

ABOUT PHARMACOPŒIAS.

FROM PRESIDENT EMERY'S ADDRESS AT THE
BRITISH PHARM. CONFERENCE.

Since the first Newcastle meeting the rival Pharmacopœias of London, Edinburgh and Dublin have been fused into a national Pharmacopœia. This has been advantageous in helping forward and maintaining uniformity and purity in medicine. Those of us who have been in harness during the publication and use of three or four pharmacopœias know the effect a well-revised edition has upon the commercial standard of crude and manufactured drugs.

The British Pharmacopœia, 1885, is an excellent type of what such a book should be, for it adopts a standard that ensures efficiency, and does not attempt to introduce rare and exceptional quality that is only occasionally obtainable, to the exclusion of that which is to be had of uniform excellence without difficulty.

There is, perhaps, no work upon which an expert has to use his judgment with so much tact and skill, so that he may keep both in touch and tune with the medical profession, the pharmacist, the drug merchant, and manufacturer, as when he is called upon to edit a national pharmacopœia. He may be

apparent when the editor, knowing the requirements of the medical profession and the capabilities of pharmacists and manufacturers, adopts standards and frames "characters and tests" which are acceptable to all concerned, and this without, in any degree, imperilling that principle which this Association has at heart, viz., to maintain, without compromise, the purity of medicine.

Pharmacists should do all in their power, not only when in their own business premises, but also in their public and private capacities, etc., to impress upon the public that household remedies should invariably be purchased of a similar strength and quality to those medicines physicians direct to be used in compounding their prescriptions.

If pharmacists would thus aid in educating the public they would rid themselves of much outside competition in which weaker and inferior preparations are sold in lieu of the preparations of a higher standard vended by themselves; and this might be done quite apart from the question as to whether, legally, it is compulsory to retail British Pharmacopœia preparations or not.

Is it not also desirable that pharmacists should co-operate with the Medical Council in their desire to make the British Pharmacopœia preparations legal for sale, and those of old pharmacopœias obsolete and illegal?

In my opinion it is most desirable.—[Chemist and Druggist.

TINCTURE OF SENNA.

BY B. S. PROCTOR, F.I.C.

The author said that at the last revision of the blue list he had raised the question of the activity of the tincture sennæ. He considered it discreditable to the medical profession that an inert preparation of an active drug should remain in the Pharmacopœia without a protest from the pharmaceutical body. He had been convinced for some years of the worthlessness of tinctura sennæ as now prepared, and had ineffectually protested against its retention among the official preparations.

His desire in bringing the subject before the Conference was that further experience and expression of opinion from members might lead either to a modification of the formula or its deletion from the Pharmacopœia. Christison had said that the active part was easily dissolved out by water, rectified and proof spirit.

Other authorities set forth that the active substance was a colloid body, easily soluble in water, but not in strong alcohol. A syrupy extract of senna mixed with an equal volume of alcohol threw down a mucilage. After this was removed an addition of alcohol caused a precipitate of brown matter possessing purgative properties, containing cathartic acid, which is almost insoluble in alcohol, but soluble in warm dilute alcohol. Various authorities might be quoted as to cathartic acid being the purgative principle in senna, and in respect to its insolubility in water and alcohol, coupled with the statement that its alkaline salts were soluble in water and active cathartics. If they supposed the alcohol to be rectified spirit, an equal volume of which threw down the mucilage but not the active principle, they would conclude that the spirit for making the tincture sennæ might be equal volumes of rectified spirit and water.

The addition of alcohol which threw down the active matter might be the quantity which was necessary to raise the strength up to that of proof spirit, and this would bring the statement of the authority quoted into accordance with his own experience, and confirm his impression that tinctura sennæ ought either to be abolished or made of weaker spirit than that now official. He described experiments which he considered fairly disposed of the idea that rectified spirit extracts the purgative principle of senna. His desire in bringing the subject before the meeting was that others should experiment upon similar lines and test the efficacy of senna preparations made with spirit more or less diluted, and determine the question whether tinctura sennæ should be abolished or amended.—[British and Colonial Druggist.

STARCH IN ENEMATA AND SUPPOSITORIA.

The Enemata of the British Pharmacopœia, five in number, are generally regarded as useful extemporaneous formulæ inserted for convenient reference. We are bound, however, to present any preparation recognized by authority in the best possible manner.

With one exception, the enema asafetidæ, made with distilled water, they may be described as medicated compounds of the mucilage of starch.

We have three varieties of amyllum at our command: that procured from the grains of common wheat, *Triticum sativum*; maize, *Zea Mays*; and rice, *Oryza sativa*.

In preparing the official mucilago amyli the choice is left free.

The selection is not a matter of indifference in a dispensing point of view.

The use of rice starch in preparing the mucilage ordered in enemata is not to be recommended, as the result, even with skilful manipulation, is poor.

Wheat or maize starch may be advised, preferably the former, as being the more readily procured.

From both an excellent agent of suspension may be produced, by means of which these otherwise unsightly remedies may be presented in a perfect state of combination.

The enemata opii and terebinthinæ may be dismissed without comment.

The enema aloes is constructed on a strictly scientific basis; the carbonate of potassium which it contains materially assists in effecting the solution of the aloes. The same alkali is employed with equal advantage in the decoctum aloes compositum.

The enema magnesiæ sulphatis presents a dispensing difficulty, the official formula and directions being as follows:

Sulphate of magnesium	1 ounce.
Olive oil	1 fluid ounce.
Mucilage of starch	15 fluid ounces.

Dissolve the sulphate of magnesium in the mucilage of starch, add the oil and mix.

Should these instructions be literally carried out the result is unsatisfactory. Oil of any kind so added to a solution of a salt must separate, and the present instance forms no exception to the rule.

The method employed is simple and depends on a well-known dispensing arrangement. Reserve half the quantity of water and in it dissolve the sulphate of magnesium. Next, make a starch mucilage with the remaining half of the water, and incorporate the olive oil with the concentrated mucilage. Finally, add by degrees the dilute solution of the magnesium salt. Two objects are thus secured—a perfect medicinal compound, and an excellent emulsion.

The Suppositoria of the British Pharmacopœia are divided into two classes: those with oil of theobroma as a base, and those with curd soap. The former are melted and