

and importation of white phosphorus matches. It will be remembered that at the International Conference on Labour Regulation which was held at Berne in 1906 a convention was signed by the above Powers with reference to the prohibition of white phosphorus matches but at that time Great Britain did not see her way to sign such convention. It was, however, subsequently found that in order still further to afford protection against "phossy-jaw" one of two courses was necessary—either more stringent regulations or total prohibition, and the decision has fallen upon the latter. This course has been found practicable owing to the fact that the Home Office was able to acquire some control over the patents governing the manufacture of "strike-anywhere" matches and thus to afford facilities to other firms for the acquisition of the necessary plant. The manufacture, sale, and importation of white phosphorus matches will, therefore, be prohibited after Jan. 1st, 1910, except as regards certain provisions with respect to retail dealers which will not come into operation until a year later. The statute governing this prohibition is the White Phosphorus Matches Prohibition Act, 1908. As will be seen by reference to our review columns, a full account of the history of match-making and of the various methods adopted against phosphorus poisoning will be found in Sir Thomas Oliver's comprehensive work on "Diseases of Occupation" which has just been published by Messrs. Methuen and Co.

THE CASE OF MABEL FLORENCE JONES.

THE report of this interesting case before Dr. F. J. Waldo at the City coroner's court will be found at p. 124 of this issue of THE LANCET. The deceased, it may be remembered, died from the results of a fractured skull in St. Bartholomew's Hospital after having been treated at the National Antivivisection Hospital, Battersea, and Dr. Waldo with marked fairness adjourned the inquest so that the latter institution could be represented. The verdict eventually found was to this effect: "That Mabel Florence Jones died from diffuse septic meningitis consequent upon a fracture of the skull by a pickaxe having been thrown from the garden of 90, Henley-street, Battersea, into the garden of deceased's house, No. 86, on the 27th September, 1908, and such death was due to accidental causes." We endorse the coroner's words, on which no doubt this verdict was founded, that there was no evidence of neglect amounting to manslaughter, but the jury seems to have been perfectly sure that the fracture was caused by the blow from the pickaxe and was present when the child was allowed to leave the National Antivivisection Hospital, Battersea, with three stitches for treatment. We do not see how any other conclusion could have been arrived at.

A PHYSICO-CHEMICAL METHOD FOR COMPARING THE ANTISEPTIC VALUE OF DISINFECTANTS.

Dr. S. B. Schryver and Dr. R. Lessing communicated to the Society of Chemical Industry on Monday, Jan. 4th, a new method for investigating the efficiency of disinfectants. The principle of the method consists in the determination of the inhibition of the rate of putrefaction of a given mixture in the presence of varying quantities of disinfectants, as indicated by the rate of chemical change of this mixture. For this purpose a solution of 5 per cent. gelatin and 1 per cent. peptone was generally employed, and it was usually infected by fæces. In the presence of putrefactive bacteria the gelatin is broken down into albumoses, peptoses, amino-acids, and finally into fatty acids and ammonia. Advantage was taken of the fact that almost *pari passu* with these changes an alteration in the physical properties of the mixture takes place. Of these the electrical conductivity is measured with the greatest

ease, a determination of this factor being an operation which can be performed in a few minutes. Instead, therefore, of determining chemical change directly by chemical analysis the changes in the electrical conductivity were estimated. By comparing the inhibition of a putrefactive change produced by a disinfectant under investigation with that produced by a standard disinfectant, such as phenol, a measure of its antiseptic efficiency could be obtained. The writers of the paper studied the rate of change produced by making sub-cultures at different stages of incubation with a medium of the same composition as the original. On inoculation from the original culture at the early stages the rate of change in the sub-culture is slow, at later stages it is rapid, and within limits practically independent of the amount of inoculating fluid. A putrefactive mixture prepared as a sub-culture in this way should serve as a convenient mixture for investigating the power of disinfectants. Owing to the simplicity of the manipulation the authors claim that the method should serve as a convenient one for the practical investigation of disinfectants.

THE INTERNATIONAL OPIUM COMMISSION.

WE learn from a circular which has been issued by the Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade that the International Opium Commission will meet at Shanghai on Feb. 1st next. In our issue last week in an article on the Presence of Morphine in Anti-opium "Cures" we pointed out that this international conference had been convened on the initiative of the Government of the United States. The following countries will also be represented at the conference—viz., Germany, China, France, Great Britain, Japan, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Turkey, Persia, and Siam. To the foreign ministers of each of these countries a circular letter has been sent by the above society in which are contained a summary of the present position as regards the sale of opium and the cultivation of the poppy respectively and a concise statement of the views of the British anti-opium societies. The report concludes:—

We hope that the Governments which participate in the International Commission at Shanghai will not hesitate to take the necessary steps to put an end as quickly as possible to the production and sale of opium, except for strictly medicinal purposes. The traffic which supplies the non-medical use of this drug is condemned by medical science, and Japan has resolutely excluded it from her soil. It is reprobated by the moral judgment of the best elements in the Chinese Government and people. Western civilisation cannot but sympathise profoundly with China in her supreme effort to free herself from this enervating and demoralising scourge. The European nations having colonies or protectorates in the East cannot evade the duty of keeping pace with China. We trust that they will not content themselves with this, but regard themselves as bound in honour to set the example of speedy and effective prohibition.

THE ASSOCIATION OF SCIENCE MASTERS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

THE annual meeting of the Association of Science Masters in Public Schools will be held at the Merchant Taylors' School, Charterhouse-square, E.C., on Tuesday next, Jan. 12th. An exhibition of scientific apparatus and books will be opened at 10 A.M. on that morning, after which Sir T. Clifford Allbutt, the President, will deliver an address upon the Relation of General to Technical Science Teaching. Some very interesting papers are promised arising out of the science curricula in the public schools, after discussing which Mr. C. I. Gardiner, the science master at Cheltenham College, will read a paper upon the Refusal of the General Medical Council to Recognise Public Schools as Institutions where Medical Education may be commenced. As is well known, this is a point upon which the Conjoint Board of the Royal College of Physicians of London and the Royal College of Surgeons of England differs from the General Medical Council and a discussion on the matter can hardly fail to be of interest to many medical men. The proceedings of the annual meeting