

THE WEEK.

As we anticipated, the Pharmaceutical Society, under the presidency of Mr. Jacob Bell, have declared against the Bill now under discussion in the House of Lords, with reference to the sale of poisons. We are not aware who were the advisers of Government with respect to the provisions of this Bill, but whoever they were, it is evident they knew little of the real working of the question. As the *Times* observed the other day, it errs decidedly on the side of rigour, and we do not believe that it would work if passed in its present form. We trust that when the third reading comes on in the Lords, on which occasion the merits of the measure will be for the first time discussed, that those restrictive clauses which will not allow a person to procure certain proscribed drugs without the warrant of a magistrate or a clergyman (!) will be struck out. With this amendment, and probably with a slight curtailment of the number of prohibited poisons, the Bill will prove an immense public boon. We certainly trust some means will be taken to prevent access to virulent poisons by raw apprentices. It is certainly remarkable that within these last few weeks several lamentable deaths have resulted from this very cause; and, as we write, we find in the *Times* a report of a death which occurred in a manner to alarm young mothers. It appears that the powder used for powdering infants is sometimes made of white lead! In the case before us, the white lead drawer was empty, and the chemist's youngest apprentice, who had not been apprenticed more than four months, filled it with arsenic from the cellar, where both were kept in barrels. The first unfortunate mother who wished for some of the white lead to powder the sore places of her infant, was served with the powdered arsenic in its stead; and, of course, the child died. The question naturally arises, what business had the chemist to keep arsenic or white lead in open barrels in his cellar? Until raw lads are absolutely forbidden to touch deadly poisons, we fear that accidents of this kind will recur, notwithstanding any Act of Parliament. But this singular accident opens up another question of vast importance. Is the violet powder used by all the infant world composed in any part of white lead? If so, we fear this pernicious compound has led many of them along "the road to dusky death."

Certain portions of Paris were, it appears, water-logged during some parts of last year. A subterranean inundation filled the cellars and did immense damage. The Paris Board of Health instituted an inquiry into the cause, which appears to have been in operation for a century, as similar inundations took place in the years 1740, 1783, 1818, and 1837. Popular opinion attributed it, at one time, to the heavy rainfalls; at another, to the infiltration of the great reservoirs of the fire-engine at Chaillot; at another, to the leakage of the great main sewer which runs from the Rue des Filles du Calvaire, and empties itself into the Seine to the right of the Quai de Billy; and lastly, the reservoir of La Villette and the canal of St. Martin have been designated as the source of the infiltration. In this opinion the Board of Health, after a careful examination, have been led to concur. Accordingly, the canal and reservoir were emptied, and the cracks found in their beds thoroughly cemented. Simultaneously with this operation the inundation disappeared.

It is very rarely that we have to record the Medical Apostasy of any members of the profession of known character and ability. Scores of disaffected practitioners have, of late years, drafted themselves off to the ranks of Homœopathy without making any sign, or without being inquired after. We have the pain this week, however, to state that Dr. Horner, the senior Physician to the Hull General Infirmary, and one of the Vice-Presidents of this Association, has taken leave of legitimate medicine and gone over to the arch-imposture. Of course Dr. Horner could not conscientiously expect to hold his appointment any longer, with his changed views with respect to the healing art; and he has, consequently, addressed a letter to the Governors of the Infirmary, announcing his conversion to the Homœopathic system. The weekly board of that Institution have, according to the *Hull Advertiser*, "called a Special General Meeting of the subscribers to consider and determine what is to be done in the matter, and whether it may or may not be necessary to declare the office of Senior Physician of the Infirmary vacant." Of course, the decision of this Board must be to declare the office vacant; otherwise, the whole medical staff would have no other alternative but to resign. We do not for one moment anticipate, however, that any other course than that of the instant dismissal of the offending physician will be taken by the Board, as it must be well known to every member composing it, that no legitimate practitioners could, in honour, continue the colleagues of a man who had declared his disbelief in the principles of practice as pursued by them. To take any other course would be to reduce the Infirmary at once to the position of an Homœopathic establishment. Of course, this apostasy on the part of Dr. Horner must come under the notice of the Association.

The nature of the Cancer-cure of Dr. Fell is no longer a secret. In a *Treatise on Cancer and its Treatment*, which he has just published, he states his remedy to be the powder of a North American plant termed by the Indians *puccoon*, and by botanists *Sanguinaria Canadensis*. This plant, which grows in abundance in the western parts of North America, is said to be successfully used by the Indians on the shores of Lake Superior in the treatment of cancer. It is stated by Wood and Bach (*United States' Dispensatory*), to act as an escharotic when applied to a fungous surface in the form of powder. Dr. Fell administers the powder both internally and externally; but we notice that he combines with it other potent agencies, as chloride of zinc, sulphate of zinc, and iodide of arsenic. This circumstance obscures the view which is to be taken of the real efficacy of the drug. A more careful examination of Dr. Fell's book must be deferred to an early opportunity; in the meantime, we have stated the main fact, the announcement of which has been anxiously looked for. It is but fair to Dr. Fell to state, that he has kept the engagement which he made with the surgeons of the Middlesex Hospital to publish an account of his treatment within six months. His first applications were made to patients in the hospital on January 22nd.

[ERRATUM. In our leader of last week on the Victoria Hospital at Netley, by a printer's error we were made to say, that many of the ward windows "command dull army camps in the rear"—instead of "dull airing courts."]