

substitution of *Ol. carui*, for *Ol. menth. pip.*, in *Pil. rhei. co.*, which, while it may possibly suit the taste of some patients, will give great dissatisfaction to others.

"*Mist.*" *acaciæ* is substituted for the powder, in *Mist. cretæ co.*, which prevents the ingredients from being kept in the dry state; while *Conf. aromat.* is ordered to be kept in powder, although less likely to spoil, and more frequently used.

The time prescribed for the maceration of some decoctions and infusions is unnecessarily long. *Infusum rosæ co.* is now to stand six hours; *Inf. humuli* four hours, &c., &c. What advantage is derived from boiling sarsaparilla six hours? By protracting the process the efficacy is more likely to be impaired, and the wood to become impregnated with the essence of the bark. Other instances might be mentioned. I shall conclude by adverting to the new measure, which is a source of great annoyance.

Scarcely any measure could be contrived which would be practically more convenient than the old one. The pint corresponds with the pound, and $3j : oj :: 3ss : 3j$, which facilitates the reduction of formulæ from large quantities to small, or *vice versa*. From the gallon downwards we obtain (by dividing by two) a regular series of simple multiples, without a fraction, to 15 gr., the next step being $7\frac{1}{2}$. But in the new measure, if we commence the above series to the pint, the third step brings us to $2\frac{1}{2}$ ounces, and, by continuing it, we come at $\frac{1}{2}$ grains at $37\frac{1}{2}$ instead of at $7\frac{1}{2}$. To a dispenser of medicine, who is constantly obliged to make such calculations while the patient is waiting for his medicine, this change in the measure will be attended with unnecessary waste of time and risk of error.

The quantities of all the formulæ in the Pharmacopœia in which the pint occurs, are of course altered to suit the new measure, even where the proportions remain the same. This is perplexing to the memory. An ambiguity will exist for a long time to come, from the term "octarium" having two values in prescriptions, according to the date, or other intention, of the prescriber. These inconveniences would be cheerfully submitted to, if any advantage were ultimately to be derived from the change, but in the present instance the alteration is decidedly for the worse.

In reforming a Pharmacopœia the object of the work should be kept constantly in mind, namely, the accurate administration of medicine; but in looking over the present and the former editions, it appears as if pains had been taken to mystify the subject, to overburthen the memory, and to puzzle those for whose use it is published. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

PERTINAX.

London, Feb. 1, 1837.

MR. CROSSE'S REVIVIFICATION OF INSECTS CONTAINED IN FLINT.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—As the manipulations of Mr. Andrew Crosse have excited much attention, probably the following account of his recent discoveries may interest your readers. They are detailed in a letter to Mr. Stutchbury, of Bristol. It will be perceived that Mr. Crosse in his experiments employed silix alone, but it will, doubtless, be found that insects, similar to those which he has described, are contained in other minerals.

"The following is an accurate account of the experiments in which insects made their appearance:—

"*Experiment the First.*—I took a dilute solution of silicate of potash, super-saturated with muriatic acid, and poured it into a quart basin, resting on a piece of mahogany, and a Wedgwood funnel, in such a manner that a strip of flannel wetted with the same, and acting as a syphon, conveyed the fluid, drop by drop, through the funnel upon a piece of somewhat porous Vesuvian red oxide of iron, which was thus kept constantly wetted by the solution, and across the surface of which (by means of two platinum wires connected with the opposite poles of a voltaic battery, consisting of nineteen pairs of nine-inch plates, in cells filled with water and 1.500 muriatic acid) a constant electric current was passed. This was for the purpose of procuring crystals of silix. At the end of fourteen days I observed two or three very minute specks on the surface of the stone; they were white, and somewhat elevated. On the 18th day, fine filaments projected from these specks, or nipples, and the whole figure was increased in size. On the 22nd day, each of these figures assumed a more definite form, still enlarging. On the 26th day, each assumed the form of a perfect insect, standing upright on four or five bristles, which formed its tail. On the 28th day, each insect moved its legs, and, in a day or two afterwards, detached itself from the stone, and moved at will. These insects have been seen by many of my friends, and appear, when magnified, very much like cheese mites, but they are from twice to eight times the size of mites, some having six legs, others eight. They are covered with long bristles, and those which are at the tail are, when magnified, seen to be spiney. After they have been born some time they become amphibious, and I have seen them crawl about on a dry surface.

"*Experiment the Second.*—I took a saturated solution of silicate of potash, and filled a small jar with it, into which I plunged a stout iron wire, connected with the positive pole of a battery of twenty pairs of cylinders,

filled with water alone, and immersed in the same a small coil of silver wire, connected with the *negative* pole of the same battery. After some weeks' action gelatinous silex surrounded the iron wire, and, after a longer period, the same substance filled up the coil of silver wire at the other pole, but in much less quantity. In the course of time one of these insects appeared in the silex, at the negative pole, and there are, at present, not less than three well-formed, precisely similar, insects at the negative, and twelve at the positive, pole; in all, fifteen. Each of them is deeply imbedded in the gelatinous silex, the bristles of its tail alone projecting, and the average of them are from half to three quarters of an inch below the surface of the fluid. In this last experiment we employed neither acid, nor wood, nor flannel, nor iron ore."

The vivification of these insects is, doubtless, to be attributed to the agency of the electric fluid; but the species to which they belong, the period of their generation, and the influence which electricity had in developing their existence, are questions which deserve much and deep consideration. Electricity has been too little studied. Its effects on organic life, its agency in supporting animation, and its effects on the nervous system,—these things combine to form a field of inquiry which has been too little explored. But inasmuch as electricity is a science which materially affects the constitution of man, it is one which deserves the attentive investigation of every medical practitioner. I am, Sir, your's truly,

E. J. HYTCH.

New-court, Carey-street,
8th Feb. 1837.

NORTH LONDON HOSPITAL.—*To the Editor*
SIR:—At the commencement of the Session a notice was posted up at the "North London Hospital" saying, that clinical lectures would be given weekly by the physicians and surgeons, which promise has been faithfully fulfilled by the physicians, especially Dr. Elliotson, and by Mr. Liston. But Mr. Cooper has not given a clinical lecture since the middle of December. Why, also, does not Mr. Quain, who is one of the professors of clinical surgery, give an occasional lecture? He has lately had a very interesting case of hernia. I think it would be a good time for him to make some remarks upon the case, as most of the students of the hospital were present at the operation, and at the post-mortem examination. I remain, your most obedient humble servant,

H. JONES.

North London Hospital,
Feb. 2nd, 1837.

THE LANCET.

London, Saturday, February 11th, 1837.

THE motion for the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into the medical treatment of the sick poor in the parochial Unions of England and Wales, stands for Tuesday, the 21st of February. Another motion, having for its object the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into the whole of the administration of the Poor-Law Amendment Act, is appointed to come on on Monday, the 20th inst.,—one day previously to the motion relating to the *medical* inquiry. But, inasmuch as the latter motion has been set down for a day when "orders of the day" take precedence of "motions," the discussion regarding the *general* inquiry must be postponed, and cannot possibly be brought on until the motion for the medical investigation has been submitted to the House. Mr. WAKLEY has been requested by several Members who are hostile to the Poor-Law Amendment Act, and who are, on that account, desirous of going into a *general* investigation, to abandon his motion on the day above-named, and allow the discussion on the *general* to precede that on the *medical* investigation. Considering all the circumstances of the case, and the many evils which are alleged to arise out of the present system, he has felt it to be his duty to decline yielding a compliance to these entreaties. The consequence of his refusal, however, may be, that the motion for the *general* inquiry will be moved as an amendment on the motion for the medical investigation,—a course of proceeding which may place several members of the House who are most desirous that the medical inquiry should proceed without delay, to vote in favour of the *amendment*, against the original motion, and thus be apparently guilty of defeating an effort which it is their undoubted object to support. Should the amendment be carried,