

should incorporate in the forthcoming Pharmacopœia suitable directions for the shaping and distinguishing of highly poisonous tablets. The same subject was also discussed editorially in this Journal, August, 1913, page 929.

The A. Ph. A., at the Nashville meeting adopted a resolution making the same recommendation to the Committees of Revision of both the United States Pharmacopœia and the National Formulary (see Sept. Journal, page 1041), and resolutions bearing upon the same topic and to the same effect were adopted by the National Drug Trade Conference at its recent meeting in Washington, reported elsewhere in this issue.

If the U. S. P. Committee of Revision will awaken to the importance of the subject, and adopt suitable regulations for the distinguishing of mercury bichloride and other dangerous tablets, it will relieve the situation in two ways:

1. The recognition of the fact that these regulations will shortly become a part of the law as the standard of the Federal and of the various State Food and Drugs Acts, will check the fury of legislators to secure special enactments upon the subject.

2. Those who insist upon immediate legislation will be likely to follow the lines of the Committee's regulations in their enactments.

It is to be hoped that the Committee of Revision will recognize the importance of the subject to medicine and pharmacy and utilize the opportunity which the occasion presents.

J. H. BEAL.



TRADE PIRATES AND OTHER THINGS.

RECENTLY the writer was consulted by a clergyman concerning the probable cost of making an analysis of a proprietary rheumatism remedy.

Upon gently suggesting that the expense of an analysis would probably exceed the cost of half a dozen packages of the stuff and also that it might be safer to consult a physician for the treatment of a case of "rheumatism," it developed that the sample had been furnished by a physician who had been using it in his private practice with extraordinary success, and that if the formula could be obtained he and his ministerial emissary were to go "cahoots" in its manufacture and sale to rheumatic humanity.

Other interesting details were likewise developed, but the most significant features of the negotiations were the theologian's complete inability to sense the moral obliquity of appropriating the fruits of some one else's labors without consent or compensation, and the readiness of the Aesculapian, who is a man of "some standing" in medical circles, to exchange the garment of professional regularity for the purple and fine linen of a patent medicine king, provided his actual connection therewith could be concealed under the convenient and all-embracing disguise of Co.

While it may be uncommon to find divinity and medicine uniting in a project of this kind, it is not unusual to find both physicians and laymen who condemn the use of patent medicines in the abstract but are quite ready to engage in the manufacture of one, provided they can find a good seller, their idea of a "good

seller" being one that already enjoys a good sale, and to appropriate without compunctions of conscience the ideas and enterprise of other men for their own benefit.

Nor is the practice of piracy in the 20th century confined solely to the patent medicine business. Drop into the first emporium you pass, whether of hardware or software, of dry goods or wet goods, and note how comparatively few of the articles displayed represent really original ideas, and how the majority are piratical imitations made by twisting, or coloring, or reshaping the ideas of other men in some unimportant detail, or by sticking together the portions stolen from different men.

The world may have gone without safety razors for 10,000 years, but let some one, by extensive advertising, create a demand for the article, and a legion of imitations immediately appear to appropriate the market created by the enterprise of the original successful man. Let some one devise a new soda water flavor, or a new game, or a striking method of advertising, or a new anything that is successful, and the sky is nearly obscured with its substitutes.

Apparently the bulk of the real thinking of the world is done by a comparatively few men, while the most of us consciously or unconsciously, just appropriate their ideas and turn them around or inside out, and persuade other people, and perhaps ourselves as well, that they are our very own. In fact a real new thought is about as rare as a new chemical element; most of those we think are new are combinations of thought elements that are as old as Greek philosophy.

Of course, there is a kind of special smartness required for the marketing of ideas, and this of itself is a kind of creative ability deserving of a certain amount of credit. So, also, a new combination of old things, or the standing of an old idea the other end up may add real value not present before the combination or inversion, and for these improvements the combiners or inverters may justly claim reward. Most of those, however, who supply substitutes and imitations are pure commercial pirates, appropriating the fruits of other men's labors without compensation, mere business hoboese whose mercantile progress is made by riding on the brake beams of other men's advertising trains.

The great naturalist, Alfred Russell Wallace, said the other day that the natural morality of man had not progressed beyond that of the maker of the first stone implement. From which, if correct, we may infer that for what seeming morality there is, we are indebted to art rather than to nature, and that 20th century honesty is either the enforced honesty of blue sky laws, and pure food and drugs acts, or the mechanical honesty of cash registers, and other automatic devices of wood and metal.

J. H. BEAL.