

only diffused a more just mutual appreciation of the knowledge and practice of different professors, but it was certain to be productive of improvement in obstetric practice both at home and abroad. The example set by the Obstetrical Society would probably be followed by exhibitions of instruments used in other branches of surgery.

The President then invited attention to the work before them. The Society had been requested by Dr. Farr, of the Registrar-General's Department, to aid in collecting information as to the modes of treating new-born infants with a view to determining the causes of the present excessive mortality amongst infants. The most singular diversities exist in the management of children, not alone in different countries, but even in different parts of England. There must be some general physiological laws that ought to be universally respected, but which were certainly in some cases disregarded out of heedless submission to inherited customs. The Council had resolved to undertake the investigation, and the aid of every Fellow would be requested.

Another point suggested for combined inquiry was the reciprocal influence of pregnancy and epidemic diseases. Since the foundation of the Society two opportunities of collecting observations upon a large scale had occurred. There had been an epidemic of small-pox in 1863, and last year an epidemic of cholera. What was the influence of small-pox, cholera, scarlatina, typhoid, typhus, relapsing fever upon the course of pregnancy, as in causing abortion, premature labour, the death of the embryo? What was the influence of these diseases upon the course of labour, upon women in the puerperal state? What is the susceptibility of pregnant or puerperal women to be attacked? In what manner do these diseases act? What is the resultant mortality? These and other cognate questions might receive important elucidation if we could collect from all our Fellows the histories of any cases of pregnancy and labour complicated with zymotic disease which had come under their observation.

The President next adverted to the question how far a learned society might usefully seek to guide professional and public opinion, by expressing a collective judgment upon controverted points in theory or practice. He thought such decisions could rarely be pronounced without danger of lending authority to error. It was extremely difficult to isolate a scientific question in medicine from its natural or artificial complications, to reduce it to the terms of a definite proposition that could be submitted to the suffrages of a body of men. Besides, medicine was a progressive science. Doctrines were ever changing; but we were all, more or less, under the thrall of the present doctrines. To commit ourselves to an absolute decision must either subject us to the contumely of seeing our decision reversed, when appeal was made to a more advanced tribunal, or, to the extent of what authority we had, the spirit of fresh inquiry was discouraged. It was, therefore, wiser to abandon the attempt. The last word upon any medical topic would not be uttered in our time. But this reasoning, he said, did not apply to the exercise of the function of deciding upon questions of ethics. Medical ethics formed but a branch, or rather an application, of those immutable laws of justice which had held wholesome sway over mankind in all ages. All associations formed for good purposes had been made to enforce respect for these laws. He thought a medical society would ill fulfil its duty if it shrank from upholding, in their integrity, those rules of honourable conduct by the scrupulous observance of which medical men could alone deserve and acquire the confidence of the world. In retiring, he was impelled by a deep sense of gratitude to acknowledge, that whatever success had attended his presidency was largely due to the generous confidence and ungrudging co-operation of the Council, and especially to their admirable secretaries, and to the kindly support and forbearance of every member of the Society.

At the conclusion of the address, Dr. Tilt moved a vote of thanks to Dr. Barnes for his valuable address, which was carried by acclamation.

ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS.—The first examination, in Anatomy and Physiology, for the present year, commences this day (Saturday), and will be continued on Tuesday and Wednesday. On the 19th inst., the second examination, in Surgery and Pathology, will commence, and it is stated that the candidates will have their knowledge tested in the application of splints and bandages. Other improvements in the mode of conducting examinations at the College are contemplated.

Reviews and Notices of Books.

Codex Medicamentarius. Pharmacopée Française, rédigée par ordre du Gouvernement; la Commission de Rédaction étant composée de Professeurs de la Faculté de Médecine et de l'Ecole Supérieure de Pharmacie de Paris, de Membres de l'Académie Impériale de Médecine et de la Société de Pharmacie de Paris.

THE appearance of new editions of the French Codex has not been of such frequent occurrence as to render the publication of this volume an event of small importance or of merely passing interest. There has been but one edition previously produced since the first appearance of the work in 1818. The *Codex Medicamentarius*, in common with many of the institutions of France, took its birth at the time of the great Revolution in that country. On the 21st Germinal, year 11 of the Revolution, a law was passed by which the Government was required to charge the professors of the Schools of Medicine, associated with the professors of the School of Pharmacy, to prepare a "Codex or Formulary of the medicinal and pharmaceutical preparations that ought to be kept by pharmacians;" and in compliance with that law the first Codex was published. It superseded the French Pharmacopœia that was previously in authority, and of which editions had appeared, first in 1639, about twenty years after the appearance of the first London Pharmacopœia, and subsequently in 1645, 1732, 1748, and 1758. The last of these was the one used in France at the time of the Revolution, and sixty years had therefore passed without the production of a new Pharmacopœia in France, when the Codex was first published. It was issued, as the law decreed, with the authority and sanction, and by the special order, of the Government. There was a new edition of the work in 1839, after a lapse of twenty years, and now there is another edition after a further lapse of twenty-seven years. It cannot therefore be said that the French have been excessively prolific with regard to Pharmacopœias.

The present work bears much of the appearance of an imperial production. It is a handsome royal octavo volume of 830 pages. Its preparation was entrusted to a commission consisting of eighteen members, and including some of the most eminent medical, chemical, and pharmaceutical authorities of France. The commission have occupied more than four years in the performance of their task, and they have been assisted by committees of the Société de Pharmacie of Paris, who undertook special investigations for the elucidation of some of the subjects to be treated upon. There is evidence of much labour having been devoted to the work, which appears to have been carefully and ably executed.

The preface, which has been written by Dumas, the President of the Commission, explains the general scope of the Pharmacopœia, which is, to contain a list of the simple *médicaments* which the pharmacien is to keep in his *pharmacie*, to point out the conditions under which these *médicaments* are to be selected, and to describe the composition and preparation of such medicines as are artificially produced. The work is described as essentially a progressive one, which has to be altered and amended from time to time, to suit the requirements of the medical profession and to keep pace with the progress of knowledge. The complex remedies which in ancient times were so much used, are gradually giving place to more simple, more concentrated, and more energetic agents; and, in proportion as this change in the practice of medicine prevails, it becomes necessary "that the pharmacians, to whom are committed the preparation, the preservation, and the dispensing of such agents, should be instructed, careful, and faithful." This statement refers, no doubt, to the discussions

which have taken place of late years in France on the subject of restrictions on the sale of medicines. "The time," says the learned president, "when this conviction is gaining ground even in England, enlightened by the errors which have multiplied under her eyes, and by the infinite evils which have resulted from them, is not one that should be chosen by France, who has always held that conviction, for its abandonment."

On turning from the preface to the matter which follows, we are struck with the great comprehensiveness of the work. The matter is arranged very much in the same way as it has hitherto been in our Pharmacopœias in this country, drugs in their natural state being described first, and then the various preparations which are compounded or obtained from them. The *Materia Medica* of the Codex is a very extensive one, comprising nearly six hundred substances derived from the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms. This is a far more comprehensive list than that of our Pharmacopœia, which does not contain more than about one-third the number of substances. The descriptions in this part of the work are generally very brief; in fact, in the majority of cases, nothing more is given than the commercial name of the drug, together, if it be of vegetable origin, with the botanical name and natural order of the plant yielding it, and the part of the plant which it constitutes. Thus, for instance, we find—

"COLOQUINTE, *Cucumis Colocynthis*, L.; Cucurbitacées. Fruit."

Some of the more important drugs, however, are very fully described, and in such cases tests for determining the purity or identity of the substances are often given, as has been done in the British Pharmacopœia. We cannot help thinking that the list of *Materia Medica* has been unduly extended, by the introduction of a great number of unnecessary articles, some of which are worthless, and others superfluous from the fact of their possessing no advantages over other substances of similar properties. Thus, for instance, there are no less than five species of *aristolochia* and eight varieties of turpentine described. We presume the object has been to include in the list, not merely the most approved medicines, such as physicians are in the habit of prescribing, but all the substances used medicinally in any part of the French Empire. If this be the case, it will serve to explain much that it would otherwise be difficult to reconcile with the high scientific character of the French Codex. The members of the Commission could not have thought that it was essential to the successful exercise of the art and science of medicine that such substances as *wood-lice*, *dried vipers*, *crab's eyes*, and *asphaltum*, should be retained in the *Materia Medica*. We presume they are there because they are occasionally used in some parts of the country, where old-fashioned remedies have not yet been superseded by a more rational method of treating disease, and as long as they are employed it is considered to be the duty of the Codex to exercise a control over their use. A similar explanation or apology is no doubt due also for the appearance in the Codex of some of the preparations described there, such as the old-fashioned "Theriaca" with its sixty ingredients, "Compound Tincture of Aloes" with its sixty-eight ingredients, and *Baume Tranquille* with its nineteen ingredients. Viewing the work from a scientific point of view, these appear as great blemishes; but it must not be forgotten that the Codex has a great practical object to fulfil, which is to control the exercise of the pharmaceutical art by indicating the methods of selecting and preparing all the various remedies which are required by the existing state of medical practice in France. It must not be forgotten also, in looking at the nature of the preparations ordered in the Codex, that there is a great difference between medical practice in France and that in this country, with re-

gard to the character of the medicines employed. The *tisanes*, *bouillons*, and other similar preparations, so frequently prescribed in France, are neither known nor appreciated here. Then they have long lists of *saccharures*, *oleo-saccharures*, *pates*, *gelées*, *chocolates*, and *syrups*, most of which are unknown to us, and unsuited to the methods of treating disease generally adopted in this country.

A considerable part of the Codex is devoted to the description of these and other similar pharmaceutical compounds; and the descriptions given are generally more comprehensive, as well as more minute, than those of any analogous preparations in our pharmacopœias. In this respect the Codex somewhat resembles a dispensatory in the character of the information contained in it.

But it must not be supposed, as so much of the work is devoted to the class of preparations commonly called *Galenical*, that due attention has not been given to more definite, simple, and concentrated preparations. The chemical substances used in medicine are fully and well described; indeed, it could hardly be supposed to be otherwise with the celebrated author of the best work ever published on chemical manufactures at the head of the Commission. Twenty-five pages are devoted in the *Materia Medica* part to the description of chemical products in their crude state, and native mineral substances. Then we have separate chapters devoted to simple chemical substances, and some of their applications; to mineral acids; to metallic oxides; to sulphides, chlorides, bromides, iodides, cyanides; salts of the oxygen acids; the vegetable acids; the vegetable alkalies, and the salts of these. Then there is a chapter devoted to neutral organic substances of definite chemical composition, such as mannite, santonine, digitaline, cantharidine, pepsine, &c. The whole of these chemical preparations and products occupy about 200 pages; and it need hardly be said that there is a great deal of valuable scientific and practical information contained in this part of the work.

The perusal of the French Codex cannot be otherwise than instructive; and we think it arrived very opportunely, if it has been made proper use of by those who are engaged in preparing the new edition of the British Pharmacopœia. It may serve to indicate, not only what should as far as possible be avoided in the way of encouraging or sanctioning the old system of polypharmacy, but also what may be imitated with advantage by supplying to the medical practitioner and pharmacist the kind of information best calculated to enhance the practical value of the work.

MR. BAKER BROWN AND THE OBSTETRICAL SOCIETY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I had the best reasons for believing that a committee of independent Fellows of the Obstetrical Society, in whom I have confidence, would have been proposed at the last meeting of the Society, and was sorry to find that the Council would not entertain the subject. I have now, therefore, written to the new Council to say that if they will appoint a fair and impartial committee, I will place every facility in their hands for investigating my cases most rigidly. In the meantime I feel confident that the new president will not allow personalities and unjustifiable language to be used against any Fellow in future discussions; and I beg to remind all Fellows of the Society that I am in no way to be held accountable for any damage the Society may sustain by the discussion of Dr. Tanner's paper.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Harley-street, Jan. 7th, 1867.

I. BAKER BROWN.

THE Pollution of Rivers Commissioners will resume their inquiry into the pollution of the river Lea at Ware, in Hertfordshire, on Wednesday, the 16th inst.