PHARMACOPŒIAS AND FORMULARIES

THE EXTRA PHARMACOPŒIA (MARTINDALE)

INCORPORATING SQUIRE'S COMPANION

23rd Ed. Vol. I. Pp. xxii + 1352. Pharmaceutical Press, London. 1952. 55s.

Some years ago the reviewer was going abroad and for reading on the journey took two books, one of which was Volume I of Martindale. This was not such an odd choice as might at first appear, for a compendium dealing with many different subjects is admirable reading for the disjointed conditions of travel, and another reason was to brush up on half-forgotten materia medica. Anyway, the idea was a good one, for it was astonishing to find how much one recalled, but more how much one had forgotten, and most of all, how much one did not know, in fine, how much there was in this remarkable book. Had the twenty-third edition been available at the time, these discoveries would have been all the more emphatic.

From the first edition in 1883 to this twenty-third, Martindale has steadily expanded with the growth and development of pharmaceutical and medical science. In 1910 the fourteenth edition proved too large for a single book—if the convenient double crown 16 mo. size was to be retained, so two volumes appeared. The present Volume I exceeds the last one by 163 pages and this has only been possible by skilful typography. If progress continues its current swift expansion it would seem as if a third volume will be needed, but it is to be hoped this will be avoided, for when a handy *vade mecum* becomes an encyclopedia it can lose more than it gains.

The changes in the twenty-third edition are extensive, the Pharmaceutical Society has acquired the copyright of "Squire's Companion to the British Pharmacopœia" and the essence of Squire has been incorporated here. This has brought in much information on the requirements of foreign pharmacopœias. A complete revision has been made of the quoted authorities so that three-fourths of the 4000 abstracts are new, thus the experimental and clinical record is as up-to-date as possible. The magnitude of this achievement can only be gauged by those experienced in bibliographic work, but it is a fair guess that to choose 3000 reference papers from to-day's flood of scientific literature, 30,000 papers would need scrutiny. Information on both British and foreign proprietary preparations is extensive, and as recent as possible. Again, this is a remarkable feat, for the welter of new proprietary names is so great that to-day both pharmacists and physicians find themselves in increasing, and apparently insuperable difficulties.

Over 150 important substances, new since the last edition, are discussed in detail. The arrangement of such varied data has always been difficult, and increasing complexity has added to the taxonomic problem. It has been met by skilful compromise, and more emphasis on pharmacological grouping. This means that recourse must be had to the index rather than the alphabetic arrangement of sections. For example, Carbo B.P.C. appears in the section on aluminium because of its adsorptive properties. Fortunately, the index has been prepared with great care, which is itself an index of the high standard of the work.

A determined effort was made to "catch out" the compilers in error or omission, not of course with any idea of denigration, but simply to retest the

reliability of the book as fully as possible. No errors were noted, and the only omission regarding which one had lately met enquiry was that of prostatic extract. In short, the completeness of this volume is striking, and the recent date of many of the entries point to a good number of additions at the galley-proof stage.

The editorial task was begun in 1949 by Mr. T. C. Denston and continued from 1950 by Dr. Capper. They and their assistants deserve warm praise for their work and, it may be suggested, rather more recognition of their responsibility than is given by the brief reference in the preface.

This book is an essential for both pharmacist and physician, and the best present one could find for a student of either profession.

W. P. K.

ABSTRACTS (*continued from page* 212).

orally. It has been used in the treatment of leukæmia and various neoplasms and its depressant effect on hæmatopoiesis suggested its trial in polycythæmia vera. 30 patients in whom the disease had continued for from 1 to 20 years were treated. Phlebotomy was withheld for at least a month prior to treatment and until the therapeutic effect of the compound was apparent. Blood studies were made at intervals of 2 to 4 weeks. The dosage was 2·5 to 5 mg. every 1 to 3 days, orally one hour before breakfast, until the total amount reached 15 to 40 mg. A further course was given 2 to 3 months later depending upon the response. The only side effect was an occasional complaint of nausea. 20 patients showed a satisfactory symptomatic and hæmatological response with an average remission of 8 to 9 months following an average course of 30 mg. of the drug. Patients in whom the disease was of shorter duration and whose thrombocyte and white blood cell counts were normal responded better than those with a longer history and elevated blood counts. Further observations are necessary before valid comparisons can be made of the treatment of this disease with triethylene melamine and with radioactive phosphorus.

H. T. B.

_d_-Tubocurarine Chloride U.S.P. and Dimethyl Ether _d_-Tubocurarine Iodide, Comparative Potency of. E. E. Swanson, W. R. Gibson and C. E. Powell. (*J. Amer. pharm. Ass. Sci. Ed.*, 1952, **41**, 487.) The following comparative potencies were determined using dimethyl ether of *d*-tubocurarine iodide trihydrate and *d*-tubocurarine chloride pentahydrate.

Animal	Method	Relative potency dimethyl ether of *d*-tubocurarine iodide / *d*-tubocurarine chloride
Rabbit ..	Head drop (U.S.P. method)	9·02 ± 0·33
Rabbit ..	Head drop (Single dose cross-over)	8·25 ± 0·50
Mouse ..	Sloping screen paralysis	0·803 ± 0·048
Rat ..	Sloping screen paralysis	8·04 ± 0·33
Rat ..	Intact gastrocnemius sciatic nerve	5
Frog ..	Isolated gastrocnemius sciatic nerve	4
Rat ..	Isolated phrenic nerve-diaphragm	4
Frog	Isolated rectus abdominis	0·833

Except in the tests in mice and in experiments with the frog rectus abdominis, the dimethyl ether was considerably more potent than *d*-tubocurarine itself.

G. B.