

one-pound print of oleomargarine, with which he was given a capsule of coloring matter, conceded to be a harmless vegetable compound. In an appeal from a conviction of a violation of the New York Agricultural Law, the sole question was the validity of Section 41 of the statute, providing that "no person selling any oleaginous substance not made from pure milk or cream of the same as a substitute for butter, shall sell, give away, or deliver any coloring matter" is valid. It was held by the Court of Appeals that the provision was a constitutional and valid enactment within the police power of the State.—*State v. Von Kaipen* (decided March 3, 1914).

Obituaries and Memorials

Persons having information of the death of members of the A. Ph. A. are requested to send the same promptly to J. W. England, 415 N. 33d St., Philadelphia, Pa. Information as to the age, activities in pharmacy, family, etc., of the deceased should be as complete as possible. When convenient a cabinet photograph should accompany data.



JAMES G. STEELE.

James Gordon Steele, pioneer of California and leader in pharmacy on the Pacific Coast, died at his home in San Francisco on Monday, February 2, 1914, at the age of 76 years and 38 days. His end was peaceful and wholly unexpected. On the morning of the second of February Mr. Steele arose cheerful and happy as usual. The day being beautiful, he took a long walk, returning refreshed, even expressing a desire to go for another stroll, but acting on the suggestion of his wife, he took a book on music, sat down in a chair, and when Mrs. Steele entered the room a few minutes later she found him dead, head slightly inclined, book still in his hands. Remarkably enough, Mr. Steele wrote his autobiography two weeks before his death, a portion of which is used in the preparation of this sketch.

Mr. Steele was born in Boston, Mass., December 25, 1838. He completed the studies of the grammar schools, and two years of high school. He came to California at the age of 15 and entered the employ of George

C. Shreve and later that of his uncle, Wm. W. Keith. He proved a trustworthy helper and Mr. Keith placed him in charge of one of his drug stores. He studied chemistry under Dr. Raymond, who had taught chemistry in the Cincinnati College of Pharmacy, and botany under Dr. Kellogg, the well-known curator and librarian of the California Academy of Sciences.

Mr. Steele was largely instrumental in organizing the California Pharmaceutical Society in the year 1868. In 1878 he gave up the retail drug business and devoted himself to supplying the Eastern and European market with California crude drugs, but in 1880 he again opened a retail store largely devoted to prescription work. In 1895 he was made city chemist of San Francisco, which position he held for two years. He became a member of the American Pharmaceutical Association in 1859, in which organization he was always active and contributed several papers to the proceedings, one on "Grindelia robusta" and one on the "Drug Market of San Francisco," which also contained a list of California medicinal plants; another paper was on "The Pines of California."

Mr. Steele was also an active member in the newly organized California Pharmaceutical Association, attending its meetings and contributing several pages of historical interest. A very full history of the California College of Pharmacy was completed shortly before his death. When the old California Pharmaceutical Society decided to establish a college of pharmacy in 1874, Mr. Steele, with W. T. Wenzell, W. M. Searby, J. W. Forbes, John Calvert, Mr. Simpson and Mr. Mayhew, were appointed a committee with power to incorporate such a college, becoming the first trustees of the California College of Pharmacy.

Mr. Steele was a most enthusiastic botanist, devoting much time to the study of the flora of California. In 1876 he sent 50 different species of California medicinal plants to the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy, at which time his intimate friend, Prof. Maisch, was instructor in materia medica in said college. Mr. Steele was essentially a student of books, of nature, of people. He was possessed of a most genial nature and a kindly disposition. He made many warm friends. His favorite author was Shakespeare, from whom he quoted freely. His favorite recreation was music, being a performer and composer of

considerable ability. It was this fondness of music which brought him in touch with the late Winchell Forbes.

The following intimate friends of Mr. Steele have preceded him by a few years or less: W. M. Searby, John Calvert, J. McDommell, W. T. Wenzell and H. H. Behr, all from San Francisco. Each one of the men named represents a distinct landmark in the progress of pharmacy on the Pacific Coast.—*The Pacific Pharmacist.*

Council Business

COUNCIL LETTER No. 13.

Philadelphia, Pa., March 6, 1914.

To the Members of the Council:

The following communication has been received from Hugh Craig:

"I have perused with a great deal of interest Council Letter No. 12, dated February 19. The matter with which it has to do is one to which I have given a great deal of attention during the past four or five months, and the result of my consideration of the subject is not such that leads me to agree with President Beringer that a specific shape for tablets of corrosive mercuric chloride will afford the desired relief. Investigation carefully conducted by the New York Board of Health shows that out of all the deaths from this poison reported during the period of ten months in that city all but about 5 percent or 6 percent were suicidal. It is folly to expect an intelligent person to believe the reports of accidental poisoning with this substance as they appear in the daily papers. Who, for instance, ever heard of any one taking *four headache wafers dissolved in water?* Yet we are told by the press that four 'bichloride' tablets were dissolved in a glass of water by a woman and taken in mistake for headache wafers! These misguided folk who wish to rid themselves of the troubles of existence and the world of their troubled existence will adapt a coffin-shaped tablet just as readily as they will a round one. The shape of the tablet has nothing to do with the desired effect.

"As far as children are concerned, they cannot tell the word 'poison' on the tablet from the motto on the popular candy wafers so dear to the childish heart. Neither can they tell whether a coffin-shaped object is poisonous or is merely a round wafer with some of the edges broken off.

"In my opinion it is a waste of time and energy to attempt to regulate the misuse of mercuric chloride by endeavoring to formulate a restriction as to the shape of the tablet into which this substance is compressed.

The real means of reaching the crux of the situation is the restriction of the sale of this substance to physicians' prescriptions. Despite the wide popular demand for the handy tablet, which can be purchased in any department store, there will be no injury to anybody if all are required to get this drug through real restrictive channels. Restrictions should also apply to physicians who are very likely to leave three or four of these poisonous tablets wrapped up in a prescription blank on the table in a sick room and also to veterinary surgeons who dip them out by the handful and leave them with oral directions for their use with an ignorant stableman—yet these stablemen being of a little sensitive nature and more stolidly constituted, seldom eat these tablets in mistake for an after-drink breath perfume or a chew of tobacco!

"There is another side to the question contained in Letter No. 12 and that is, of the advisability of the Association's taking over any such proposition. While it might be possibly easier to over-estimate the influence such an action would have upon the consideration given to the Association by those who are at present engaged in the manufacture of these tablets in various shapes, this phase should not be lost sight of. This matter, I believe, can be dealt with, very satisfactorily by some of those who have a longer acquaintance with the Association and its purposes. To me it appears rather a departure for the Association to engage in the manufacture of or the supervision of the manufacture of any article of commerce—I have not, in making this statement, lost-sight of the fact that the Association publishes the National Formulary.

"There was not enclosed with the letter any voting card, and there was nothing about the letter which leads me to believe that a vote is to be taken at this time, but rather the matter is simply up for discussion. However, if a vote is expected, I should like to have mine recorded in opposition to the proposition."

President G. M. Beringer replies to Mr. Craig's comments, as follows:

"I have read with great interest the comments of Mr. Hugh Craig on Council Letter No. 12. I fear that Mr. Craig fails to grasp the real situation presented in that Council Letter. I agree with him fully as to the necessity of educating the public to the importance of exercising *the proper care in the handling of all poisons.*

"The question of an official shape for tablets of mercuric chloride is only *one* of the means of safeguarding the careful handling of these tablets, and it was not presented as the *sole* means that should be adopted. Through the clamor of the public press, the legislators of the country are very likely to enact in the various States and Congress, some form of legislation that shall define a shape for bichloride tablets and the proper precautions regarding labeling and selling of