

of manufacture of foods in this country and who would also obtain information as far as possible concerning foods imported from abroad. Has this been done or was this recommendation of the Royal Commission on Arsenical Poisoning looked upon as frivolous? On Feb. 5th Mr. Walter Long, in the House of Commons, replying to a question upon the subject, said that he was considering the matter and in his opinion a conference of representatives of the Government departments concerned should be held before a decision was arrived at. Where is this conference of representatives? Has Mr. Long given to it any further consideration? The necessity of a food authority has been admitted and its formation recommended by both the Royal Commission and by the Departmental Committee, and by ourselves again and again, but no further steps have, so far as the public know, been taken in this most important matter. The necessity for such an authority is emphasised when we take into consideration the increasing numbers of new manufactured foods which are constantly being placed on the market day by day. It is open to anyone to make any foodstuff and to place it on the market without any further protection to the public than that provided by the Sale of Food and Drugs Act. As the report of the Royal Commission on Arsenical Poisoning points out, knowledge is required as to the question whether these new food preparations do or do not contain substances deleterious to health or in the process of their manufacture may be liable to contamination by any deleterious substance. “These foods are sold under fancy names without any indication of the ingredients which they contain or of the substances used in their manufacture, and in present circumstances hardly any official control is exercised over the purity of these preparations.” When samples are taken under the Sale of Food and Drugs Act, which as a matter of fact is seldom the case, the analyst has no means of knowing whether any particular deleterious matter should be looked for. That the present administration of the Sale of Food and Drugs Act is not all it might be was shown by the outbreak of arsenical poisoning owing to the contamination of beer in the neighbourhood of Manchester. The arsenic in the beer was not discovered by the revenue officials or by the public analysts but by a medical officer of one of the large hospitals. Since this epidemic the Board of Inland Revenue has caused, under an order from the Treasury, numerous samples of brewing ingredients to be taken at breweries and examined in order to see if they are free from deleterious substances. It is of the utmost importance to the community that this process of inspection should not be confined to beer and beer ingredients only. Under the Factory Acts men are protected as far as possible from accidents by well-guarded machinery; boys are not allowed to work until they have passed a medical examination by the factory surgeon. Surely in a similar manner their food should be open to inspection, as recommended by the Royal Commission on Arsenical Poisoning, to see not only that the finished product is free from deleterious substances but that in process of manufacture proper precautions are taken to safeguard the ingredients used in its manufacture from contamination. It is well known that the arsenic in the beer in the Manchester epidemic had its origin in the use of arsenical glucose made with arsenical sulphuric acid, but we have since learnt, especially with regard to the arsenical poisoning cases at Halifax in 1902, that arsenic can also get into beer through the malt. Now at the present time sulphuric acid is used in the preparation of many other food ingredients besides glucose and malt enters largely into the preparation of many patent foods now on the market, so taking only these two food ingredients it shows very clearly the necessity for some form of supervision or inspection of foods beyond that of the Sale of Food and Drugs Act. The United States of

America are fully alive to the necessity of having a Pure Food Law and a Bill has just passed through Congress the provisions in which are said to be, first, the fixing of standards of foods and drugs as to their purity, strength, and character and the defining of what shall be considered adulteration or misbranding of foods and drugs; and secondly, the prohibition of inter-state commerce in such misbranded or adulterated articles. It is scandalous that this matter should be so lightly considered by the Government and made the subject of mere pourparlers between the various Government Offices. The question of the health and the well-being of the community is concerned and the reform indicated should be commenced without delay.

#### THE SUNSHINE OF SPRING.

THE brilliant sunny weather of the present week would seem to have come to assure us that we have at length emerged from the long, dark, cheerless days of winter. The effect upon the well-being and the physical aspect of the individual is quite noticeable. The winter pallor is gradually yielding to a healthier-looking colour, faces even look sunburnt, and the general personal appearance is that of renewed vigour and health. Improved tone and nutrition are moreover disclosed in the temperament as well as in the physical appearance. All this is the beneficial work of a bright spring which brings especial joy after the dark, devitalising influences of an unpropitious winter. About this time of the year the sun in England exerts its maximum actinic strength; the solar rays are more active in the month of May than in any other month. They effect profound changes in plant life and *a priori* they must have an important influence upon the physiological processes of the animal body. Both analytic and synthetic processes are going on in the full flood of chemically active light in which the spring sun's rays are peculiarly rich. It would be difficult to estimate the good which a bright, sunny spring brings in its train, what epidemics and disease it may avert. It is fatal to the *materies morbi* which may have survived through the dark days of winter; it purifies the streams, it vitalises the air, and it revives and healthily stimulates the great circulatory processes of both vegetable and animal life. In short, light is life, yet of the exact nature of the action of light we know very little. Modern discoveries are teaching us that the whole interest of nature lies in the perpetual degradation and change that are going on not only in the animal and vegetable kingdom but in the mineral kingdom also. The very enjoyment and agreeable stimulation which we experience from the spring sunshine are gained at a cost which means the sun's degradation. When that degradation is complete, life, as we now understand it, must cease. For aught we know the sun may be a vast mass of radium which in the process of breaking down gives out heat and light, new elements appearing which possess no radio-activity at all. How immense and almost inexhaustible this energy must be is well illustrated in the apparent permanence as regards thermo- and photo-activity of even a thousandth of a grain of radium.

#### “TESTING THE EYESIGHT OF A NATION.”

THE reception given by the *Times* to the circular under the above heading, which was sent by the *Optician and Photographic Trades Review* to the press generally, has in no small degree fluttered the Volscians of the optical Corioli. The *Times*, in very plain language, condemned the proposed “diploma” of the Spectacle Makers' Company as a document which would be used to mislead the public and pointed out that the relations between errors of refraction and troubles arising from, or connected with, disease were so