

## CORRESPONDENCE

### NOTE ON COLOR AND FORM OF "BICHLORIDE TABLETS."

BY E. FULLERTON COOK, CHAIRMAN.

COMMITTEE OF REVISION OF THE U. S. P.

"A few days ago a personal friend of mine in Swarthmore made the tragic error of taking several Bichloride Tablets in mistake for Aspirin. Several weeks before he had been told by his physician to go to the drug store and buy some Bichloride Tablets for use in a wash for a foot inflammation from which he was suffering. He had done this in December and the record shows the purchase of these and its proper registration in the store as for a wash.

"Unfortunately neither the drug store management nor the manufacturer of the tablets seems to have known of the requirements of the Pharmacopœia for these dangerous tablets. Many will doubtless remember, some years ago, of 'almost an epidemic' of similar accidents and nation-wide publicity concerning them. At that time the Pharmacopœia established specifications for these tablets which were intended to prevent their accidental misuse and it was believed that every manufacturer was fully conforming to the spirit of these requirements. However, the tablets sold and accidentally taken, in this case, were *white* and *discoïd* and while the word POISON was stamped on the tablet in raised letters it could have been easily overlooked, especially as Aspirin tablets also carry a raised lettering.

"I am taking the liberty of sending this letter to manufacturers in this country and to the pharmaceutical press with the appeal to every one selling Bichloride Tablets of the Antiseptic type, *no matter whether they do or do not conform exactly in strength or formula to the tablet now official in the Pharmacopœia*, that they immediately check the essential safety factors and see that in these respects they do conform to the specifications of the U. S. P. which have been in force for the last sixteen years.

"In accordance with the Pharmacopœia, a Poison Tablet of Corrosive Mercuric Chloride (Corrosive Sublimate Tablets or Bichloride Tablets) should be of an angular shape, *not discoïd*, each having the word POISON and the skull and cross bone design distinctly stamped upon it. Each tablet weighs about 1 Gm. and contains not less than 0.45 Gm. and not more than 0.55 Gm. of corrosive mercuric chloride ( $\text{HgCl}_2$ ), the remainder consisting chiefly of either sodium chloride ( $\text{NHCl}$ ) or ammonium chloride ( $\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$ ). *The tablets are to be colored blue*, preferably with sodium indigotindisulphonate. Poison Tablets of Corrosive Mercuric Chloride are to be dispensed in securely stoppered glass containers on the exterior of which is placed a red label bearing the word POISON and a statement indicating that the Tablets contain the required amount of corrosive mercuric chloride.

"This warning applies to *manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers* over the entire United States and all distributors should immediately check their stock and withdraw from sale every package which offers a white or discoïd tablet.<sup>1</sup>"

### PHARMACY IN THE 1933 WORLD'S FAIR.

Chairman H. C. Christensen, of the Pharmacy Committee of the World's Fair, prepared a most interesting report dealing with the 1933 World's Fair. The pharmacy exhibit will depict the educational, scientific and professional progress of pharmacy during the past century; the exhibit will be located in the Hall of Science. The fair officials have allotted a definite space to pharmacy in the Hall of Science, a very choice spot, and the size is about the same as that for the American Medical Association and the American Dental Association for their exhibits, approximately 1500 square feet. There is no charge for this space but pharmacists are obligated to portray in the exhibits the progress of pharmacy during the past century from a non-competitive and professional viewpoint. (Outside of the general display zones there will be competitive displays.) It is evident that pharmacy has been fairly dealt with and the space gives a splendid opportunity for showing the progress of pharmacy, so that the visitors may realize what pharmacy has ac-

<sup>1</sup> I have just learned that death resulted from the Bichloride poisoning referred to. The patient died at the University of Pennsylvania Hospital on Sunday night, February 7th.—E. F. C.