NOTE ON A SAMPLE OF ADULTERATED PEPPER.

BY DR. BOSTOCK HILL, F.I.C.

(Read at the Meeting, June 10th, 1885).

All those who have had much experience in the examination of pepper, know that adulteration of two kinds is practised. The addition of starch, chiefly rice starch, and the addition of sandy matter.

As a result of examination of a large number of samples of both white and black pepper, I find the ash to vary in the white from 0·8 to 2·0 per cent., while in the black it is generally from 3–5. In black peppers, however, of low quality, the ash may prove to be as high as 7 or 8 per cent., owing to grit or sand being introduced, I believe, in the shape of shop sweepings. I have come to this conclusion, owing to the fact that on more than one occasion I have discovered starch granules of different kinds, and in one instance a piece of chicory root. In the sample I desire to call your attention to now, we have quite another kind of adulteration. Under the microscope can be seen pepper cells, and a large quantity of matter of very doubtful origin. But on incineration an ash is left of a reddish colour, equal to 24·2 per cent. of the weight of the pepper taken. At first I thought this was sand, but on further examination I find it to be smooth, and scarcely at all gritty, and it proves to be, on analysis, finely-ground clay or

brick-dust, and by the intimate way it seems mixed, is undoubtedly added by the manufacturer.

I may add that last week a sample of pepper was submitted to me by an Inspector containing 11·08 per cent. of ash, which, although slightly gritty, appears to be greatly like that found in the previous sample.

I have examined peppers constantly for a period of nine years, but have never before seen an ash like those described above.

DISCUSSION.

MR. HEINER said that he was informed that ordinary dirty pepper was being whitened with nitrate of bismuth, in order that a higher price may be obtained for it.

MR. BERNARD DYER said that he had had samples of pepper which had been sold in Mincing Lane as white, but which were in reality black, and had been beautifully coated over with a kind of whitish brick clay, which all washed off in water. It had been done so skilfully, that the peppercorns might be rubbed in the hands without its being noticed that they were sophisticated.

CONCLUSION OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY.