

EDITORIAL

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PHARMACEUTICAL RESEARCH AND THE LISTER CENTENARY.

THE approach of the centenary of the birth of Joseph Lister prompts this comment. It is seldom, if ever, true that one individual alone is responsible for any great discovery—Lister recognized in Semmelweis (1818–1865) a true forerunner in rational antiseptic treatment, and gave due credit to Pasteur's discoveries that enabled him to accomplish his great work. As the writer said in an editorial about ten years ago (*JOUR. A. PH. A.*, April 1917)—“there is always an interdependence, and at the appointed time the individual comes forward who is competent to utilize the investigations of others and by the aid of his native or cultivated ability, energy and wisdom brings about the results that make him a hero.” The foregoing reflection recalls the name of Scheele, Labarraque, Runge, Calvert, Spalding and others. Pasteur's connection with pharmacy is limited to apprentice service and as member of the Strasburg Pharmacy Faculty. (See p. 572, *JOUR. A. PH. A.*, June 1924.)

Sir William Osler said of him: “At the middle of the last century we did not know much more of the actual causes of the great scourges of the race, the plagues, the fevers and the pestilences, than did the Greeks. Here comes in Pasteur's great work. Before him Egyptian darkness; with his advent a light that brightens more and more as the years give us ever fuller knowledge.” It was a study of the processes of fermentation that led Pasteur to the sure ground on which we now stand. In the annotated list of persons included in “Pasteur—The History of a Mind,” by Duclaux, among others the following names, well known to pharmacists, are mentioned: Bechamp, Berthelot, Boullay, Helmont, Leeuwenhoek, Liebig, Ludwig, Wöhler, Van't Hoff.

In the Foreword of the “Commemoration Volume,” which memorializes those who made the Panama Canal an achievement of modern science, it is written “medicine consists of those facts, gathered from the various sciences, which can be utilized in the prevention or cure of disease.” And the last paragraph opens with the words that “The present volume is an incomplete and imperfect statement of what medicine has done, is doing and an indication of what it may do for common good.” Pharmacy has a part in the wonderful achievements of medicine and a rightful claim to a reasonable and intelligent appreciation “of what it has done, is doing and may do.”

Pharmacy has continuing and greater duties to perform in the promotion of the interests of the people; its votaries have reasonable satisfaction in having met their responsibilities and opportunities with a fair degree of success, and realize that study and research increase both responsibilities and opportunities—pharmacists are co-workers in medical science, and none of the associated professions can hope to achieve greatest success unaided.

The centenary of Lister's birth reminds us not only of the changes he brought about in surgical practice, but of the many who, throughout the past centuries, contributed to his epoch-making discoveries. We also are reminded of the opposition Lister had to overcome in bringing the benefits of these discoveries to humanity. His life, therefore, is not only of interest because of his great achievements, but a source of hope and encouragement for progress in scientific research.

E. G. E.

CODES OF ETHICS.

DR. ARTHUR DEAN BEVAN, former President of the American Medical Association, read a paper before the annual Congress on Medical Education, Medical Licensure and Hospitals, at Chicago, February 14, 1927, on the "Need of Teaching Medical Ethics." He emphasizes the general statement, that "Possibly the most essential asset in life is character; the acceptance of the moral code to guide our actions." This is as applicable to pharmacists as to physicians, and with this thought the AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION, at its inception, adopted a code of ethics which was revised several years ago in order to make it adaptable to modern conditions. Dr. Bevan points out that the principles of medical ethics are most important but that a code must be modified to conform with changing conditions. He says it should be made perfectly clear that a physician has no ownership in a patient by virtue of the fact that the patient has consulted him, and this part of the guide should be expressed in such a way that the public can understand it and approve it.

The prohibition amendment is discussed at length and considered as a serious problem. Conditions which have arisen should be corrected by constructive criticism, by educational methods and by the acceptance and practice of a code of ethics as clear and simple as the Golden Rule, which will control the lives and actions of the members of the medical profession in their relations with all men. What Dr. Bevan has said in that connection applies with equal force to the members of the pharmaceutical profession. The paper is concluded with the following statement:

"Much can be done to elevate the standards of medical ethics and medical practice, as much has been done to elevate the standards of medical education. This task will require courage and the imagination, good organization, hard work and the united effort of the organized profession of the country. It is a task which must be done. It is a task which is well worth while. It is the purpose of the medical profession of this country to give to the people of this country the full benefit of the great possibilities of scientific medicine."

The substance of the foregoing statement may be applied to pharmacy. The public should be informed relative to the service pharmacy can render and is rendering, and impressed with the possibility of great harm which may result through incompetency and motives which are purely selfish.—E. G. E.

EGGS AND MILK AS ANTIDOTES AGAINST MERCURIC CHLORIDE.

IN A RECENT *Bulletin* of the Department of Pharmacology of Western Reserve University School of Medicine, Dr. Torald Sollmann, O. W. Barlow and M. S. Biskind report on the value of eggs and milk as antidotes against mercuric chloride poisoning. Reference is made to their employment during many years in the treatment of poisoning by mercuric chloride. By the use of this antidote precipitates are formed with the mercuric salt which delay the absorption of the mercury. At the same time they act as demulcents, tending to protect the mucous membrane against contact with the poison. This antidote must be followed by further treatment, for if the mercury remains in the body death occurs with the same dose of mercury whether milk and egg are administered or not. Favorable references are made to the Fantus and phosphite antidotes; the latter consists of sodium phosphite and sodium acetate; the Fantus Antidote of "Sodium hypophosphite, 5 Gm.; water, 10 cc.; solution of hydrogen dioxide, 25 cc.; water, 50 cc.—this amount neutralizes one **poison tablet of corrosive mercuric chloride.**" If the amount of the poison taken be known, ten times as much of the hypophosphite should be given as of the poison taken; this should be followed by copious lavage in a very dilute solution of the antidote. This may be followed by a safe dose of the antidote which is to be retained and repeated every eight hours, for several days.

The report is comprehensive as far as the use of eggs and milk is concerned. The concluding comment made is as follows: "In poisoning by mercuric chloride, prompt administration of eggs or milk would be useful to delay absorption and local action, provided they are followed by emesis or lavage, or preferably both if the stomach is full. We have been quite impressed with the difficulty, and sometimes the impossibility, of effectively washing the stomach if it contains undigested food. Not only was it impossible to withdraw the food, but by being sucked against the opening of the tube it prevented also the withdrawal of fluid.

"Raw eggs and milk precipitate the mercuric chloride about equally effectively. Milk would have the advantage that it would spread more rapidly over the stomach and would therefore act more promptly. It may be best to administer first a glass or two of milk, then several raw eggs, to increase the protein without too much bulk. Egg white does not have any advantage over the whole eggs.

"If the tablets have been swallowed dry, and if milk is not available, it would be advisable to administer half a glass of water just before the eggs are given to prevent the cementing of the tablet by the egg white."

Numerous recent suicides have prompted discussions on antidotal methods in the treatment of poisonings.—E. G. E.

Comment on bill to reorganize Prohibition Service will be found immediately following end of Department of National Association of Boards of Pharmacy.