

Mr. Street's statement that an infinite number of laws could be found that would satisfy the conditions is obviously true, but any of them, by what has been said above, would necessarily bear a strong resemblance to the firmo-viscous law, and the simplest hypothesis that is acceptable on physical grounds is that of firmo-viscosity near the centre.

I am unaware of having modified my views on this question in any vital matter save by addition; in any case, I fail to see that such modification would afford any argument against my present position.

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THE PROPOSED MINISTRY OF HEALTH.

WHEN Lord Rhondda some months ago declared that there was a great deal of overlapping in connection with the work of public health administration, and that a separate Ministry was urgently required, of the many who agreed with him few, if any, seemed to be prepared to tell him in detail how he might set about abolishing the overlapping and constructing the Ministry. The faults of the system under which health service was given to the public were plain to see. The reason for their existence was also obvious.

There was no real planning when the scheme was initiated; no one grasped the importance of health work or foresaw that it would and must grow. Even the enthusiasts underestimated the importance of the cause they had at heart, and the persons they induced or compelled to listen to them and to take action naturally also underestimated it. Both parties builded worse than they knew. They did, indeed, the worst thing possible: they chose the wrong foundations, and they did not look ahead and plan for future extensions.

Imbued with the dread, so common in relation to central administration in this country, that trouble would follow if there was any suggestion to form a new department; believing that, so far as Government work is concerned, the safest plan is "more men and fewer of them," they canvassed the existing departments for one or more upon which the new duties might be placed. Not unnaturally, they eventually found a department. That concerning itself with Poor Law administration, now known as the Local Government Board, was obviously the proper one to take on the new work. As organisation went, it was fairly well organised. It had some doctors and a number of lawyers attached to it, and through its officials of a lower grade it was in touch with the class of person whose health required most looking after.

The easy and pleasant task of placing new work in old departments, once commenced, was continued. As new lines of work were found and the necessity for doing something along these lines was recognised, it became essential once more to look round for departments to which the duty of doing what was required might be entrusted.

In some cases the Local Government Board felt unable or disinclined to undertake it, and it was taken round until another department more suitable or complaisant was found. There came at length a time when health work was regarded as the most important of all the public works, and the necessity for seeking departments to accept fresh work in this field ceased. Actually the departments began to compete for it, and it was counted as essential by each that it should have part of the nation's health work to do.

It was regarded as nothing that there should be absolute lack of uniformity and co-ordination; that work on behalf of the public health was so organised that one part, the largest perhaps, was at the Local Government Board with Poor Law administration, another part at the Board of Education, and portions more or less important at the Home Office, the Insurance Commission, the Board of Agriculture, the Board of Trade, the Admiralty, and the Ministry of Munitions.

Recognition of the fact that such a distribution of important work is undesirable and likely to lead to inefficiency, overlapping, and waste of money is easy. Those who recognised it, however, did little more than this. If they had anything to offer in the way of suggestions as to how the existing difficulties might be overcome and the Ministry of Health that was considered so indispensable formed, they did not advertise the fact very widely.

The one scheme that has been given publicity was drafted by certain persons interested mainly, apparently, in State insurance and bodies concerned with its administration. Quite obviously this scheme had for its chief intention the belittling of the importance of the work done by other departments, and particularly that of the Local Government Board, the body at present regarded as the central health department. This scheme and a Bill founded upon it the Prime Minister was asked to bless by a deputation that waited upon him on October 11. Wisely he refused to do so, pointing out that the matter bristled with difficulties, and hinting that consideration, involving a vast amount of time and trouble, would have to be given to it.

It is certain that long and serious consideration will be necessary. The drafting of a scheme is not the work of half a dozen persons known only to one class of the population and knowing but one side of health work. To suggest that a Commission would be the best body to deal with the subject is almost to ask to be regarded as ridiculous. Nevertheless, there is something to be said in favour of a suggestion that a Commission should be appointed, with the proviso that it must be something more than the ordinary body that meets and reports and rests.

The Ministry of Health Commission must consist of individuals possessing business ability and capable of taking a broad view, if the very best is to be done for the health of all the public. Further, it must be given a clear reference and a free hand; the right even to embody its recom-

mendations, not in a report, but in a Bill, might be conferred upon it. If it is necessary to pass an Act of Parliament to allow of the creation of such a Commission and the giving of such powers, then the passing of such an Act must be the first step. The matter is so important as to justify such procedure. The difficulties with which it is attended, mainly because of the number of departments and interests that are involved, render it almost hopeless to expect that a solution will be found if only the methods regarded as constitutional are available.

PROF. ADOLF VON BAEYER, *For.Mem.R.S.*

THE announcement in the *Times* of September 8 of the death of Prof. Adolf von Baeyer at Starnberg, near Munich, in his eighty-second year, must have come as a shock to his many pupils in this country. It was known to several of us that he had not been in good health for some years, but the quiet life which he led at his beautiful home on the shores of the Starnberger See seemed to benefit his health so much that his sudden decease, even at his advanced age, was quite unexpected. It is questionable whether any teacher or investigator ever exerted a greater influence on the development of chemical science, and especially of organic chemistry, than Baeyer has done, for not only was he a great teacher whose pupils are to be found in every civilised country, but his researches have also laid many of the foundations on which the amazing structure of modern organic chemistry has been raised. Apart from the interest which always attached to his published work, it is probable that his main influence on chemical thought was due to his magnetic personality and power of imparting to others some of his enthusiasm for discovery.

For many years, and particularly during the period 1880-1900, it was the custom for the large majority of those who wished to come into contact with the later developments of experimental method to attach themselves, for a short time at least, to the laboratories at Munich. The power which Baeyer exercised in connection with the progress of chemistry in Germany can scarcely be better illustrated than by the fact that during these years almost every professor of chemistry in Germany of the first rank was a pupil of Baeyer. Among these we find, for example, the names of E. Bamberger, L. Claisen, Th. Curtius, Emil Fischer, Otto Fischer, P. Friedländer, C. Graebe, L. Knorr, C. Liebermann, Victor Meyer, H. v. Pechmann, J. Thiele, and R. Willstätter.

Baeyer's influence on the development of chemical industry, and especially of the colour industry, was not less remarkable, for in every works were to be found such men as Caro and Duisberg, Homolka and Weinberg, and a host of others who had learnt their chemistry and acquired their methods of research in the laboratories at Munich. If inquiry is made into the reason for the wide influence which Baeyer has exerted on

chemical thought, it will be universally agreed that this has been due in the main to his extraordinary enthusiasm for research and the keen joy which he felt and expressed when he had succeeded in producing some new substance of importance which he had probably been seeking for many months, and possibly for years. On such occasions he used to walk about the laboratories beaming with delight and discuss his latest discovery and its probable consequences with his assistants and advanced pupils. His enthusiasm fired the enthusiasm of his hearers, and unquestionably did much to awaken and stimulate the desire to make discoveries and achieve something perhaps of equal importance. Baeyer was essentially an experimenter, and had little real interest in the development of new theories, although some of his views, such, for example, as those on the constitution of benzene, the structure of oxonium salts, the cause of colour in the triphenylmethane series, and the mechanism of the formation of sugar in the plant, were valuable contributions to theory, and his well-known "Spannungs Theorie" was a brilliant conception of real value in connection with stability in ring structures.

It was Baeyer's habit to adjourn to his private laboratory directly after his early-morning lecture, for perhaps an hour, in order to carry out any experiments which had occurred to him after the close of the previous day's work and to discuss the day's programme with his assistant. He would then walk through the research laboratories and talk over any difficulties with those with whom he happened to be working, and with others whose work happened to interest him. Baeyer's custom was to work himself with comparatively few of those engaged in research in his laboratories, and he left to the *Privatdozenten* almost entirely the supervision of the *Doctorarbeiten*.

Unless something of real interest had happened, it was usual for those working with him to tell him at once that there was nothing to report, and, in this way, Baeyer frequently made the tour of the large laboratories so rapidly that he was back in his private laboratory soon after eleven o'clock, and the whole of the rest of the day was spent at his own work. His private laboratory—a large and very well lit room—usually contained, besides one private assistant, some other researcher in whose work he was specially interested, and it was not unusual for such a student to remain in the private laboratory for weeks at a time. Such an experience was, of course, of the utmost value to those who were fortunate enough to enjoy the privilege; in such circumstances it was impossible not to be profoundly influenced by the skill, patience, and resource with which the experimental difficulties of so many intricate problems were gradually overcome. His equipment for research consisted almost entirely of test-tubes and glass rods, and it rarely happened that he used anything larger than quite small beakers and flasks. Large wooden racks containing hundreds of test-tubes were always at hand, and it used to