

Cyprus

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT ANALYST FOR THE YEAR 1935

IN his Annual Report Dr. S. G. Willimott gives an account of the method of administering the Food and Drugs Law in Cyprus. For this purpose the Island is divided into seven districts. Adulteration was highest in Nicosia and Paphos districts, whilst in the districts of Kyrenia and Polis it was apparently non-existent. The general adulteration rate (3·6 per cent.) showed a marked decline on that of 1934 (23·9 per cent.), but this is believed to be only partly accounted for by any real drop in the amount of adulteration, and to be due principally to the fact that no special surveys and inspections of suspected stocks or old supplies of canned foods were made by the sanitary staff.

Of the 1310 samples examined, 48 were adulterated, namely, flour 25, olive oil 19, flour 2, milk 1, and condensed milk 1.

CONDENSED MILK REGULATION.—By an Order in Council, No. 1634 of 1935, the importation of skimmed milk or of milk with a fat-content of less than 7 per cent. was prohibited. This was due to the fact that the uninformed poor in town and village have used this product, because of its lower price, for feeding infants.

ADULTERATION OF OLIVE OIL.—An important test case of adulteration of olive oil was heard before the President of the District Court, and the vendor was heavily fined. On appeal to the Supreme Court the conviction and sentence were confirmed, and cancellation of Government contracts followed. Adulteration of olive oil, with all manner of cheaper vegetable oils, was rife during the year.

USE OF QUININE AS A POISON.—The use of quinine as a poison by would-be suicides is still not uncommon in Cyprus. In one case, in which a young Greek woman ingested 45 grains of quinine, traces of the alkaloid were found in the vomit and stomach washings.

PERMANGANATE POISONING.—An unusual case of poisoning with potassium permanganate was investigated. The distinguishing feature of the case was that the permanganate was not ingested *per os*, but self-injected through the urethral canal. The total amount of permanganate solution brought in contact with the tissues of the urethra and bladder was equivalent to 20 g. of the solid salt. The case ended fatally, and at the autopsy extensive burns of the mucous membrane of the bladder and urethra were found. Full details were published in the *British Medical Journal*, Jan. 11th, 1936, p. 58.

LOCAL MANUFACTURE OF HASHISH.—The hemp plant (*Cannabis sativa* L.) has been grown in the Island since Venetian days and probably a long time before that, and it is noteworthy that the names of at least two villages are derived from that of the cultivated plant. The plant is cultivated in the Paphos district as a field crop for its fibre, but the production of hashish is unknown and in any case

prohibited. During the year the Customs authorities submitted samples connected with an attempt, fortunately unsuccessful, to prepare hashish in the hemp-growing district. The attempt failed because extraneous material and crude appliances appeared to have been used. The laboratory findings on the material submitted were entirely negative.

MOSQUITOES AND WATER SALINITY.—In conjunction with the survey of malaria in Cyprus by the Rockefeller Foundation a number of observations on brackish waters from different malarial localities have been made. In particular, samples from the Larnaca salt lakes were analysed for salinity and reaction, in an attempt to correlate these figures with the presence of eggs, larvae or pupae of species of mosquito maturing there. It appears that two species, *multicolor* and *elutus*, have different critical salinity points beyond which they cannot exist. On the Kyrenia coast an important observation has been made that eggs and larvae of *Aedes mariae* (fortunately not a malaria vector in Cyprus) can flourish in salt water of extraordinarily high salinity. This work is being continued in co-operation with the Foundation.

CYPRUS UMBER.—The umber and ochre beds are among the most interesting mineral resources of the Island, and the winning of the ore is probably of great antiquity. Ancient slags have been found to contain considerable amounts of manganese, but whether the Phœnicians and Romans used the umber, which was easily accessible, as a flux in smelting their pyrites for copper, remains a matter of debate. The umber beds occur on the line of contact of the pillow lavas with the overlying marls and sedimentaries. The question of the geological origin of the umber beds in Cyprus cannot be discussed here, but it is very doubtful whether the theory of contact metamorphism of Gaudry can be accepted (*cf.* C. G. Cullis and A. B. Edge: *Cupriferous Deposits in Cyprus*, London, 1927). Geological study of the question shows, however, that the natural deposits of the umber must be enormous, and are for the most part untapped.

At Larnaca, the seat of the industry, the ore is exported as raw umber in lumps and as burnt umber in powder, and may be graded into 25 different shades. The colour of the natural umber varies from yellowish-brown to dark sepia, according to the manganese-content, which has been found to range from less than 1 up to 10 per cent. It is well known that manganese salts are readily leached out of rocks by percolating water, so that the manganese-content of any particular specimen appears to vary according to whether its position in the umber bed was above or below the geological water table. The subject is by no means one of academic interest only and, so far as our experience goes, the results appear to confirm this theory.

Specimens of Cyprus terra verta, which occurs in small pockets in the contact zone, have also been analysed and found to be free from arsenic and copper. The colour is due to the mineral chlorite.
