

PHARMACOPŒIAS AND FORMULARIES

PHARMACOPŒA INTERNATIONALIS, Editio Prima, Volumen I.

By PROFESSOR D. M. DUNLOP,
B.A. (OXON.), M.D., F.R.C.P. (EDIN.), F.R.C.P.

Chairman, The British Pharmacopœia Commission

The publication by the World Health Organisation of the Pharmacopœa Internationalis is a landmark in the progress of scientific international relations. It represents the fulfilment of long felt aspirations to unify the pharmacopœias of the world. It has been realised since about 1874 that the pharmaceutical Tower of Babel which existed as regards standards, terminology, strengths and composition of drugs was, as in other spheres, a source of confusion, misunderstanding and even of danger. A long step has been taken by the publication of the present volume to resolve these national differences though some still remain: for example, two strengths for the tinctures of digitalis and opium are recognised, probably the result of the impossibility of reconciling differences of long-established national habits in treating liquids by volume or by weight; and the limit test for lead and the limit test for heavy metals are both included in this pharmacopœia which thus perpetuates the differing analytical practices in this country and in the United States. The volume has a very British flavour about it, which is a tribute to the influence which must have been exerted by the very British Chairman of the Expert Committee which dictated its policy. Nevertheless, a considerable list could be made out of preparations which have different strengths in the International Pharmacopœia from those in the British Pharmacopœia. The book is beautifully produced and printed, though the typographical innovation which omits a full-point after "g" and "ml" but retains it after "cent." is, as Gibbon once said of Venice, "singular if not pleasing," as is the confusing habit of giving a dose as 0.0005 g instead of 0.5 mg. Incidentally, is there any point in giving an oral dose for adrenalinum? Since it is the stated object of the International Pharmacopœia only to include drugs of *established* therapeutic interest, as well as some substances used for diagnostic and pharmaceutical purposes, it is surprising that it should have been thought worth while to include aconitinum, bromoformium, and lobelini hydrochloridum. Hyoscyami mutici herba is also included which is not itself a medicinal agent but is only used as a source of hyoscyamine and atropine, but other monographs on the botanical material from which alkaloids, such as pilocarpine, are extracted, are not included. The title thiopentalum natriicum cum natrii carbonate gives to thiopentone a pedantic accuracy which chiniofonum is perhaps fortunate to escape. Lastly, the simple doctor may find it difficult to recognise the familiar chloramine under the formidable title of tosylchloramidum natriicum. These are, however, perhaps captious criticisms of what is an important and admirable work, the production of which can only have been achieved by patient compromise and general co-operation.

BOOK REVIEWS (continued from page 215)

enzyme becomes inactivated is characteristic, and measurement of the activity of an enzyme can be used to establish the temperature to which a particular product has been heated during the course of its preparation. The inclusion, in the preface, of a table of substances which may be estimated by methods of enzymatic analysis, is most useful. Numerous references to original papers are given throughout the text.

J. B. STENLAKE.