
CHAP. V.

OLEA FIXA SIVE EXPRESSA.—FIXED OR EXPRESSED OILS.

EXPRESSED Oils are distinguished by their unctuousity and insipidity, by being insoluble in water and in alkohol, by being incapable of volatilization without change, and by combining with the alkalis, forming soaps. They exist in the fruit and seeds of vegetables, and are obtained by expression, or decoction with water. The former method is in general to be preferred; and to afford the oil pure it must be performed without heat, which, though it favours the separation of the oil, communicates to it acrimony and an unpleasant flavour. To preserve them from becoming rancid, they ought to be kept secluded from the air, this change being produced in them by absorption of oxygen.

A process in Pharmacy somewhat difficult is to mix these oils with any watery fluid, so that they may be conveniently exhibited. It is usually done by the medium of mucilage, or of an alkali. If triturated with mucilage, and a small quantity of sugar, the oil is diffused through the water, and a milky liquor is formed, in which, however, the diffusion is rather imperfect. A combination

more complete and permanent is effected, by adding a few drops of water of ammonia, or two or three grains of sub-carbonate of potash.

The directions for preparing these oils in the Edinburgh Pharmacopœia are given under the OIL OF ALMONDS.

OLEUM AMYGDALÆ COMMUNIS. Oil of Almonds.

“Take of Fresh Almonds any quantity. Bruise them in a stone-mortar, inclose them in a hempen bag, and express the oil by a press without heat.”

The oil thus obtained is the purest of the expressed oils, being limpid and entirely free from odour or taste. It is used as a demulcent, and for the general medicinal purposes to which expressed oils are applied.

In the same manner is to be expressed OLEUM LINI USITATISSIMI, Oil of Lintseed, from the seeds of the plant. Being less pure, it is used only as an external application. Usually, it is prepared on the large scale; and to remove the mucilage, heat is employed.

To these the London College add OLEUM RICINI, Castor Oil, ordering it to be prepared by bruising the seeds, from which the external pellicle has been removed, and expressing the oil without any application of heat. This oil is usually prepared, however, in the West Indies by decoction, and is milder than when obtained by expression. The Olive Oil, OLEUM OLÆ EUROPÆÆ, which of all the expressed oils is most largely employed, is imported from the South of Europe.