

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE BRITISH PHARMACOPŒIA, 1914.*
(Fifth Revision.)

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To learn the purposes of and the reasons for any book, one consults its preface, as it is here authors "state their case." By doing so, one avoids making undeserved and ill-considered criticisms.

In this instance, careful reading of the preface is quite essential for the proper understanding of the subject. Here one will find that certain deviations are permitted, and inclusions made, to broaden the scope of the book to better serve the whole empire.

The "histological characters of the parts of plants officially recognized are fully described whenever the information is important;" so also of drug powders, where "by chemical testing alone the identity of the article in question could not be certainly determined."

Thus omitting non-essential or the more technical details wherever it was deemed permissible. "Words in the text" referring to articles, reagents, and processes defined or described in an appendix, are printed in italics, thus emphasizing their importance and facilitating reference.

We are informed that "the English titles are not, as a rule, literal translations of the Latin titles." Again that the list of abbreviations in the index, in the interest of international uniformity, is in response to a suggestion of Dr. Remington, chairman of the U. S. P. convention, and that the list probably will be found useful to those in foreign countries, who have to interpret the abbreviations of British practitioners.

Because the $\bar{3}$ symbol is used to represent 60 grains as well as one fluid drachm, and the $\bar{3}$ symbol is used to represent sometimes 480 grains, sometimes 437.5 grains, as well as one fluid ounce, and are liable to be misread, "it is recommended that prescribers should cease to employ them."

Other features are the use of the centigrade thermometric scale, and metric weights and measures only, in stating temperature and quantities.

Doses are stated in both the metric and the imperial systems, with only approximate equivalence intended. The term millilitre is used instead of cubic centimetre, being shorter, and in better conformity with the metric notation.

In stating doses of fluids, the contraction "mil," and its compounds "decimil" and "centimil" are used—a decided improvement on our present method.

For "metric measures" and "volumetric vessels" the standard temperature is 15.5° C. (60° F.), however, for purposes for which the imperial system is used, vessels are "recognized" which have been graduated at 16.7° C. (62° F.).

The terms "water-bath" and "steam-bath" are specifically defined.

The atomic weights adopted are the 1914 values of the International Committee on Atomic Weights, on the basis of Oxygen=16.

In quantitative testing, proportional amounts of those stated, are permitted.

* Read before Chicago Branch, April 27, 1915.

The last sentence of this paragraph seems like an official recognition of professionalism in British pharmacy, and a compliment to British pharmacists, and reads as follows:

"In short, the details of procedure in these and other chemical operations are now left to the skill and judgment of pharmacists and of analysts who are assumed to be fully trained."

Considering the several monographs, the grouping of the various reactions and tests, and the descriptions of general processes in the appendix has resulted in a great saving of space, producing a smaller book than the present U. S. P.

The simple and direct manner of statement adds definiteness and brevity, for example, Hydrochloric Acid is defined as "a liquid containing 31.79 percent, by weight, of hydrogen chloride, HCl, and 68.21 percent, by weight, of water. And under "Characters and Tests" we find: "Lead limit 10 parts per million. Arsenic limit 5 parts per million." Both statements short and to the point.

"Alumen Purificatum," may be either potassium or ammonia alum. "Amylum" includes corn, rice, and wheat starch.

Under "Acidum Acetylsalicylicum" the test for absence of salicylic acid reads as follows: "When 0.5 gramme is shaken with 20 millilitres of water and 1 drop of T. solution of ferric chloride is added, no violet coloration is produced." Prolonged shaking may sufficiently decompose a sample to give a positive reaction; also allowing the test to stand several hours gives a positive result, thus showing the need of time-limits on certain procedures and tests.

Under "Apomorphinæ Hydrochloridum" the following warning serves the busy pharmacist well: "The solutions decompose on boiling or keeping, with production of a green colour; but remain unchanged for a considerable time if acidified with a trace of hydrochloric acid."

There is a lack of uniformity in the titles of the bismuth salts: "Bismuthi Carbonas" is Bismuth Oxycarbonate, synonym B. subcarbonate; "Bismuthi Salicylas" is B. salicylate, and in the definition named oxysalicylate; "Bismuthi Subnitras" is B. oxynitrate, without the synonym "Subnitrate." Chemical formulas are provided for these salts, thereby suggesting definite and uniform composition, which, however, will not likely be the case.

Cantharidin and its preparations replace Cantharides and preparations, assuring more certain medication.

Infusion Digitalis contains only 7 gm. drug per litre, less than half the U. S. P. strength. Hypodermic injection solutions of few drugs are provided. These are prone to fungous growths, and the use of tablets affords, more readily a closer approach to asepsis.

Formulas for several ophthalmic discs are included.

"Liquor Ammonia Fortis" is 32.5 percent by weight, of NH_3 , 28 percent being the U. S. P. strength.

The ammonia waters, lime water, witch hazel, and hydrogen peroxide are classed as liquors. "Liquor Cresolis Saponatus" is made with castor oil.

"Oleum Phosphoratum" differs slightly from the N. F. preparation.

"Opium" contains somewhat less morphine than the U. S. P. standard requires.

A number of inclusions and omissions may seem odd to us: Codeine alkaloid and phosphate are included, the sulphate omitted; morphine acetate, hydro-

chloride and tartrate included, the alkaloid and sulphate omitted; strychnine alkaloid and hydrochloride included, the nitrate and sulphate omitted; quinine alkaloid is omitted; pilocarpine nitrate only is official; "Potassa Caustica," potassium hydroxide, is included, sodium hydroxide omitted.

"Sodium Acid Phosphate" is a valuable inclusion.

"Spiritus Rectificatus," alcohol, is 90 percent by volume—the U. S. P. alcohol being 94.9 percent.

There are four diluted alcohols official, namely, 70, 60, 45, and 20 percent, respectively.

"Tinctura Iodi Fortis" is 10 percent, "Tinctura Iodi Mitis" is 2.5 percent. "Unguentum Hydrargyri" contains 30 percent mercury, conforming in strength to the International Agreement. "Unguentum Hydrargyri Ammoniaci" is 5 percent, a more commonly used strength. There are 43 ointments in the B. P., the U. S. P. containing only 24. "Benzoinated Suet" replaces benzoinated lard for ointments made in India.

There is a tendency of having opium in disguise in a number of preparations, examples of which are: "Compound Pill of Soap," "Compound Powder of Ipecacuanha"—"Dover's Powder," "Compound Powder of Kino," "Compound Lead Suppositories," and "Compound Tincture of Camphor"—Paregoric.

A number of "coined" names are among the official titles, such as "Barbitone" for diethylbarbituric acid—Veronal, "Benzamine Lactate" for beta-eucaine lactate, "Diamorphine Hydrochloride" for di-acetyl morphine hydrochloride. "Hexamine" for hexamethylenetetramine, "Phenacetinum" for para-acet-phenetidid, "Salol" for phenyl salicylate, "Sulphonol" for diethylsulphone-dimethylmethane, "Methylsulphonol" for diethyl-sulphone-methyl-ethyl-methane.

Some of these names are new, others familiar; taken as a whole, perhaps better than former attempts.

There is a stated limit of error for Alkaloidal Assays, within which preparations must be brought in their final adjustment.

These are some of the things noted in a more or less careful inspection of the book, with a very limited working knowledge of the formulas.

A PLAN FOR A MORE SERVICEABLE A. PH. A. JOURNAL.*

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It has been apparent to many members of the American Pharmaceutical Association for some time that the "Journal" of the Association is not giving as satisfactory service as might have been expected, judging by the contentions of those who advocated discontinuing the issuance of a volume of annual proceedings and substituting therefor a monthly journal. In the editorial outlining the policy of the "Journal" published in the first issue of the latter it was stated that it had been brought "into existence to serve the necessities of the Association," and that, "except for its ability to render this service in more complete manner

* Read before New York Branch, A. Ph. A., March 8, 1915.