

EDITORIAL

E. G. EBERLE, EDITOR

10 West Chase St., BALTIMORE, MD.

THE UNITED STATES PHARMACOPŒIA XI AND NATIONAL FORMULARY VI.

IT IS unnecessary to stress the fact that the AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION is deeply interested in the revisions of the standards for drugs and preparations, represented by the United States Pharmacopœia and National Formulary.

It may be stated that a motive for organizing the AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION was the desire of pharmacists to improve the quality of drugs and medicines and that this has continued to be one of its principal activities.

The ASSOCIATION accepts full responsibility for the revision of the National Formulary, hence it is a matter of very deep concern to every member. A committee to have charge of the Sixth Edition was elected at the recent annual meeting and is now organizing for this very responsible duty. Fullest coöperation should be given the Committee by all pharmacists so that the National Formulary may continue to serve efficiently as a legal standard, and that its purpose may be fully understood by physicians and pharmacists. In the spirit of service it is said that its usefulness should not be limited to the official recognition of the *Materia Medica*, which is a very important and a distinctive recognition, but there should be more extended prescribing of its preparations by physicians in their practice. The outstanding aim is to have the National Formulary serve its purpose as a representative work of professional pharmacists, and thereby the AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION renders an essential service to the Government, states and the public.

The revision of the United States Pharmacopœia is entered into by the AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION as a service in which the divisions of Medicine, Pharmacy and the Drug Industry share; important to all of them, as well as the Federal Government and states for the protection of their citizens and safeguarding their health, and promoting medical and pharmaceutical practice. In fixing the standards for drugs and chemicals the Committee contributes largely to the commerce and industries. There is no question relative to the sincerity of all who are delegates to the Pharmacopœial Convention; however, no objection will be made to the suggestion that they carefully study revision problems; it is assumed that they will give due consideration to the disinterested selection of members for the Committee of Revision and the Board of Trustees. A representative and large delegation testifies to a general interest, and as a result the Pharmacopœia XI will reflect the status of medicine and of pharmacy and serve the public accordingly. The former revisions of the Pharmacopœia represent a heritage of which we avail ourselves and, after the completion of our work, pass on to the next generation.

The Pharmacopœia and National Formulary have recognition as legal standards in the Federal and State laws applying to drugs and preparations of them, and the designation "official" is applicable, equally, to both standards. Such

recognition makes it imperative that the interest of the public be given due consideration in the revision of both standards and that they should be looked upon by physicians and pharmacists as public trusts.

BIOLOGICAL STANDARDIZATION.

THE AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION does not assume a partisan attitude upon controversial questions, but it can investigate such subjects in the search for truth, and when this is made plain controversy ceases. The foregoing statement, made in substance by another, may be applied to some of the biological tests relative to which there are differences of opinion. A purpose of the publication of a series of articles relating to biological standardization is search for truth. In the October number of the JOURNAL, Aconite was the subject of two papers; in this issue Ergot and, if possible, Digitalis will receive consideration. The constant interest of the ASSOCIATION in U. S. P. Revision work is evidenced by its coöperation in publishing researches in the JOURNAL and "Abstracts of Changes" in the Pharmacopœia, during the revision periods, whereby the information is communicated to those interested. The same applies to the National Formulary, wherein the AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION has the responsibility of revision and publication.

Evidently a number of questions are involved in the proper standardization of ergot and its préparations. Much experimental work has been reported on this important drug for more than a half century; the clinical results have varied and experiences in the laboratories have not always been consistent. These reports have stimulated a closer study of the drug and its préparations, and recent investigations seem to explain some disagreements of former investigators. The importance of the drug, it is hoped, warrants the number of pages given to the researches reported to the Scientific Section at the Rapid City meeting of the AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION. Pharmacists have responsibilities in proper standardization of drugs and, hence, this is a subject of paramount interest; it is an expression of professionalism in pharmacy.

"IRREGULAR LEGISLATIVE SCHEMES."

The *Army and Navy Register* criticizes the Pharmacy Corps Bill as follows:

"One of the circumstances that beset Congress, to the annoyance of those of the legislative and appropriations' committees and to the impairment of really necessary and worthy projects that inevitably crowd the calendars of the House and Senate, is that which finds every session confronted with measures that have little or no merit, that come from various unknown and even unknowable sources and that have no indorsement from the executive officials, who have a responsibility for recommending legislation required for the protection, development, and conduct of the Government. A few of these types of measures pass both branches of Congress, and there may be instances where they receive presidential approval.

"One of the most conspicuous of these examples of unauthorized, undesired and unnecessary measures was that which failed of enactment in the 70th Congress, the bill, of more or less mysterious authorship, intended to impose on the War Department a new bureau for the administra-

tion of the affairs of the Organized Reserves. It never acquired the favorable comment of the then Secretary of War, Mr. Davis, whose silence in this particular was among the most unaccountable of departmental inarticulation.

"Of much less importance and of correspondingly little consequence was another measure (H. R. 16278), introduced by Mr. Kelly, of Pennsylvania, to provide officers and enlisted men for a pharmacist corps in the Army. It is of no special interest at this time, and evidently made no impression upon the House military committee in its hearings on this bill, that accusations were made that Army medical officers issued prescriptions for drugs that were defective and a peril to the life of the patient. The bill originated in a quarter not revealed, and accordingly it was left to surmise that it was sanctioned and urged by the Association of Pharmacists. While there was nothing in this instance of needless legislation to criticise for its ulterior and harmful purpose, it belongs to that class of measures that should never be introduced and submitted for committee discussion until those interested in it ascertain from the responsible officials whether or not it possessed the qualities asserted in its behalf by its sponsors and whether or not it would prove an interference with other legislation already under consideration. By the simplest process imaginable the unfavorable attitude of the Secretary of War would have been promptly and convincingly disclosed. The bill was plausible enough in its provisions and in the accompanying arguments and charges, but almost casual inquiry made in the proper place would have shown the futility and possible menace of such an endeavor, the purposes of which were more efficiently met to the greater advantage of the civilian pharmacists, for example, in the measure of general effect drafted by the surgeon general of the Army and introduced in the last days of the 70th Congress by Representative Wainwright and again in the present Congress (H. R. 1248) on April 18."—*Army and Navy Register*, November 1929.

FOR years the conditions existing in the United States Army in the matter of pharmaceutical practice, embracing the compounding of physicians' prescriptions, the dispensing of drugs, poisons and potent medicinal agents and the general handling of supplies for the sick, have been notoriously unsatisfactory to pharmacists. Notwithstanding the efforts of the AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION and other organizations including the American Medical Association to bring about the necessary improvement, the military authorities make poor pretense of providing a pharmaceutical service worthy of the name. In civil life a rigid standard of competency is demanded of those engaged in this responsible and essential work; in the Army in most instances work of this character is left in the hands of persons having inadequate training, insufficient experience and correspondingly lacking in the rudimentary phases of professional fitness. The military authorities have treated the entire subject with a marked and callous indifference, and the efforts of those who have attempted to call attention to the dangers of the present system have been shunted aside as worthy of no consideration.

The bill for the proposed pharmacy corps is classed with "Irregular Legislative Schemes" in the editorial of the *Army and Navy Register*, quoted above. The undertaking is referred to as having "little or no merit" and as having sprung from "unknown and even unknowable sources." The bill is further characterized as "having no endorsement from the executive officials, who have a responsibility for recommending legislation required for the protection, development and conduct of the Government." In spite of its basic humanitarian aspects, the *Army and Navy Register* casts the bill aside as of "no importance and correspondingly little consequence," and continues with the statement that the bill "is of no special interest at this time, etc.," as above quoted, in full.

If written with a full knowledge of the facts, the editorial exhibits an amazing inability to understand and interpret them; if written by one unfamiliar with the

subject, the article is glaringly unfair and unworthy of a discussion of a serious purpose. The source of the bill has not been hidden; quite the opposite, in fact. The AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION, at its 1928 convention, held at Portland, Maine, gave earnest study to the conditions underlying this bill, and gave its enthusiastic endorsement to the measure, presented by a committee of experts which the ASSOCIATION had appointed to deal with this matter. The measure has been approved by practically every national and state pharmaceutical organization. The AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION has behind it three-quarters of a century of splendid accomplishment. Thus the charge that the bill sprung from "unknown and even unknowable sources" impugns the information on which the *Army and Navy Register* bases its opinion. In a letter, dated October 17, 1928, addressed to Mr. A. L. I. Winne, chairman of the committee appointed to bring about a Pharmacy Corps in the Medical Department of the United States Army, Surgeon General Ireland stated that "under the circumstances I am now and will be as long as I am Surgeon General opposed to the organization of a corps of pharmacists in the Medical Department of the United States Army." An effort was made to stimulate the interest of the military authorities in the purposes of the bill, so another insinuation of the *Army and Navy Register* falls as not in keeping with the facts.

As the matter now stands, the Army of the United States is a place where in our opinion proper and adequate safeguards are not thrown about the exacting and responsible duties of those engaged in pharmaceutical work. In civil life the laws of every state regard this work as seriously related to the welfare of the people. Colleges of Pharmacy are important units in many of the outstanding educational institutions of the country. More than two thirds of the states require a standard university degree in pharmacy as one of the requisites of exacting and stringent standards for pharmaceutical practice and all of them require that the pharmacist prove his fitness and reliability by an examination before being registered. In addition, the laws of most of the states provide for the active enforcement of the pharmacy laws so that the protection contemplated by the statutes may be in fact provided.

The relation existing between the *Army and Navy Register* and the military departments of our Government is unknown to us and we cannot judge how correctly it reflects views of the responsible heads of these departments. The Surgeon General of the Army occupies a unique position and the *Army and Navy Register* voices sentiments that are difficult to understand by those who know the dangers and responsibilities involved in handling drugs and medicines. If the responsible authorities approve these expressions the conclusion is unescapable that continued adherence to military principles and the persistent endorsement and defense of antiquated military procedure induce a certain indifference to human welfare. It is obvious that life, health and happiness are not given the same high value in military circles that is accorded these priceless possessions in civil life where a human being is still a human being irrespective of his position in the social cosmos.—R. L. SWAIN, *Chairman*, A. PH. A. Committee on Pharmacy Corps in the Medical Department, U. S. Army.
