

DIAGNOSTIC REAGENTS AND TESTS.

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PHARMACEUTICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY—A SUGGESTION AND AN ILLUSTRATION.*

BY EDWARD KREMERS.

In the March 1921 number of *THIS JOURNAL*, its editor published a free translation of the Polish editor Tugendhold's article on "The need of an international bibliography of pharmaceutical literature." The plan is a magnificent one. Its greatest failing, however, is that it suffers from a sort of pharmaceutical empiricism. Whereas some empirialistic plans in world politics, unfortunately, succeed temporarily only to collapse ultimately in themselves, this scheme of a pharmaceutical empiricism will, no doubt, fail even before an attempt has been made to try it out.

Of late so much has been orated about scientific research that one hesitates to use the word, lest one be found guilty of popular oratory. Even the *London Times*, in an editorial on national organization and international superorganization, pointed out recently that the scientific politicians, who spout at national and international gatherings, do not at all represent the real investigators.

Whereas research, in its best sense, is highly individualistic, there are other fields of activity in which the individual can accomplish almost nothing or, at best, but little. Not but that coöperation among investigators in the same science, or, better still, among investigators in different sciences, is absolutely essential; the best results, however, are more likely to be attained by voluntary coöperation and not by a machine-like coöperation on part of the members of a given organization.

In the bibliographic field, however, the situation is different. In this line of activity it has become practically impossible to master the progress made year in and year out in but a single science. Furthermore, such an undertaking is frequently a waste of mental energy that should be directed toward research itself.

Bibliographic efforts conducted at cross purposes, such as we find exemplified in Pharmacy and Chemistry or in Pharmacy and Botany and as are suggested in Tugendhold's proposed plan, afford illustrations of the waste of energy, time and money. Moreover, within one and the same science coöperation should find a place. If, for example, the bibliography of a given subject has been thoroughly worked up for years, why do our associations waste their financial and other resources to cover the same subject less thoroughly?

An illustration of this sort we find in the bibliography of the volatile oils. Since 1877 the chemists of Schimmel & Company have covered this subject in thorough fashion. Nevertheless, several organizations—among them our AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION—find it necessary to cover the same ground

* Read by Title at the Cleveland meeting of the A. PH. A.

though in but fragmentary fashion. We complain about an insufficient budget and find it necessary to increase our membership dues. Yet we spend at least some of this money uselessly. Especially in the field of bibliographic activity coöperation is not only possible but highly desirable. If the chemical societies of England and the United States cannot agree on a joint publication of their abstracts, this is no reason why our AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION should not make the attempt at bibliographic coöperation whoever the coöperating parties may be.

The "Reports" of Schimmel & Company are not the only ones in the volatile oil field. Gildemeister's three-volume work on "The Volatile Oils" is not the only one on this subject, but between the two we have a complete treatise with running bibliography covering the entire field in all of its aspects.

Equally admirable, though somewhat different are the Semi-Annual Reports of Roure-Bertrand Fils.

In a university library or a similar institution one naturally expects to find the book literature on volatile oils represented as completely as possible. The pharmacist, however, or the chemist, who is interested in this subject, will not think of burdening his private library with a complete set of "Schimmel & Company's Reports" any more than with the complete book literature on the subject. It will suffice him to have in his possession the new edition of Gildemeister, "The Volatile Oils" of 1910-1922 and the supplemental Semi-Annual, now Annual Reports of Schimmel & Company from April 1913 on, since which time even the size and printed page have been changed to harmonize with the page of "The Volatile Oils."

For the sake of completeness, however, a list of the German Berichte has been added to this suggestion concerning bibliographic coöperation as published in German translation. To the librarian and many a specialist, this list may be welcome. For additions and corrections the writer will be grateful indeed. The references to maps and illustrations ought to prove useful to the custodian of drug and other collections, but more particularly to the pharmacogeographer.

To the same extent to which our modern factories appreciate and apply research, not only for commercial development but to further science as such, to the same extent investigators outside of the factories should affiliate more closely with their colleagues within the factory. Above all, it should be the duty of scientific bibliography, not only to record the results of factory research, but to make the greatest possible use of factory publications for the benefit of all.

The only criticism that may be passed on these semi-annual and annual bibliographic reports is that a general oversight over each year is wanting. This should be written not so much for the specialist as for the general scientist who endeavors to keep posted in a general way outside of his specialty. For pharmacists, perfumers, even for physicians, botanists, pharmacognosists and others such a brief annual survey devoid of details should prove of greatest importance.

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That which seems well within reach in the volatile oil field should likewise be possible along other lines. Repeatedly individuals have attempted something of this sort in their specialties, *e. g.*, in the subject of alkaloids. According to the

point of view, the literature on this subject could be worked up along three distinct lines: *firstly*, from the phytochemical point of view; *secondly*, from the structural chemical point of view; and *thirdly*, from the point of view of alkaloidal assay. Whereas the individual undertaking such a task is bound to fail in the end, a larger organization, which disposes, not only over the means, but which has claims on the time and energy of individual specialists as well, should endeavor year in and year out to achieve the end.

Paper plans have their charms for those who develop them. Much more valuable, however, is the accomplishment of but a fragment of a great scheme. The AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION should strive to create such a bibliographic undertaking. Coöperation on the part of individuals will not be wanting provided the plan is rightly conceived and properly conducted.

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The German copy of this manuscript which was published recently in the New York *Apotheker-Zeitung* (April Number) is supplemented with a table of bibliographic special features of fifty years of the *Bericht* von Schimmel & Co. Most of these Reports have been published in English and not a few in French. It did not seem worth while, however, to prepare corresponding bibliographic tables for these translations. Aside from the incompleteness of the foreign series, the differences would have consisted primarily in the page references. Librarians and others interested in these details are, therefore, referred to the account in the *Apotheker-Zeitung*, published in the same language in which the original *Bericht* appeared.

SOME INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT MERCUROCHROME.

BY FITZGERALD DUNNING.

Many of the well-known therapeutic products dispensed by pharmacists in various parts of the country become, in time, so familiar that their chemical nature and history of development are forgotten.

Assuming this fact to be true in regard to Mercurochrome, it would seem desirable before describing practical methods of dispensing this product, to offer a résumé representing the history of its development.

The discovery and practical application of Mercurochrome is involved in the research work directed by Dr. Ira Remsen back in 1889, which resulted in the discovery of saccharin and phenolsulphonphthalein. Phenolsulphonphthalein, among other new compounds, prepared by Remsen and his co-workers, was submitted to Prof. J. J. Abel, Chief of the Pharmacological Department, Johns Hopkins Medical School. Dr. Abel tested these products on animals with the idea of ascertaining whether or not they would show properties which would indicate their value in medical practice. It is quite generally known that phenolsulphonphthalein proved to be of value in estimating kidney function, because of the uniformity and rapidity of its elimination through the kidneys. Dr. L. G. Rowntree, working with Dr. Abel in the Pharmacological Department, was in charge of the work which resulted in demonstrating the value of phenolsulphonphthalein as a kidney functional test, and Dr. J. G. Geraghty applied the results of Rown-