

such a preparation, because of interference from the ether present. Someone has suggested that the ether be removed by warming the product or the distillate so that the ether will be driven off, but not high enough to lose any alcohol, but that does not seem to be a very sound analytical procedure. If the alcohol content of collodion is a subject of enough importance, I believe that considerable work will be necessary in order to develop an accurate method.

We present these few notes on alcohol determination not only because we hope they may be of interest to others but, also, because they may show that in preparing the next Pharmacopœia the alcohol determination methods should be given in greater detail.

REACTION OF BISMUTH MAGMA N. F. V.*

BY K. W. SMITH AND R. E. SCHOETZOW.

The Fifth Edition of the National Formulary, in the instructions for making this product, directs that it be washed with distilled water "until the washings cease to react with phenolphthalein T.S." The magma is then drained and made up to the correct volume with distilled water.

In describing the qualities of this product, the National Formulary states, "It is neutral to litmus paper and phenolphthalein T.S." This can only be interpreted as meaning that the Magma itself is neutral to litmus and phenolphthalein T.S.

We have long been of the opinion that this statement is wrong. We believed that a magma correctly made—its washings neutral to phenolphthalein—would, itself, still be alkaline to litmus and phenolphthalein T.S.; but that its supernatant liquor or a filtrate from the magma would be neutral.

To verify our opinion we prepared two small batches of bismuth magma, strictly following the N. F. V procedure, washing as directed, until the washings ceased to react with phenolphthalein T.S. The product, however, as we anticipated was alkaline to litmus and phenolphthalein while its supernatant liquor or a filtrate from it was neutral to both.

Since it might be thought that the National Formulary did not direct a sufficient amount of washing, we subjected these two magmas to further washing with a relatively large amount of water. But the result was still the same—the product was alkaline to litmus and phenolphthalein test solution.

We recommend then that, at the next revision of the National Formulary the neutrality statement be changed to read "When filtered bismuth magma should yield a filtrate neutral to litmus and phenolphthalein test solution."

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"Mystery is the fundamental curse of medicine; evasion and secrecy are criminal. The best way to help any human being is to help him help himself. The man who is evasive in his dealings with his patient is either dishonest or ignorant, or both."—F. B. MOOREHEAD, M.D.

* Scientific Section, A. Ph. A., Baltimore meeting, 1930.