

slightest degree daunted by prior failures. The purpose is worthy; it is good; it is an advance step for the benefit of humanity. It is well for us to meet our responsibilities and to meet them in a way that reflects credit upon us.

I sincerely hope to see the day when your organization, the New York Branch of the American Pharmaceutical Association, will claim the honor that will be the just reward for carrying this progressive movement to the homes and for the benefit of the people.

THE NEED OF AUTHORITY FOR NON-OFFICIAL MEDICAMENTS.*

JOHN ROEMER, WHITE PLAINS, N. Y.

There is no doubt that at times we have all found ourselves on the border line of indecision in relation to what is intended when some medicament for which no official standard is extant was requested, and there are many such which find their way through the channels of pharmacy, for which it is impossible to ascertain the facts necessary to intelligent dispensing.

That no such authority exists is surprising, for the need is apparent, and although information is promiscuously scattered throughout the literature relating to pharmacy, this information is far from specific.

Assuming that we do find an abstract or digest on any given subject, we are often in doubt whether the statements are reliable, or whether they are paid advertisements.

The Pharmacopœia and National Formulary occupy their time-honored place under legal authority for all that happened many years ago, but pharmacy progresses and investigators are constantly thrusting new material upon us, either with a view of finding a convenient outlet for their products or with the idea that they may prove of value, and the pharmacist and physician both are confronted with the necessity of distinguishing that which is good from that which is valueless, and hence there is need for some authorized standard that will supply us with the proper information.

Take, for example, a prescription calling for two grains of digitalin to be divided into fifty capsules.

Shall we dispense Digitalin German, Merck's Pure Digitalin, Merck's Crystallized Digitalin, Boehringer's True Digitalin, Digitalin Abbott, French Digitalin, or any one of several other so-called digitalins, the doses of which are given variously as from one-fourth to one two hundred and fiftieth of a grain?

The American Medical Association in 1905 created the Council of Pharmacy and Chemistry, for the purpose of disseminating information regarding such medicaments, such information being transmitted to the medical profession from time to time in the Journal and annually printed in book form.

This work of the A. M. A. is worthy of the highest commendation, but it is a field of work in which pharmacy should be the pioneer and at all times maintain its position in the vanguard of the procession.

The American Pharmaceutical Association claims this as the right of pharmacy,

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and in a measure justifies itself; for in the Reports on Progress of Pharmacy we have an able presentation of the sum total of what is now and of the old that has been renovated, but it is mainly in the form of abstracts or digests without any authority or legal standing.

The Department of Agriculture from time to time determines standards which also under given rules and regulations are accepted as such, yet these in the main apply to food products and have little bearing on drugs, except such as may also be classed as foods.

What is needed for pharmacy is an authorized, legalized bureau, to which all material relating to drugs or medicaments may be submitted for investigation, and which will be recognized as standard.

As a further illustration, take a preparation such as Syrupus Iodo-Tannicus. It has been my pleasure through this Branch to sift its possibilities so far as pharmacy applies. Having made numerous experiments which finally resolved themselves into a preparation which to all intents and purposes answered the requirements, it was submitted with the conviction that it answered the question of admissibility. It contained by assay 68 percent of iodine combined with the tannin, the balance of the iodine being determined as hydriodic acid. It was at least definite, but other investigators also were taking a hand in this and Casanova and Careane advanced the conclusion that no iodotannate exists in this preparation, but that it is all hydriodic acid.

Marcel Becquet, of Havre, also made this claim. E. Rochereau neutralized the hydriodic acid, and finds iodotannate. H. Percher takes a different view, and besides supplying us with hydriodic acid and iodotannate, obtains also gallic and elagic acids and some free tannic acid, and concludes that the question is as yet unsettled.

By the time I got through these various digests on this preparation I was not at all certain as to what it was. I am not even certain that it is a syrup, and would not be greatly surprised to see some one making the claim that it is only a tan-iodosaccharate in aqueous solution.

And so we find perplexities increasing. The time has surely arrived when we must provide some means to obtain order, and I ask in all sincerity, will pharmacy ever awaken to the needs of the hour?

Why cannot we as pharmacists show some tangible proof that we are entitled to the right to call our profession scientific? No one who appreciates the conditions will deny the need, and our aim should be directed to supply the need and live up to our claim that we do know something about drugs.