

proportions of pluck and pass in each class of candidates sent up by the several schools respectively. The public would thus have the best attainable means for forming its own conclusions as to the relative efficiency of each school; and as those conclusions would certainly in the main determine the prosperity of the school, so the interest of the teachers would be very directly identified with the merits of their system of teaching. And thus, in our opinion, Medical Education would be far more likely to improve than under a continuance of the present illusory regulations.

IX.—In concluding our Report it is perhaps desirable for us expressly to point out that the conditions of qualification to which it refers are exclusively those of minimum qualification for the Profession, and that we therefore do not pretend to have exhausted the subject of medical education. We, on the contrary, think it incalculably important that persons entering the Profession should to the utmost be moved by adequate inducements to continue their education far beyond the comparatively low point at which a standard of minimum qualification must be fixed; and in this point of view the conditions under which the various Corporations confer their higher titular distinctions, seems to us only of less public interest than the conditions of minimum qualification. It would, however, be beyond the limits of our commission to enter upon this subject, or to discuss educational provisions (such as of course every first-class school ought to contain) for licentiates who wish thus to extend their studies. And we only advert here to those branches of the general subject, lest it should in any degree be supposed that we have been unmindful of their great importance.

J. S.

June 26th, 1868.

THE PRACTICE OF PHARMACY IN GREAT BRITAIN.

THE PRACTICE OF PHARMACY IN GREAT BRITAIN.

ACCIDENTAL AND CRIMINAL POISONING.

From the Sixth Report to the Privy Council, 1863.

[The following extract from the Sixth Report is inserted here for convenience of reference, the evils described having led up to the Pharmacy Act of 1868.—Ed.]

To what extent the administration of poison causes death or disease in England is not even approximately known. From the Registrar General's last Annual Report it appears that during the four years 1858-61, 1,059 deaths by accidental poisoning, and 509 deaths by voluntary self-poisoning, were returned to him as certified. And during the same four years there were also certified 1,380 murders, of which no doubt a considerable, though not ascertained, proportion was due to poison. But evidently it would be erroneous to infer from these figures that poison does not in England prove fatal to more than from four to five hundred persons per annum. The list of deaths by poison is at best only the list of the fatal poisonings which are discovered. But here is a cause of death which is peculiarly apt to be undiscovered. For the murderous poisoner of course plans not to be found out. And the accidental poisoner—the careless dispenser, for instance, who supplies a poison instead of an innocent medicine, is at first unaware of his mistake, and may perhaps never be made aware of it. Further, as regards the victim himself,—poisons which make no decided impression on the mouth or palate may be swallowed quite unconsciously of harm, and their effects may then be confounded with symptoms of ordinary disease. And thus, in various ways, whether the administration of poison have been accidental or felonious, the essential circumstances of the case may easily be such that suspicion is not aroused as to the real cause of the illness.

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Both with reference to the number of cases in which poison is recognised to be the cause of death, and with reference to the doubt whether perhaps many other deaths are, without discovery, caused by poison, my Lords have deemed it important to consider what security the public enjoys against an indefinite multiplication of such cases. And in order to the consideration of this question, I under their Lordships' orders requested Dr. Alfred Taylor to report, from his large experience, what, in his judgment, is the present degree of the insecurity;—viz., (1) to what extent is injury occasioned by the carelessness and incompetence of persons employed in retailing drugs;—and (2) to what extent are unnecessary facilities given for the purchase of poison for criminal purposes.

Dr. Taylor's report points in both respects to a most unsatisfactory state of things.

First, as regards the facility with which poison may be obtained for criminal purposes,—Dr. Taylor sums up the case by stating that "so long as a person of any age has the command of threepence, he can procure for this sum a sufficient quantity of one of the most deadly poisons to destroy the lives of two adults... No one wishing to destroy another by poison, and having the knowledge to make a selection among drugs, can meet with any difficulty in carrying out his design. If refused at one shop, he can procure the poison at another. If refused by a druggist, he can procure it at a grocer's. If refused at a grocer's, he can procure it at a village general shop, where poisons are retailed by girls and boys, and no questions are asked.... In the course of more than 30 years' experience in investigating charges of poisoning, I have met with a large number of cases in which murder and suicide have been perpetrated or attempted, as a result of the dangerous facilities which exist for the purchase of poisons."

One particular poison has indeed been the subject of legislation. Under 14th and 15th Vict., cap. 13, arsenic (in quantity under 10 pounds) ought not to be sold otherwise than coloured with soot or indigo,—nor except with full registration of the buyer's name and residence, and of the time, quantity, and professed purpose of his buying,—nor, even thus,

to any person unknown to the seller, unless it be in presence of a witness known to both buyer and seller. But, says Dr. Taylor, "in several cases of criminal poisoning (two occurring in 1863) which I have been required to investigate, involving charges of murder, uncoloured or white arsenic has been used as the instrument of death. Its great cheapness (one penny to twopence an ounce) places it within the reach of the poorest person. It is sold to any applicant on the most frivolous pretences; and even in the coloured state it affords but little protection, except when it is mixed with liquids. The better class of druggists do not sell arsenic by retail; the grocer, chandler, oilman, and village shopkeeper are the principal vendors of this poison; and it is clear from the numerous deaths which take place from white arsenic that they set the law at defiance, and sell the poison in an uncoloured state, in which case it may be readily administered in any article of food, without exciting suspicion."

With the sale of other poisons there is not even nominal statutory interference. And whether they are wanted for murder, or for suicide, or for the procuring of abortion, the facilities are such as Dr. Taylor describes;—for though doubtless druggists of the best class are extremely chary of selling poisons, yet, says Dr. Taylor, "the lower class of drug-dealers, including grocers, oilmen, and the general shopkeepers of villages, have no such scruples; and although, if we except strychnia, many of the more potent poisons are not found in their shops, they have still a sufficient number of noxious drugs to endanger health and life, by reason of the facility with which they dispose of them to the public."

Secondly, as regards the ordinary business of retail druggists in dispensing and vending medicines,—Dr. Taylor testifies to the frequent employment of entirely unskilled and heedless persons in this business, and to the mischief which results from the incompetence or slovenliness of such persons;—how "a large number of persons wholly unacquainted with the properties of powerful drugs and medicines are allowed to retail them to the public, on demand, without any check or control;—how "persons who have had no professional education as druggists, and acting as oilmen, grocers, or

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"village shopkeepers, keep for sale laudanum, tincture of rhubarb, senna, black draughts, &c., and either from carelessness in placing the bottles containing these medicines near to each other, or from ignorance, supply laudanum for the tinctures above mentioned, and thus either injure health or destroy life;"—how, for instance, opium and its tincture have often been given in mistake for rhubarb and its tincture,—how oxalic acid and other poisons have again and again been given for Epsom salts,—how chloride of zinc has on several occasions been given for fluid magnesia,—how arsenic has been given instead of calomel and instead of magnesia,—and so forth. In part-explanation of these lamentable accidents, Dr. Taylor points out that the natural results of incompetence and gross ignorance on the part of those who are allowed to retail drugs to the public "are increased a hundred-fold by reason of the carelessness displayed in keeping innocent medicines and poisonous compounds resembling each other on shelves or drawers in close proximity." Thus, in the shops of ordinary druggists, tincture of opium and tincture of senna and tincture of rhubarb, like one another in colour, may be standing side by side on a shelf, in bottles of like size and shape, and with labels which, if only half-read, seem identical. Or strychnine may be side by side with jalapine, morphia, salicine, quinine;—and "cases have come to my knowledge," says Dr. Taylor, "where strychnine has thus been dispensed by mistake, and has caused death." But the greatest dimensions of this particular danger,—dimensions, in fact, which are almost incredible,—are reached in the general shops of country villages, where draperies and groceries and drugs and poisons are all sold, and where perhaps even foods and poisons are not kept well asunder. From shops of this description (in cases which Dr. Taylor quotes from among various instances known to him), arrowroot, rice, oatmeal, or something else in common demand, has reached its purchaser with a fatal admixture of arsenic. And in one such case (where arsenic had been given instead of arrowroot, and had of course killed the consumer) a witness who "went to the shop after the accident to make inquiries, found rice, corrosive sublimate, jalap, and oxalic acid in different papers

"in the same drawer, and all under the care of an ignorant boy."

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And, beyond the limits of the petty village-shopkeeping, the careless custody of poisons leads sometimes to their being sold for other matters, and used, even on a larger scale, accordingly;—orpiment (arsenical yellow) sold instead of the milder poison of chrome yellow, or instead of turmeric, or instead of mustard, and used as turmeric to colour buns,—or 12 lbs. of white arsenic sold instead of 12 lbs. of plaster of Paris, and used in this supposed capacity to adulterate lozenges,—or 30 lbs. of sugar of lead sent (perhaps instead of alum) to a miller's, and used for admixture with 80 sacks of flour. Dr. Taylor gives cases where occurrences such as these have led to wholesale poisoning;—the Bradford case, for instance, where arsenical lozenges killed 17 persons and severely injured 183 others,—and the Stourbridge case, where, some years since, under the circumstances I have just described, no fewer than 500 persons were more or less affected (none fatally, but some with great severity) by the poisoning of their bread with lead. And in illustration, not necessarily of the mistaken sale, but assuredly of the most wanton and reckless use of a poison, he describes how, seven years ago, the 340 children of the Norwood school took with their morning milk-and-water about one grain of arsenic each, and suffered of course sharp symptoms of arsenical poisoning, in consequence of a workman's having left in the boiler which he was employed to clean as much arsenite of soda as contained about nine pounds of arsenic. "Fortunately [and this accident saved 340 lives] only four gallons of the poisoned water were drawn from the boiler on the following morning. Each child had taken a quantity just within the fatal dose of arsenic."

I venture to submit that the above-described state of things deserves the particular consideration of Parliament. For the unrestrictedness with which at present the retail trade in drugs and poisons is conducted, confers, in a curious way and to an extent which could scarcely have been foreseen, irresponsibility even for mischievous acts. Apparently the view which the legislature has taken of the matter has been,

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that the trade might safely be left unshackled by special regulations, and open without special licence to all who choose to undertake its practice;—for that the common law would suffice to protect the public by punishing any druggist who by his own incompetence or carelessness, or by the employment of an incompetent or careless agent, should have caused any personal harm. But the view taken by the administrators of the law has not corresponded with that supposed view of the legislature, and the absence of special enactment on the subject seems in most instances to be accepted as a ground for concluding that a druggist's carelessness and malpractice, however extreme in degree, and however fatal in result, are not in the eye of the law criminal carelessness and malpractice. Thus, in nearly all the scandalous cases which Dr. Taylor describes, the tradesman whose ill-conducted business led to loss or endangerment of life escaped with absolute impunity. "In nearly all cases which are the subject of inquests or trials for manslaughter, it will be observed that proof of *negligence* is not sufficient; the proof must amount to *gross or culpable negligence* in law, or the wrongdoer will escape. What gross or culpable negligence is has not yet been defined, but we learn from the verdicts of juries that the keeping of poisons and medicines similar in appearance on the same shelf close to each other is not gross negligence! So the selling of oxalic acid or nitre for Epsom salts, and the keeping of these substances in contiguous drawers or packets, unlabelled until the time of sale, and then labelling the poison as an innocent medicine, does not constitute culpable negligence! The employment of youths of no experience in drugs, who cannot distinguish arsenic from calomel, magnesia, or plaster of Paris, or powdered opium from powdered rhubarb, or laudanum from tincture of rhubarb,—furnish, by the destruction of life, merely illustrations of unavoidable accident or misadventure, and not of gross negligence on the part of an employer!" Even in the Bradford case, where, in 1858–9, 200 persons were poisoned, and seventeen of them fatally, through the sale of arsenic for plaster of Paris, it was ruled that no legal carelessness had been committed,—no legal carelessness, though arsenic and plaster of Paris were

kept in similar casks side by side, in a loft, with no evident label upon either of them,—no legal carelessness, though a boy who had but three weeks' experience in the shop was sent to choose between these imperfectly distinguished casks,—no legal carelessness, though the stuff which he brought down was given without the master's examination to the man who was waiting to make it into lozenges. Evidently this state of things implies more than the legislature can mean to sanction:—it implies not merely that the right-doing druggist shall be free from interference, but that the wrong-doing druggist shall be almost secure from punishment.

Dr. Taylor concludes his report with suggestions which deserve to have much weight, as to the reforms which are desirable in the conduct of pharmaceutical business. His fundamental opinion, that poisons, and medicines likely to act as poisons, ought not to be sold in retail except by properly educated persons, and under some other reasonable restrictions as regards both seller and purchaser, is an opinion which I submit for consideration, as one in which I entirely concur. And it seems to me that this object might be attained without giving the drug-trade any reasonable ground of complaint, and without inconveniencing the public as regards the purchasability of non-poisonous drugs. Facilities might be given to druggists to divide themselves into an upper and a lower class. At first such a division might be made by an enactment constituting into an upper class all who had previously passed an examination as pharmaceutical chemists or as apothecaries; perhaps with the further addition of all who at the time of the making of the enactment should be in bona fide practice as druggists on their own account, provided their trade as druggists were conducted separately from all other trade;—and subsequently to the first constitution of this upper class, admission into it might be obtained on examination before some appointed authority or authorities. To persons of this class (but with express exclusion of general shopkeepers) the office of selling poisons might be restricted. And the purchasability of poisons by the public might at the same time be made effectually subject to the rule which now ineffectually relates to the purchase of arsenic;—that no such

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sale shall be made except with full registration of the buyer's name and residence, and of the time, quantity, and proposed purpose of his buying,—nor, even thus, to any person unknown to the seller unless in presence of a witness acquainted with both seller and buyer. But whether or not provisions like these may seem to the legislature fit and proper for enactment, I must submit that, with or without such enactments, one particular act of legislation is urgently wanted in the matter;—an act, namely, which, either by its own language, or by empowering some department of the Government to make regulations in the matter, shall directly or indirectly provide for the establishment of a legal criterion as to what is *culpable carelessness* in the sale of drugs and poisons, and shall thus render every such carelessness an offence punishable at law.

Before closing this section of my report, I beg leave to bring under particular notice, as connected with the present subject—first, the statements which, in relation to manufacturing towns,* I submitted two years ago concerning the destructive practice of drugging infants with opium, and, secondly, the statements which are contained in Dr. Hunter's report concerning the use of opium in our principal marsh districts. “There can (says Dr. Hunter) be no doubt of the truth of the horrid statement made by almost every surgeon in the marsh land, that there was not a labourer's house in which the bottle of opiate was not to be seen, and not a child but who got it in some form. In other counties, where women work away from home, as in the factory towns, the children are drugged by the nurses, and one need not be surprised to find the same plan adopted here; but other circumstances combine to render it a common practice to push this drugging system to an extent known only in the districts in question. The painful rheumatisms and neuralgia which still continue to be common in the fens [i.e. among elder persons, but probably without any suspicion that the infants suffer from them] have been generally treated by the free use of opium, and with this drug the whole people have become thoroughly familiar. The wholesale druggists report that they send immense quantities to these counties, and the retail druggists

* Fourth Report to the Privy Council, Vol. II. pp. 55–59.

“often dispense so much as 200 lbs. a year.* It is sold in pills or penny sticks, and a well-accustomed shop will serve 300 or 400 customers with the article on a Saturday night. The druggists thought their largest consumers were not the villagers, or people of the little town in which the shop was, but rather the inhabitants of small hamlets or isolated farms in the fens. Opium is often asked for under some cant name, and the idea of it is as of a forbidden jollity. The quantity which an old opium eater will take has often been reported (about half an ounce a day is common) and finds its limit rather in the cost than in the strength of the drug. A man in South Lincolnshire complained that his wife had spent 100*l.* in opium since he married. A man may be seen occasionally asleep in a field leaning on his hoe. He starts when approached, and works vigorously for a while. A man who is setting about a hard job takes his pill as a preliminary, and many never take their beer without dropping a piece of opium into it. To meet the popular taste, but to the extreme inconvenience of strangers, narcotic agents are put into the beer by the brewers or sellers. Half a century ago the growth of poppies for the London drug market was conducted in this light land. Then the husbandman took poppy drink with him to the field; and now, although the cultivation of the article for sale is almost abandoned, the poppy capsule forms the principal ingredient

* Dr. Thudichum gives me the following curious information as to the quantity of opium annually sold at one country town in Lincolnshire:—“Seven druggists in the town of Spalding sell 27 stones $3\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. of opium, partly in the form of laudanum. There are 21,000 souls in the town and district of Spalding (last Census) supplied by these druggists. This gives a consumption of opium of 127 grains per head per annum. A small portion of the opium is used for sheep during lambing season. Allowing the 27 grains of every 127 to cover that purpose, which is probably an excessive estimate, there remains the startling circumstance that the consumption of opium in the Spalding district amounts to about 100 grains per individual of the population per annum. The opium is used for eating by adults, and for drugging infants. Infant mortality in that district is 21,845, while in all England it was 17,731 out of 100,000 living. The population of Spalding was decreased during the last 10 years. The above quantity of opium does not include the opium used by medical practitioners. The data regarding the quantities of opium sold at Spalding have been collected by Dr. E. Morris of Spalding, and communicated to me.”—J.S.

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" of the herb teas and domestic medicines of the neighbour-
" hood. With such familiarity with the drug, no wonder that
" every one is ready to use it to quiet a crying child, though
" only to ensure its crying again as soon as awake. Opium
" eaters are said to be always proselytizers, and will even
" give a child opium behind the back of the mother or nurse.
" The favourite form for infants is called Godfrey's Cordial, a
" mixture of opium, treacle, and infusion of sassafras. This
" is thickish, and is often fetched in a teacup. When
" the mother going to field work deposits her child with a
" nurse, she thinks it best to leave her own bottle of Godfrey,
" because the preparations of the different shops vary, and
" there is not a little village shop in the country that sells
" anything that does not sell its own Godfrey. To push the
" sale of opiates in these little shops is the great aim of some
" enterprising wholesale merchants. By druggists it is con-
" sidered 'the leading article,' and the profit on it is small
" when sold in a crude state. It has not unfrequently hap-
" pened that a nurse has substituted her own Godfrey for her
" client's, and, frightened at its effects, has summoned the
" surgeon, who finds half a dozen babies, some snoring, some
" squinting, all pallid and eye-sunken, lying about the room,
" all poisoned."

THE PHARMACY ACT, 1868.

From the Eleventh Report to the Privy Council, 1868.

Pharmacy
Act, 1868.

An important addition to the sanitary law of the country was made last year by the passing of the Pharmacy Act, 1868. This statute is chiefly directed against evils to which I particularly drew attention in my sixth report, as attaching to the practice of pharmacy by unqualified persons, and to the too unrestricted procurability of poison for criminal purposes. The new law is to be worked by the Pharmaceutical Society, under the general sanction and supervision of my Lords of the Privy Council. It provides that in future no one shall

begin any such pharmaceutical practice as involves a sale of Pharmacy
poisons, unless he have first passed a sufficient examination Act, 1868.
in pharmaceutical knowledge; and that poisons shall not be
purchaseable except with such personal identification as would
probably hamper anyone who intended to make criminal use
of them; and that the keeping and sale of poisons generally
shall be subject to regulation under the Act. It also affirms
an important principle in regard of the adulteration of drugs,
by enacting that the provisions of the Adulteration of Food
Act of 1860 shall be extended, mutatis mutandis, to the sale
of drugs.

THE PRACTICE OF PHARMACY IN GREAT BRITAIN.

From the Twelfth Report to the Privy Council, 1869.

Under the Pharmacy Act, 1868, which makes the Phar- Practice of
maceutical Society a licensing and regulating body for the Pharmacy.
business of chemists and druggists in England and Scotland,
certain responsibilities of sanction and supervision are assigned
to the Lords of the Council: the bye-laws of the Society,
and its appointment of examiners, and its resolutions and
regulations concerning poisons, having, before they can become
valid, to receive the approval of the Privy Council: while
also, in order that the public may be certified of the sufficiency
of the Society's examinations for license under the Act, my
Lords are authorised to have present at any examination
of candidates any person whom they may appoint for the
purpose.

1. In 1869, under the provisions above referred to, the Byelaws of
Pharmaceutical Society submitted for their Lordships' approval Pharmaceu-
a system of consolidated and amended bye-laws, partly tical Society.
repeating former bye-laws which the Secretary of State under
the Act of 1852 had approved, partly proposing various
alterations and additions which the changed relations of the
Society rendered expedient; and these bye-laws (some of the
sections of which fix the conditions of qualification and the

Byelaws of
Pharmaceu-
tical Society.

machinery of examination for admission to pharmaceutical practice in the United Kingdom) received their Lordships' approval. The annual list of examiners for the purposes of the Act was also submitted by the Society and approved by my Lords.

Poisons under
the Pharmacy
Act.

2. Under section second of the Act, my Lords confirmed a resolution of the Society making some important additions to the list of things enumerated in Schedule A of the Act, to be accounted "poisons" under the Act. I subjoin the schedule of "poisons" as it now stands, extended by the above confirmed resolutions. Appendix.

Examinations
of candidates
for Pharma-
ceutical prac-
tice.

3. Under section six of the Act, the examinations of the Society were visited, for their Lordships' information, in London on eight occasions by Dr. Greenhow, and in Scotland on three occasions by Professor Christison; and the subjoined reports on the examinations (Appendix) were furnished at the end of the year by the visitors. It had long been a desideratum in Great Britain as regards the practice of Pharmacy, that this skilled commerce, where unskilfulness means very serious danger to the public health, should only be open to persons whose qualifications for safely practising it had been tested by proper examination; and the appended reports appear to me to give ground for much public satisfaction, as showing that the system which the Pharmacy Act of 1868 brought into operation provides adequate security to that very important effect.

Adulteration of
drugs.

4. One most important section of the Act has, I fear, hitherto not borne fruit. The Act, in its 24th section, enacts that the provisions of the Adulteration of Food Act shall extend to the adulteration of drugs, and that every such adulteration shall be deemed an admixture dangerous to health. So far as my knowledge goes, this section has not yet been acted on. Indeed, seeing that the Adulteration of Food Act is virtually a dead letter, no one could have expected that this extension of it would be very effective. There is, however, cause for congratulation in the fact that a principle of great public importance has in that section been affirmed by the Legislature. The falsification of drugs is a crime which, in the interests of the public health, ought to be very severely

punishable, and very vigilantly looked after; for, as I need hardly observe, it so frustrates the best medical skill, and may so cheat away life after life, that it is really a kind of secret poisoning. I do not propose now to dwell on the subject; for, in the present state of the law, with so many first necessities for the health of the country unfulfilled, and with such great masses of fundamental sanitary law to be amended or created, it may scarcely be expected that this particular grievance can be matter for immediate legislation. So far, however, as the inoperativeness of the adulteration laws results from defects of administrative machinery, I would beg leave to refer to the remarks which in my last report I submitted on the kind of local authority which in my opinion is greatly needed to protect the public health against this and other varieties of commercial wrong.

5. I also regret to state that the very important power which the first section of the Act vests in the Pharmaceutical Society, to prescribe (with the consent of the Privy Council) regulations as to the keeping, dispensing, and selling, of poisons, has hitherto remained unexercised by the Society; and that consequently the public is still without the protection which such regulations might give, and which notoriously is much needed, against the danger of having poisons dispensed or used in mistake for harmless preparations.

Regulations
concerning
poisons.

From the Thirteenth Report to the Privy Council, 1870.

Under the provisions of the *Pharmacy Act*, 1868, described in my last year's report, I conveyed to the Pharmaceutical Society, in 1870, your Lordships' approval of the Society's annual list of examiners for the purposes of the Act, and have now to submit to your Lordships the satisfactory report made by Dr. Greenhow on the London examinations of the Society in 1870, as visited by him for your Lordships' information. (Appendix.)

The practice
of Pharmacy in
Great Britain.

I regret to report to your Lordships that the power which, for the public protection, the first section of the Act vests in

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the Pharmaceutical Society, to prescribe (with consent of the Privy Council) regulations as to the keeping, dispensing, and selling of poisons, is still entirely unexercised. I believe it to have been by an accidental oversight in legislation, that, while all other powers to be exercised for public purposes by the Society under the Act were vested in the Council of the Society, the language of the first section vested in the Com-monalty, and not in the Council, the very important power which that section confers, and to which my present observa-tions relate. It is perhaps not surprising that a large body of tradesmen should be slow to take the initiative in imposing even the most reasonable penal restrictions on themselves: but I have to submit to your Lordships, as a fact which you may deem deserving the consideration of Parliament, that this non-fulfilment of the Society's duty, to make rules against dangerous slovenliness in the keeping, dispensing, and selling of poisons, is a breach of the implied contract under which the Legislature in 1868 gave powers and privileges to the Society.

in Scotland with a Report to the Council 1894

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