Land Values," the pharmacist may well ask the reason for the complicated and petty taxes imposed by the Revenue act of 1918.

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## REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON PROPRIETARY MEDICINES TO THE AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION AUGUST 1919.*

During the period since its last report the Commission on Proprietary Medicines has continued the study of the several problems assigned to its consideration, but has not been able to bring any of the particular investigations to a sufficient degree of completeness to warrant a final report thereon. The present therefore may be regarded as a report of progress.

*Continued Decrease of Alcohol Content of Patent Medicines.*—The report of the Commission for 1916 set forth the results of its investigation of the alcohol content of 1108 proprietary medicines commonly handled by the retail drug trade. Of these 29.40 percent were found to contain alcohol in excess of one percent, as compared with 48.25 percent of U. S. P. preparations and 47.65 percent of National Formulary preparations which contained alcohol in excess of one percent.

Since then hearsay reports not yet confirmed, but probably correct, indicate that proprietary manufacturers generally are making strenuous efforts to find substitutes for the alcohol in their preparations, and that some of them are considering the change of their products from liquid to solid form, their efforts in these directions no doubt being stimulated by radical prohibition legislation and by the increasing cost of alcohol.

Reports continue to come of the use of a certain hair tonic as a beverage liquor substitute in dry territories, some enterprising experimenter having discovered the preparation to be good for inward as well as for outward application. From information received there is reason to believe that the abuse of this preparation in this manner will soon be brought to an end.

As is well known the U. S. Internal Revenue Bureau publishes a list of excessively alcoholic preparations that have been discovered from time to time through a long series of years. From the fact that the Internal Revenue Bureau is known to be one of the most efficient of government agencies and that it has a highly efficient secret service at its command, it may be inferred that but few preparations of this character have escaped its attention. A careful examination of the Internal Revenue list shows the names of comparatively few preparations that are handled by the regular drug trade, and it is to be hoped that even this small number will soon cease to be found in the stock of any reputable drug house.

On the whole it may be said that the regular drug trade, both wholesale and retail, is gratifyingly free from the sale of proprietary medicines containing alcohol in excess of what might reasonably be considered necessary for the solution of their medicinal constituents or to ensure them against spoilage by fermentation or freezing.

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* Presented and accepted New York meeting American Pharmaceutical Association, 1919.

It should be noted that this statement refers specifically to preparations commonly handled by the legitimate drug trade and not to such as are distributed through other channels, such as advertising physicians who do a mail order business, or by other indirect methods.

The National Wholesale Druggists' Association has requested of its members that they refuse to handle proprietary preparations that are excessively alcoholic or which contain habit-forming drugs in such proportions as to render them objectionable, and it is believed that the wholesale trade is very generally complying with this request.

*Habit-Forming Drug Content of Proprietary Medicines.*—As regards the use of habit-forming drugs in proprietary medicines the Commission is able to report the same gratifying improvement as has been noted in the case of alcohol.

Of two preparations discovered by the Commission several years ago as being used by opium habitues, one has been entirely withdrawn from the market, and the formula of the other has been revised so as to omit the opium which it formerly contained.

There is some reason to believe that preparations containing habit-forming drugs are still being distributed by certain advertising physicians who do a mail order business, but who distribute them in such a way as to avoid coming into conflict with either the Food and Drugs Act or the Harrison Act. The evidence as to this is mainly hearsay, and the Commission is therefore not prepared to positively assert that the charge is correct.

Some evidence has been received indicating that certain proprietaries prepared exclusively for physicians' use and not advertised to the general public are being used by habitues to replace the opium and morphine formerly employed. So far as the Commission has been able to discover the pharmaceutical manufacturers who issue such preparations are in no way responsible for their misuse. Most, if not all, of the regular pharmaceutical houses refuse to sell such preparations to dealers in excess of such quantities as they could reasonably be expected to require for legitimate dispensing purposes.

*Injuries Resulting from the Use of Patent Medicines.*—Since its last report rumors have continued to come to the Commission of injuries resulting from the use of proprietary medicines, but attempts to secure reliable information regarding such cases have been as unsuccessful as formerly. Several of the persons who were reported to have said that they possessed such information denied that they had made the statements attributed to them. Others claimed that their information was of a confidential nature and could not be revealed, while still others never replied to requests for information, although the requests were accompanied by return postage.

While not prepared to deny the existence of cases of injury resulting from the use of proprietary medicines, the failure of the Commission to obtain any reliable information of such injurious effects would seem to indicate that they can not be very numerous or its inquiries, widely published in drug journals, would have been more productive of definite results.

*Effect of the Pure Food and Drugs Act.*—Throughout its investigations the Commission has constantly been impressed with the comparative efficiency of the federal food and drugs act in clearing interstate commerce of undesirable prepara-

tions and in enforcing a considerable measure of decency in the character of those which remain.

Whereas the market at one time admittedly contained many worthless or fraudulent preparations, such preparations now seem to be the exception rather than the rule, especially as respects the class of articles commonly distributed in interstate commerce through the regular drug trade. The majority of the preparations now distributed in interstate commerce probably possess some degree of merit when properly used in the class of ailments for which they are designed.

Probably the most deserving of censure at the present time are the preparations put in circulation by firms which do an exclusively mail order business. Such firms are usually composed of licensed physicians or have licensed physicians in their employ, and establish communication with their patients by advertising in the public press. Their business being carried on as a variety of the regular practice of medicine and entirely outside of regular drug trade channels, and their medicines being distributed as compounded prescriptions it is, of course, not easy to deal with them under the provisions of the food and drugs act.

Though the drug trade has not always been in perfect agreement with the rulings of the Bureau of Chemistry it must in fairness be said that the enforcement of the Food and Drugs Act has on the whole been of very great benefit to the public in protecting it from fraudulent preparations, and to the drug trade in freeing it from the responsibility for the distribution of such compounds.

*Disadvantages of Local Legislation.*—Every year brings forth a fresh crop of legislative measures designed for the regulation of the sale of proprietary medicines, ranging from proposed state laws to ordinances by State Boards of Health or other local authorities. Some of these measures no doubt possess merit, but the majority of them would inflict undue hardship upon the drug trade without any compensating benefit to the public. Even if all of them were meritorious, they would still lack uniformity, and if they were enacted the trade would be subjected to a large variety of local laws no two of which would be in agreement and many of which would be conflicting in their provisions.

In the opinion of the Commission any further legislation found necessary should be in the nature of an amendment or supplement to the existing Federal Food and Drugs Act. If the field of interstate commerce could thus be covered there is strong probability that all subsequent local and state legislation would be shaped to correspond thereto, and thus federal and state laws and local ordinances would have substantial uniformity.

*Formula Disclosure.*—Most of the proposed measures for the regulation of proprietary medicines include some variety of formula disclosure, either complete or partial.

Those who have studied the conclusions of the British Parliamentary Commission after devoting several years to a careful investigation of this subject can readily understand that formula disclosure is not likely to prove the complete remedy for the evils connected with the exploitation of patent medicines that some imagine it would be.

As a matter of fact formula disclosure is a large subject, reaching far beyond the manufacture and distribution of patent medicines, and the collateral and

possibly embarrassing effects of such legislation upon other pharmaceutical products are deserving of serious attention.

One requirement frequently proposed is that all of the active ingredients of a proprietary medicine shall be plainly printed upon the package, as is now required in the case of alcohol and certain other drugs.

Another proposition is that the manufacturer be required to disclose his formula, or the names of its active ingredients, to some public official or board which is to preserve the information thus obtained as an official secret.

The Commission is not prepared at present to give its unqualified endorsement to either of these methods of formula disclosure. In so far as it has any preference it would favor a proposition to require the publication upon the package of a list of the ingredients upon which the manufacturer bases his claims of therapeutic value as the most simple and direct requirement, as the least liable to evasion, and as the most unlikely to impose unnecessary hardship and responsibility upon dealers who handle such preparations in good faith.

Before making any specific recommendations regarding formula disclosure, however, the Commission desires the advice of the association upon the subject, probably the most important of all the questions which the Commission has been called upon to consider.

Respectfully submitted,
(Signed) J. H. BEAL, *Chairman*,
S. C. HENRY,
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## CHLORETONE WATER: A NEW PRESERVATIVE OF BIOLOGICAL SPECIMENS.

BY OLIVER ATKINS FARWELL.

During the early part of this summer (1919) it was suggested to me by Dr. T. B. Aldrich to try out chloretone water as a vehicle in which to preserve vegetable material for permanent biological exhibits and as a means of keeping in a fresh condition vegetable material designed for early laboratory work. He told me that he had animal organs in chloretone water that had been kept for several years and that they were apparently in good condition. He saw no reason why vegetable matter could not be equally well preserved. I therefore carried chloretone water on my botanical excursions and collected various plants, such as Green Algae, Water Lily stems, etc., and put them in the chloretone water. Plasmolosis has not occurred in any of the plants collected, which included both aquatic and