

EDITORIAL

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THE FIFTH NATIONAL FORMULARY.

THE first general impression of the new National Formulary seems to be that it is "more like the Pharmacopœia than ever." While this may be true it was not the purpose of the revision or the aim of the Committee.

The aim of the Formulary is distinct from that of the Pharmacopœia, and has been kept so throughout the revision. The primary question in revision of the Pharmacopœia is "Why should this particular article be in the book?" and the answer is based upon its therapeutic value as judged by the physicians on the Committee. The primary question in National Formulary revision is "What preparations do the physicians wish to use?"—and no question is raised why they wish to use them. The National Formulary makes no dispute concerning the physician's therapeutic judgment. It recognizes his legal and ethical right to his own discriminating purpose, and merely aims to add the prestige of uniformity in composition and appearance and of pharmaceutical skill in compounding to the physician's desire. So while the two books may appear alike, there is a fundamental difference in their purpose which should be borne in mind.

The new Formulary does resemble the Pharmacopœia more than formerly in that it contains a number of tables which are new to it. These are included for two reasons: Some are needed to complete the data of Part I, and the tabular form seems to be more convenient and space-saving, and some are there because they are designed for the convenience of both the physician and the pharmacist. Whether the last will prove true is to be determined in the use of the book during the next few years. Is it easier, in looking up a dose or a solubility, to refer to a table, or to the individual article in either the U. S. P. or the N. F.? Perhaps habit is a large part of the answer to that, and the value of these tables will be determined very largely by the younger members of the profession, including students. Here is where innovations must begin and in a large measure must be judged.

The last table, that of component relations, is a truly new venture. It may prove helpful and it may prove to be more of a trap to entangle the student. It is hoped that the first only will be true. As a trap it certainly has no valid reason for existence. Furthermore, its accuracy is quite uncertain because, being new and also very inclusive, it demands more study than could be given during the revision to be sure that neither omissions nor mistakes are made.

The new book contains 151 more pages than its predecessor, and yet Part I, which is the foundation of the work, contains 35 less formulas. Logically it would appear that the book should be smaller, rather than larger. But four conditions have contributed to the increase in pages—first, the addition of dose statements to all preparations except those intended for external use; second, the addition of descriptions and tests to the Solutions and some other articles; third, the necessary increase of 25 articles in Part II over the number in the preceding edition, and fourth, the inclusion of diagnostic tests and tables in Part III.

Dose statements are a reincorporation. The first three editions of the Formulary contained partial dose statements, but these were not nearly as full as the present edition. The fourth edition contained none. The plan of the statements is open to question. Three plans are possible. One in which the doses are approximated in a way to be easily grasped and remembered. This plan has many advantages. Another plan is to give the actual equivalents in each dose by each system of weights and measures. The third is to give actual equivalents in one system, and approximate in the other. The second plan has been followed. Whether it is the wise one to adopt may depend upon the point of view. It is more accurate, but less usable. Teachers may approve of it and practitioners may not, or perhaps both may approve. It must be tried out before we can know which method is to be preferred, but no judgment is likely to be unanimous.

The descriptions and tests which have been added to the Solutions—and a few other preparations—are designed to be an added safeguard against errors or sophistication. This feature should be and doubtless will be extended in future editions, but it must be done very carefully. Both the descriptions and tests should be carefully checked up against a number of samples, to avoid errors in color or appearance due to normal variations in materials or individual skill in compounding, and also to supply reasonable tolerances for the tests. This will require the making of the preparations by a number of different operators, using different supplies or materials, and then the comparison of physical properties and chemical tests. It cannot be done in one revision. The present offers a basis for checking up on the descriptions and tests now given, and also for an enlargement of the subject for future revisions. Too minute descriptions or tests, based on a single or a very small number of samples, may be a detriment instead of a help.

Among the added preparations, the ampuls and tablets may be mentioned. Whether more than a very few pharmacists will make use of the formulas in the stores is doubtful, but the average pharmacist may derive a more definite idea of the standards and requirements in ampul and tablet preparation which will enable him to deal with these lines of medication more intelligently. The seven ampuls recognized are all typical of different classes, and except the iron ampul solutions, and the insoluble bodies which are offered in suspension in ampuls, they cover the general field.

There are a number of dental formulas which have been compiled by the aid of a special coöperation committee of dental teachers and practitioners appointed by the National Dental Association. These formulas include a toothpowder, dental liniments, a mouth wash and a toothache remedy—all, of course, having the approval of dental authorities. Before final adoption they were submitted to a number of dentists who were not on the committee, and their judgment was added thereto. They can, therefore, be offered as authoritative preparations for dental use, and the practice of local dentists be attracted thereto. This is another experimental development for the success of which future propaganda may be the key.

A few veterinary remedies are included in a similar way, adopted through the coöperation of a committee from the American Veterinary Medical Association. This committee coöperated very cordially, but it developed that there are but few distinctly veterinary preparations that would be suitable for inclusion. A number

of the present and past formulas are used in veterinary practice, but are not distinctly known as such. These are kept, and thus the only one which the Formulary recognizes as distinctly for veterinary use—the Veterinary White Lotion—while seemingly a small recognition is really one of a number of formulas which veterinarians use. Here is another opportunity for propaganda development. The N. F. Committee hopes that the next revision will see an increased interest in the Formulary, and a stronger desire to cooperate on the part of the allied medical organizations.—WILBUR L. SCOVILLE.

THE COMING MEETING IN PHILADELPHIA.

THE attention of the officers of the Sections of the AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION has been called to the rapidly approaching convention in Philadelphia. Steps should be taken immediately to prepare the programs of the Sections so that publicity may be given in the succeeding issues of the JOURNAL—only two issues are available for the purpose. The program must be prepared in advance of the meeting and every contributor desires that the titles of his or her paper be properly listed.

The session in Philadelphia promises to be one of the most important meetings in the history of the ASSOCIATION. A decision will probably be reached as to the vote on the Headquarters site. The contributions have been coming in very satisfactorily and there is reasonable hope that when the decision is reached as to site that endowments will be forthcoming which will enlarge the opportunities of the Headquarters. This hope is strengthened by the experiences of other promotions and the statement is prompted by a related result in the matter of the new \$240,000 chemistry building for the University of Maryland, for the completion of which sum \$30,000 was needed—the response came promptly from a few donors, who made up the required sum, and among these names that of the Chairman of the Headquarters Campaign Committee is included.

At last year's meeting of the National Conference on Pharmaceutical Research, Secretary John C. Krantz, Jr., brought up the question of publishing a book in popular style describing the research achievements of pharmacy. Progress has been made and the subject will, doubtless, have further consideration at the Philadelphia convention.

In the Preface of "Principles of Publicity," by Glenn C. Quiett and Ralph D. Casey, the authors say:

"The aims, ideals, activities, and accomplishments of many important groups in our complex modern society would go unrepresented in the forum of public opinion did not these groups themselves make an effort to popularize the causes and doctrines to which they are committed. To-day even a useful and honest opinion must make its appeal to the public in the face of other rival efforts to influence opinion, and it must therefore seek a hearing by availing itself of modern technical methods calculated to reach the mind of the average man. Many important causes would remain obscure and neglected if their supporters did not avail themselves of publicity to get the attention of the public."