

EDITORIAL NOTES

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PHARMACEUTICAL RESEARCH.

In a recent issue of the *Scientific American Monthly* the statement is made that "We have really just begun to get results in that interesting field where chemistry and medicine meet, and there is every reason to believe that further experimentation will lead to the discovery and utilization of new substances that will be of greatest efficiency in the treatment of diseases." This statement is agreed to; there is also great opportunity, and proven years and years ago, that the experimentation and discoveries of pharmacists resulted in the establishment of the large chemical industries; Scheele is referred to, but in other lines references might readily be cited which opened up other fields of activities and brought natural resources to largely extended usefulness.

The medical profession is greatly concerned in pharmaceutical research and, for reasons cited, the chemical industries are intensely interested. The custom abroad was to make a few specialties discovered by laboratory workers pay for the investigations and utilize the by-products. Coöperative research can be made of great value.

BRITISH MINISTRY OF HEALTH CONTROL OF THERAPEUTIC SUBSTANCES.

In an editorial of May 8th, the *Pharmaceutical Journal and Pharmacist* states that the "therapeutic substances" now under consideration by the British Ministry of Health are recognized medicinal substances, the purity and standard of efficacy of which cannot be adequately ascertained by the employment of ordinary chemical tests as can that of the great majority of medicinal substances. This determination can only be done in the substances under consideration in properly equipped laboratories by the

employment of biological or physiological methods. Among these are serums and vaccines, and mineral and vegetable bodies such as salvarsan, digitalis, etc.

It is said that in Great Britain there is at present no effective supervision and control of the manufacture or standardization of many of the important agents included in the classes of therapeutic agents now to come under supervision. The work of the Committee is, among other things, to devise measures to coördinate and control the various tests and standards employed by firms and persons engaged in the preparation and sale of these substances and to devise a uniform system of standardization and control the better to guarantee that these agents are what they purport to be, and are of an accepted standard of efficacy.

SODIUM vs. POTASSIUM.

Many of our textbooks continue to specify potassium as the only alkali with which many reactions can be carried on efficiently, and the methods contained in these books require its use in much of the detailed laboratory work.

The *Scientific American Monthly* for April cites as an instance worthy of emphasis in the manufacture of synthetic phenol, where according to the textbooks, in which statements of previous authorities are often taken at their face value without experiments to check their accuracy, potassium hydroxide must be used if satisfactory yields are to be obtained. This statement has been widely copied throughout the literature and is probably based on insufficient and faulty experimentation or carefully planned potash propaganda. In this country we were compelled to produce phenol during the war without potash and one of the companies assigned

the problem to their research laboratory with the result that ways were found of obtaining just as good yields in fusing sodium benzene sulphonate with sodium caustic to produce phenol as could be obtained with potassium hydroxide. In large scale production, ninety percent of the theoretical yield was obtained, which is believed to be as high as yields attributed to potash. By very careful control yields of ninety-four percent of that theoretically possible were obtained in experimental fusions, and two investigators found that by excluding air they could actually obtain ninety-nine percent of the theoretical yield when using sodium benzene sulphonate and sodium hydrate. The displacement of potassium salts by those of sodium in medicine is possible, at least to a considerable extent.

THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE FRENCH CODEX.

The Supplement to the French Codex became official April 1st. Purity rubrics are provided for. Pending the issue of a new edition of the Codex, products may be given official sanction by publication in the *Bulletin de l'Académie de Médecine*. Twelve new preparations have been included in the Supplement: Barbituric Acid, Stovaine, Fluidextract of Cinchona, Urotropin, Oil of Cade, Novocain, Menthol Ointment (1% in petrolatum), Piperazine Hydrate, Solution of Silver Nitrate (2%), Iodated Tincture of Iodine, Antidysenteric Serum, and Antimeningococcic Serum.

COMPULSORY HEALTH INSURANCE CONDEMNED, BUT NOT ALCOHOL, BY A. M. A.

The American Medical Association, at the New Orleans meeting, refused to pass a resolution condemning the use of alcohol in the treatment of influenza. The Association went on record as opposed to Compulsory Health Insurance.

UNITED STATES BOTANIC GARDEN CENTENARY ANNIVERSARY SAME AS THAT OF U. S. PHARMACOPOEIA.

Whether the framing of the U. S. Pharmacopoeia had anything to do with the action of Congress on May 8, 1820, or not, in granting five acres of land for a botanical garden, is not recorded. Four years later, on May 26,

1824, the area of this grant was extended. Many of the presidents have planted trees, which now are among the show spots of the National Capitol.

Throughout the years the Smithsonian Institution has been deeply interested in the upbuilding of the garden, and many fine specimens of plant life gathered in many climes by intrepid explorers have found a home in the garden.

The first plants installed were gathered by the Wilkes exploring expedition to the southern hemisphere. Some of those plants are still living and many of the plants in the present garden are descendants of those brought to the country by that party headed by the late Rear Admiral Charles Wilkes in 1838-42.

The Botanic Garden is spreading its influence by coöperating with state institutions, colleges and universities. Through the members of Congress these gardens distribute various plants into all communities throughout the country, as the founders of the garden proposed to do. There has been assembled a very valuable museum of plant life, including every known plant that can be induced to thrive here.

THE DECLARATION OF U. S. INDEPENDENCE PROCLAIMED ON JULY 8.

Quite a number of the antecedents and descendants of Apothecary Christopher Marshall plied the mortar and pestle, as did the latter. He is also known as the Quaker patriot and diarist. In his diary under the date of July 8 appears this entry: "At eleven went and met Committee of Inspection at Philosophical Hall; went from there in a body to the lodge; joined the Committee of Safety (as called); went in a body to State-House yard, where, in the presence of a great concourse of people, the Declaration of Independence was read by John Nixon.

"The company declared their approbation by three repeated huzzas.

"The King's Arms were taken down in the Court-Room, State-House, same time. * * * I went and dined at Paul Fook's. * * * Then he and the French Engineer went with me on the commons, where the same was proclaimed at each of the five Battalions. * * * There were bonfires, ringing bells, with other great demonstrations of joy upon the unanimity and agreement of the declaration."

HIGH PRICES IN 1760.

In 1760 American supplies were largely purchased in England. The *London Times* states that twice a year General Washington forwarded a list of such articles, comprising necessities and conveniences for household purposes, and so minute and particular was he in these concerns that he could tell if anyone took advantage of him. In a letter written in 1760 he says: "And here I cannot forbear ushering in a complaint of the exorbitant prices of goods this year. For many years I have ordered goods from London as well as other parts in Britain, and can truly say I have never had such a pennyworth before." On May 1, 1759, he wrote to Robert Carey, merchant, of London: "I beg you to send me by first ship bound for the Potomac as I am in immediate want of them." The list, which is entirely in Washington's autograph, includes not only tools, but medicines and household supplies. Among the latter, "25 lb. Glew," "6 bottles Turlington's Balsam," "4 oz. Best Rhubarb," "1 lb. Spirma Citi," "40s. worth of Medicines proper for horses," "& such others as are most proper."

TECHNICAL TABLETS.

BY WILBUR L. SCOVILLE.

One of the first (if not the first) colleges of pharmacy was founded in 1550 at Rouen. Among the earliest textbooks in pharmacy was one by Abbé Nolle about 1740, and by Hagen about 1749-1829.

Propyl alcohol is proposed as a vehicle for perfumes and cosmetics. It has properties similar to ethyl alcohol but is stronger in action. The workings of the prohibition law may develop the use of this alcohol for external preparations.

Sodium cacodylate is sufficiently alkaline in reaction to precipitate strychnine from solution unless free acid is added.

Salvarsan has been tried for pyorrhea with excellent results. The germ of this disease is a spirochete and the arsenic compound is very efficacious. In mild forms it is rubbed into the gums, in severe cases it is injected intravenously.

Leafy foods, such as spinach, cabbage, lettuce, etc., are rich in the fat-soluble vitamins, and thus important in nutrition, though low in nutritive powers.

Biologists have concluded that the harmful effect of poor ventilation is not due to

the chemical contamination of the air, but to disturbances caused by interference with the elimination of body heat. Cold water, if freshly boiled to expel the air will preserve fruits by simply filling the jars containing the fruits to the brim with the water and sealing them. Diastasic reactions in the fruits will use up all the remaining oxygen, and the fermentation or putrefactive germs present cannot develop in absence of air; consequently the fruit will keep as long as the jar is airtight.

In flesh wounds a proteolytic bacillus, known as the Reading bacillus, is usually present. This promotes healing by liquefying the dead protein in the wound, thus removing the base on which pathogenic germs subsist as well as permitting the living tissues to unite. Antiseptics usually destroy this bacillus as well as the pathogenic germs, and healing is thus hindered. Nature has a system which needs little artificial help.

In the treatment of wounds by antiseptics a cooperation between the tissues and the antiseptic gives the best results. The flavine dyes, acriflavine, proflavine and brilliant green have proved especially successful because they are strong in inhibiting the growth of bacteria but are weak in action upon fleshy tissues. They do not require frequent renewal, and they prevent the development of pathogenic germs.

Pills containing arsenous acid with organic matter, when kept moist, have developed a garlic odor and a mould, the arsenic being partly volatilized as ethyl arsenite. Arsenic pills, if stored, should be well dried or coated.

The administration of very small doses of gelsemium and of bryony to rabbits has been found to markedly increase their resistance to influenza and pneumonia.

PERSONAL AND NEWS ITEMS.

CHICLE-PRODUCING TREES DISCOVERED IN BRITISH GUIANA.

Announcement has been made in a report submitted by Consul McCunn of the discovery of chicle-producing trees in British Guiana. Prospecting expeditions sent into the interior have recently returned to Georgetown with fully 600 pounds of chicle, and preparations are now being made by the discoverer, who holds a concessional right over 6,200 square miles of territory, to send out four prospecting parties in order to continue investigations and ascertain the capacity of

the tract. Territory thus far examined is reported to be capable of yielding 200,000 pounds of gum annually.

SODIUM SULPHATE DEPOSIT IN CANADA.

It is reported from Calgary, Alberta, that an important discovery of sodium sulphate has been made near Fusilier, Saskatchewan, on the Lacombe-Kerrobot branch of the C. P. R. The deposit is estimated at 2,000,000 tons, and is claimed by analysts to be 95 percent pure in its raw state. The "lake" is approximately one mile long and 1,000 yards wide, and the depth of the deposit ranges from two feet at the edge to 11 feet at the center. A pit dug in the center of the deposit disclosed that a spring carrying a heavy solution of sodium sulphate flowed in.

UNITED DRUG COMPANY MAY BUY BOOTS, LTD., OF ENGLAND.

Newspaper reports of May 28 state that the United Drug Co. is considering the purchase of Boots, Ltd. The latter own 647 stores in Great Britain and the business is said to amount to about 40 million dollars annually.

Bishop Remington, son of the late Prof. Joseph P. Remington, recently addressed the South Dakota College of Pharmacy on "The Ethics of Pharmacy." He dealt on the great part pharmacists may have in the development of a community.

John F. Hancock, senior ex-president of the American Pharmaceutical Association, has been elected its honorary president for 1920-1921.

Vice-President E. Fullerton Cook, of the A. Ph. A., is the chairman of the U. S. P.

Revision Committee. He was guest of honor at a dinner in Philadelphia, May 28.

Dr. Reid Hunt of Harvard Medical School, a member of the American Pharmaceutical Association, was elected president of the U. S. P. Convention, 1920-1930.

George D. Beal, associate professor of chemistry of the University of Illinois, was awarded the Ebert Prize by the American Pharmaceutical Association for his paper on "The Shaking Out Method for the Quantitative Estimation of Alkaloids."

George M. Beringer, **Leonard A. Seltzer** and **John Culley** are the retail pharmacists who were elected members of the U. S. P. Revision Committee.

Surgeon-General Braisted spoke at one of the General Sessions of the American Pharmaceutical Association.

W. G. Crockett, for the past year professor of pharmacy in Baylor University College of Pharmacy, has accepted the chair of pharmacy in the Medical College of Virginia.

A. G. DuMez, of the Hygienic Laboratory is Secretary of the Council, A. Ph. A.

Edwin Baker, Shelburne Falls, Mass., had a record of fifty-six consecutive years at the same old stand, before retiring from business.

Major Clark, of Surgeon-General Ireland's department, and **Lieutenant Dickens**, under Surgeon-General Braisted, were speakers at the convention of the American Pharmaceutical Association. Both of them are pharmacists and the former is also a graduate in medicine. **Lieutenant Dickens** is one of the editors of *The Hospital Corps Quarterly*.

OBITUARY.

JOHN HENRY DAWSON.

John Henry Dawson, a member of the American Pharmaceutical Association since 1882, died at his home in Glendora, Cal., last month. He was born in New York City in 1852, learned the drug business with Edwin Rulon and graduated from the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy in the class of 1872. For a time thereafter he was engaged in the pharmacy of Alexander Hudnut at 218 Broadway, New York City. Since 1875 he has lived in California and, with the exception of a few years, in San Francisco. He held a number of offices in the Association, was

active in the entertainment of the members during the convention of 1889 and Local Secretary when the Association met in San Francisco in 1915. A sketch of the deceased will be found in the February JOURNAL, A. Ph. A. for 1917, p. 115.

VALENTINE SCHMIDT.

Valentine Schmidt was born in Strassburg, France, July 29, 1840; he died April 1, at his home in San Francisco. As a lad of fourteen years he came to Chicago where he was employed in the drug store of J. Roemheld. In 1860 he went to San Francisco and for a