does not know prussic acid from rhubarb; or of an agitated wife, left by a dissipated husband to perform the duties of the laboratory! But anything short of this fails to attract attention. We do not take into account the slow undersapping of the health and strength of the population, by this lax and criminal administration of drugs. A medicine, otherwise harmless, becomes a poison in ill-qualified hands, and like Aaron's rod is changed into a serpent!

The duty of the Government is obvious. All men intending to carry on business as chemists and druggists, must be made to pass through the ordeal of some adequate examination. The public are entitled to a guarantee from some duty-constituted Board, that the parties who supply drugs, shall, at least, have gone through a course of *materia medica*; that they have a sufficient knowledge of quantities and strengths; that they are not simply guided by the labels on their bottles; and that they should not depend upon the *form* of the bottle—as has been gravely suggested by one learned body. But the test of qualification must be obtained; this *must* come.

In the mean time Dr. RIDGE, Dr. GARDNER, and other gentlemen, have associated themselves into a Company for supplying unadulterated drugs; and they propose to establish themselves in the principal towns in the kingdom. This is a bold undertaking, and demands no small amount of determination. They are not only a trading, but they profess to be a scientific body, and publish periodically a record of pharmacy and therapeutics, keeping the profession up to the mark of new remedies, &c. No doubt they will

encounter no small amount of opposition ; but they deserve the support of all impartial persons—if there are any to be found who would not readily confess to a partiality for unadulterated drugs, administered by intelligent and well-qualified men. If we are to be poisoned by physic, at any rate, let it be scientifically and *selon les regles*. When science fails, let ignorance assume the work ; but until this is demonstrated we prefer the fitly-educated man. As matters are conducted at present, a man had need carry the counter poison of Mithridates in his waistcoat pocket *sorbere ante cicum*, whenever he goes out to a dinner party, or into a doctor's shop !

From the "ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS," October 18th.

THE GENERAL APOTHECARIES' COMPANY.—A new Company has been recently started under the above designation, with the professed objects of procuring the purest drugs and chemicals, as well as that amount of skill and carefulness in dispensing them, the want of which amongst general dealers has been of late a subject of much loud and just complaint. We recently inspected the works and laboratories of the Company in Berners street, which were very complete, and admirably arranged. The facilities the latter will afford to the public for the analysis of various articles of consumption will be of extreme value. When we visited the laboratory we had an opportunity of seeing an illustration of the colour test in the detection of strychnine ; and also learned a very curious fact which is of importance in the connection with the recent trial of Palmer. It will be recollected that the chemical analysis of Dr. Taylor failed to elicit evidence of the presence of strychnine, and by this failure the verdict was considerably imperilled. The action of the tartarised antimony previously administered to the murdered man was supposed in some way or other to have affected the result ; but the *rationale* of its operation was not attempted to be explained. It now appears that the presence of tartaric acid in any form, prevents the action of strychnine in the colour test ; and this fact being established at once explains away all that before was a mystery in this notorious case. We are yet very far behind hand in chemical knowledge ; and any institution which tends to promote it is deserving of encouragement.

From the "COURT CIRCULAR," November 1st.

MEDICAL ADULTERATION AND ITS ANTIDOTE.—If it be any satisfaction to the public to know that everything they consume is adulterated, sometimes to an extent that it reduces the nominal article to an infinitesimal proportion, there is abundance of incontestible evidence of the fact. There is nothing that enters the mouth of man that is not now adulterated in some way. As to bread, "the staff of life," the housekeeper is lucky who discovers the baker that gives him twenty per cent. of sound wheaten flour in the quartern loaf. So with tea, coffee, milk, spices, sugar, arrowroot, wine, whiskey, gin, brandy, beer—the adulterating ingredients constitute considerably the greater portion of the bulk of each article : and though the Government are fully aware of this, yet the iniquity is suffered to spread and cast deeper roots, without any attempt to check its progress, except where the interests of the revenue are affected by the fraudulent practices of the trading classes. A baker may rob and even gradually poison his customers with impunity, but woe to the publican who puts a few grains of paradise into his beer—though it merely supplies the place of a few hops—or to the tobacco manufacturer who substitutes a dock or rhubarb leaf for one of the growth of Virginia ; or to the grocer, who mixes a little rice powder with his ground white pepper, though there is nothing deleterious in the compound.

Our paternal Government in their zeal for free trade, cannot think of interposing to save the public from being poisoned, by the adulteration of food, so long as the operation does not run counter to our precious fiscal laws ; and the people of this country are such sticklers for "freedom," that the odds

are ten to one they would rise up in rebellion against the Crown, if the executive presumed to ask Parliament for powers to interfere with the sale of articles not affected by the excise laws. We are so wild about freedom, that we insist upon the right of our tradesmen to perfect freedom in cheating and even poisoning us.

But it is not in food alone that this iniquitous system of adulteration is carried on. Even the medicines, upon the efficacy of which our safety, humanely speaking, depends in the hour of sickness, are a mass of pernicious adulteration. The rage, the monomania for cheapness renders it, we admit, almost impossible for an honest medicine vendor to earn a livelihood; and hence the great temptation to make up prescriptions improperly. A physician, for instance, prescribes "pulvis Jacobi;" but that is a dear medicine, though a most valuable one in febrile and other cases—and as the customer would consider it a gross piece of extortion to be charged three or four pence for a few grains of white powder—antimony which can be profitably sold by the pound for what James's Powder costs an ounce, and which possesses some at least of the dear medicine, is substituted, and the patient is not relieved and the physician's skill is defeated. The same observation applies to fifty other medicines in daily use; and dishonest men are amassing fortunes by manufacturing spurious medicines, which they sell in enormous quantities by the cwt. for a price at which the genuine medicine could not be sold by the pound.

This is a serious evil which, however, can be adequately corrected only by competition. But competition requires capital—and this must be the result of combination, for no individual can prudently attempt to stem the torrent of adulteration. But there is more than capital required; scientific knowledge and practical skill are also essential to the success of such an enterprise. The company that can defeat spurious medicine manufacturers, must be thorough adepts in pharmaceutical chemistry and in botany. They must watch the progress of scientific research, and be able to avail themselves of the latest discoveries in the manipulation of drugs, and in the use of vegetable and mineral medicines. London has already the advantage of such an establishment in the laboratory of the General Apothecaries' Company, in Berners-street, Oxford street—a report of whose inaugural proceedings has been published in all the papers—and while wishing them all the success which is due to a body who pledge themselves to supply the public with genuine medicines at a moderate price, we shall be glad to hear that in the other capitals of the empire similar institutions will be established. The names of the gentlemen connected with the laboratory in Berners-street, are a guarantee that scientific knowledge will be applied to the production of their medicinal preparations, and that they will act with good faith towards the public. It is one of the advantages of such a company, that they cannot afford to deal in deleterious adulterations, or fraudulent substitutions; for they are known in the professional world, and have a character to uphold. They have a much higher object than mere gain to look to, namely, their professional reputation—and we confess we shall be much disappointed if, within the compass of a year, their existence is not widely and beneficially felt in the great diminution of the sale of spurious drugs, and in the improved sanitary condition of the population. We are well aware that many public companies have been started who have promised to confer numerous benefits upon the public, and that these promises have too often been falsified; but we have hopes for the faithful adherence of this company to their programme, from the circumstance of the directors being members of a learned and certainly most honourable and liberal profession.

From the "ROYAL LEAMINGTON SPA COURIER," October 18th.

Among the thousand and one projects which the Limited Liability Act has brought forward, one has just been started in London, and which I understand proposes to extend its operations throughout the provinces, for preparing and dispensing pure and unadulterated drugs. At the present moment, following immediately upon the exposures which the *Lancet* and the Parliamentary Committee on adulterations have made, it would be next to impossible for such a scheme to fail, if honestly and systematically carried out. The promoters of this scheme, which is launched under the title of the General Apothecaries' Company, are men of character in the medical profession; one of them, Dr. Gardner, I recollect as a gentleman who laboured, some years ago, zealously and most effectually in the establishment of the College of Chemistry, an institution which is now thriving, and which has been a great service to medicinal science and to the arts. The object of this Company is, according to the explanations given by its projectors at a public inspection of their laboratory, which took place on Wednesday, to prepare and sell medicines without adulteration or substitution, to follow the orders of the Colleges, in all preparations, to keep the profession *au fait* in all discoveries, and to put new life and vigour into the science of medicine. One can scarcely conceive a more valuable boon to society than such an institution, and, seeing how largely medicine, in some shape or other, enters into the every day life and economy of every family, the pecuniary results of the project must be—always supposing that it is conducted by men of business, as well as men of medical ability—enormous.

From the "SUNDAY TIMES" of October 19th, 1856.

DEATH IN THE DRUGS.—It would seem that we must eschew not merely eating and drinking, but physic also, if we would escape the perils of poison. Diseased meats and adulterated condiments, simulated wines, and vitriolised liquors, dyed teas, and doctored coffee—whatever we take in the shape of food or refreshment—if not inherently bad and deleterious, is, in all probability, rendered so by artificial means; and then, to cap the climax of our misery, the very drugs we are driven to the use of, by the taking of these injurious things into our stomachs, are, in a great majority of cases, it seems, no more to be depended upon than the things which demand them as correctives. We are, indeed, in a plight most miserable: for no caution or vigilance we can individually exercise will suffice to protect us against the most deadly assaults on our stomachs. Sometimes the worst things assume the most seductive appearance, and, in almost all cases, the spurious and the genuine are so much alike as to deceive even the best instructed and most familiar with the commodity. We are at last promised some protection in the case of drugs, so that when obliged to resort to the physic bottle to obtain relief from some one of the many natural or induced ills which flesh is heir to, we may take the nauseous potion, with, at least, the satisfaction of knowing that it is what it purports to be, and not something else, which, if it do not increase the malady, will certainly fail to remove it. "The General Apothecaries' Company," which has just opened its hall and laboratories in Berners-street, if it but conscientiously carry out the promises it now makes, will rank amongst the philanthropic institutions of the day. "The preparation of medicines," they say, "has been entrusted to a class of persons, who, whatever may be their merits in other respects, make no pretension to understand the treatment of diseases, and who, according to unquestionable testimony, either wilfully or negligently sell, or employ in the preparation of prescriptions, spurious or adulterated drugs. They plead, indeed, that they are themselves imposed upon by others. But this is beside the question. If, as many physicians have testified, when a prescription is written, it is a

matter of extreme uncertainty what the medicine as prepared will contain, if the preparations and drugs sold to the profession contain only one-half, or one-third of their active constituents at one shop, are replaced by some wholly worthy substitute at another, are even sold genuine at a third—it is evident that much of the uncertainty, failure, and defects of practice, must be attributed to this radical evil. The inquiry instituted by a committee of the House has proved the very general prevalence of this state of things," and it is to correct it, by supplying both profession and public with unadulterated and unsophisticated drugs, chemicals, and medicinal preparations, to meet a loudly-expressed public demand; to remove the scandal of fraudulent trading attached by the parliamentary committee to dealers in medicines; and to sell in every case the article asked and paid for, that the company has been instituted, and professes to carry on its operations. On Wednesday, we had an opportunity of going over the works of the company, and hearing a statement of its objects and method of proceeding, from Dr. Ridge, the chairman of the board of directors. This gentleman and Dr. John Gardner, the managing director, conducted the visitors through the laboratory and explained the various processes, many of which are most ingenious, science being so applied as most economically and effectually to produce the desired results. The steam-engine and hydraulic pressure grind, and pound, and express the juices of many articles hitherto obtained only by means of heat, in which process much of their virtue is lost. Most of the preparations are made on the premises, but some are necessarily procured from manufacturers; these, however, are all tested by a practical chemist, Herr Von Sicherer, a pupil of Liebig's, who performed some experiments, one of which it may be interesting to notice. It was with respect to the colour test of strychnine. It will be in the recollection of our readers, that, in Cook's case, the usual test failed to evince the presence of strychnine, and this was the strong point of Palmer's defence. Herr Von Sicherer showed that the presence of tartaric acid, in any form, neutralises the action of bi chromate of potash, by which the violet colour would, in the absence of the tartar, be produced. An inkling of this is given in Dumas's "Monte Christo," and it is not improbable that Palmer was from thence induced to saturate his victim with tartarised antimony, with a view of rendering the proof of the presence of strychnine more difficult, if not impossible. After the inspection of the laboratory, the visitors dined, and, after the usual loyal toasts had been drunk, the chairman (Dr. Ridge) gave a very interesting account of the origin and objects of the company, and remarked that if they had given £10,000 for the advocacy of a company of this kind, the object could not have been so well accomplished as it had been without any payment whatever, by the exposition of the extensive adulterations of drugs and medicinal preparations by the press. The *Lancet*, he believed, was the first to call attention to the universal adulteration of drugs, but the press generally had taken the subject up, and the movement had resulted in a mass of information, proving the prevalence of a system of gross imposition and fraud, fraught with much evil to the public. A committee of the House of Commons, too, had issued a report on the subject; but he was told that the adulteration of drugs in London was as nothing to the adulteration which took place in the provinces; where 50 per cent. was applied in London, 75 or 90 per cent. was not uncommon in the country. At Wolverhampton a house advertised to supply any powdered drug at 20s. a cwt., while they all knew that some drugs could not be supplied at 20s. a pound. (Laughter.) He was not prepared to say that the druggists generally, either in London or the country, knowingly dispensed adulterated drugs. He did not believe they did; but, from ignorance, they sold drugs which did not contain what they were represented to contain, and the public suffered in consequence. Medical Men, not having leisure to examine what they purchased, were themselves deceived; they were obliged to judge of

things by their operation rather than by their composition, and thus the art of healing was made a matter of chance, rather than, as it should be, a matter of mathematical certainty. The profession was much indebted to the Apothecaries' Company; but their prices were high, and they scarcely supplied 2 per cent of the practitioners. This company proposed to prepare and sell medicines without adulteration or substitution, to follow the orders of the colleges in all preparations, to keep the profession *au fait* in all discoveries, both at home and abroad, respecting the cure of diseases, and to put new life and vigour, into the science of medicine.—Dr. Gardner, and several other medical men, also addressed the company; and the proceedings, which were of a highly interesting character, then terminated.

From "LLOYD'S WEEKLY NEWSPAPER," October 26th, 1856,

PURE ANTIDOTES.—We eat alum, &c., in our bread, and sand in our sugar, and poison in our beer—and then, we become ill. Well, still adulteration pursues us. The adulteration may be seen even through the coloured bottles of a chemist's shop. We have already pointed to the very effective manner in which our neighbours deal with this matter—posting up the adulterator's conviction upon his shop-door; and we now point with considerable satisfaction to the establishment of a company pledged to supply the public with pure drugs. From their laboratory in Berners-street, Oxford-street, the public is to be offered at least a fair chance of escape from the effects of grocers' and bakers' adulterations. This is but common justice. If the government cannot be brought to deal with adulteration in a proper and determined spirit—at least, let poisoned Englishmen be supplied with pure antidotes. If we must continue to incorporate Prussian blue, verdigris, strychnine, and other equally agreeable substances—it is surely not unreasonable that when, as Mr. Wright says in his wondrously plaintive tone, "We are so *very* poorly," we should get pure the drugs that *are* to strengthen us. That which the government will not do may be partially effected by the new drug company, the appearance of which we welcome with unmixed satisfaction. If we must be poisoned, it is well, at any rate to have pure antidotes.

The following Preparations, as sold by the Company, are particularly recommended:—

Concentrated Decoction of Sarsaparilla.

Concentrated Gregory's Powder.

Fluid Magnesia (very superior.)

Pure Magnesia.

Sweet Essence of Senna.

Arrowroots, Isinglass, and all kinds of Invalids' Food, Spices, and all Chemicals for Medicinal or Domestic use.

49, BERNERS-STREET, LONDON.



