

### Annotations.

#### A SELFISH PRACTICE.

The complaint made by three patients recently discharged from the Bromsgrove, Droitwich, and Redditch Isolation Hospital that the milk as supplied to them was skimmed is unfortunately by no means unique. From time to time we hear of nurses and probationers receiving instructions to skim the milk supplied for ward use to provide cream for the Sister's tea, and of their following the example so set them by obtaining cream in a like manner for their own tea in the ward. Probationers whose consciences are still sensitive are placed in a difficult position in wards where this bad custom prevails. Either they must acquiesce in wrongdoing, or they must refuse to carry out the instructions of their superior officers. It is time all Sisters and nurses understood that it is as wrong to skim the milk provided for the use of the sick as to abstract a portion of their allowance of wine, and to dilute the remainder with water. No nurse who has any knowledge of the value of cream as an article of diet can deprive the patients, for whose welfare she is responsible, of this nourishment, without a gross misuse of trust.

#### THE SALE OF POISONS.

The Pharmacy Acts Amendment Bill, introduced into the House of Commons on behalf of the Pharmaceutical Society, will, if it becomes law, put a check on the sale of poisons by persons who are not qualified by law, and who do not possess the requisite knowledge. This, while not placing additional obstacles in the way of those who are entitled to buy poisons, will make it more difficult for those who have no right to obtain them. The Bill provides for the registration of every shop in which poisons are retailed, and that every dealer must be a properly-qualified chemist. Thus the trade in poisons of herbalists will be touched, and also secret drug-taking will be rendered more difficult.

At present if an unqualified person wishes to open a chemist's shop he has only with six or more persons to form a limited liability company, and thus avoid coming under the Pharmacy Act of 1886, which provides that only a qualified person can open a chemist's shop. The law cannot touch a company, nor is a company bound to have qualified men as assistants. Thus the new measure would rectify by compelling limited liability com-

panies to accept the same regulations as registered chemists, and by making the master responsible for the acts of his servants. At present it is only possible to prosecute the seller of the poison, often the shop assistant.

#### A NEW ILLUMINANT.

The illuminating properties of an element known as radium have just been revealed by Sir William Crookes. Radium, when brought near a screen of sulphate of zinc, illumines the screen, but, further, it shoots out "electrons" at a speed of 100,000 miles a second; these hit the screen and produce a shower of tiny sparks. It is this display which constitutes the discovery of the man of science. It is asserted that if houses were painted with radium and a coat of zinc sulphide added the streets at night would be as light as day. However, as the cost of a ton of radium is equal to that of the English National Debt, it is not likely to come into general use at present.

M. Curie, a French physicist of high reputation, has, aided by his wife, Madame Curie, recently obtained remarkable results with radium, and has placed the result of his experiments before the Academy of Science. His communication is so startling that the Paris correspondent of the *Times* says it "would have been received with absolute incredulity had it been offered on less unimpeachable authority."

M. Curie's statement is that radium possesses the extraordinary property of continuously emitting heat, without combustion, without chemical change of any kind, and without any change in its molecular structure, which remains spectroscopically identical after many months of continuous emission of heat. He finds, further, that radium maintains its own temperature at a point 1.5 Centigrade, or 2.7 deg. on our ordinary scale, above its surroundings.

That is to say, the actual quantity of heat evolved is such that the pure radium salt would melt more than its own weight of ice every hour. Or, again, half a pound of the radium salt would evolve in one hour heat equal to that produced by the burning of one-third of a cubic foot of hydrogen gas; and this evolution of heat goes on continuously for indefinite periods, leaving the salt at the end of months of activity just as potent as at the beginning! Radium emanations act upon the nerve substance and "cause the death of living things whose nerve centres do not lie deep enough to be shielded from their influence."

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