

Review of the Year 1898.

In placing before our readers our annual review of the progress in pharmacy and the science upon which pharmacy depends we are naturally inclined to give the premier position in importance to the publication of the much delayed

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The method of publication calls for a word of comment, as never has such an important work been issued in such an objectionable manner. The day before Good Friday, when most of the London pharmaceutical press had suspended their labors for the week, a copy of the new B.P. was sent them, apparently for review. No further copies were obtainable, and it was some time after this that a copy was sent to us, but the distinct statement of the secretary of the General Medical Council indicated that it was only on loan. At the end of May the book was gazetted, and according to the best authorities immediately came into force in England. Pharmacists were placed in the sublimely ridiculous position of having to conform to the regulations of a work which was actually unobtainable. Private enterprise fortunately came to the rescue; the drug journals published copious extracts, and in one case so well was this done that a copy of the B.P. was quite unnecessary, and it was just a question for some days whether the Copyright Act would not be called into motion to stop the publication of the epitome. Then followed various Notes and Guides on the New B.P., several of them being distributed free to medical men and pharmacists through the enterprise of wholesale drug firms. Chief among these may be noted Umney's Guide, which was issued only a few days after the press copies of the B.P. were distributed, and therefore called forth some envious comments. Hewlett's Notes were also of great value, and we abstracted some of the more important parts. Gadd's Synopsis, published at 12 cents, is a little book which is wonderfully complete and specially adapted for pharmaceutical students.

CRITICISMS OF THE NEW B.P.

There has been no falling off in the usual number of criticisms that always crop up when a new edition of the B.P. appears. The strongest and truest remark

is that it is becoming more and more a physician's pharmacopœia rather than a pharmacist's. That is to say, the convenience of the physician has been chiefly consulted, and most of the radical alterations are only inconvenient to the pharmacist. The natural result is that, in spite of the strenuous efforts of the pharmacopœia committee of pharmacists, upon whom the duty of devising formulæ and revising old processes naturally fell, the new B.P. makes it still more difficult for the retail pharmacists to manufacture even galenicals. Thus, the loss of spirit in making a pint of one of the 1 in 5 tinctures is so great that a retail pharmacist would inevitably find it cheaper to purchase than to make. The wholesalers, with their hydraulic presses, recovery of spirit from marc in the still, and standardization of large batches, are placed in a better position than before. This has been mentioned by critics as a stricture on the pharmacopœia committee, but, as there were only about three wholesale druggists and nine retail on the committee, it is very certain that their action was compelled by the pressure of medical opinion.

Once again the new B.P. comes out well in its botany and materia medica, although Druce has found fault with several of the botanical sources of drugs. In many instances, however, the exact species is only a matter of conjecture, and, as the committee had the assistance of E. M. Holmes, Curator of the Pharmaceutical Society's Museum, and the greatest living authority on the subject, it is not surprising that this part was well done.

WHOLESALESALE'S CRITICISMS

were based chiefly on the alterations in the strength of tinctures, the absurd striving for unattainable purity in commercial chemicals, the complete disregard of wholesale methods and convenience, and absence of preparations that were expected by everybody in a new pharmacopœia.

E. Merck has shown that the color reaction for morphine with sulphuric acid is incorrect, that borax seldom answers the degree of purity laid down, and that some of the specific gravities and melting points do not agree with the Ph. Germ. and N.S.P. D. Howard objected to the monograph on quinine and the de-

tails for testing bicarbonate of sodium. He also showed that, in altering Warrington's standard for lead in citric and tartaric acids, the committee had made a mistake. Moss raised many objections to the solid and liquid extracts of the new pharmacopœia, and Fletcher used very plain language about the ridiculous directions given for producing the new concentrated liquors of calumba, chiretta, etc. His criticism is to the point as he invented the concentrated liquors for the quick production of corresponding tinctures, decoctions, infusions and syrups. Bryant has shown that the method of making liquid extract of belladonna does not exhaust the root. Umney has protested against the exclusion of a liquor gentiana-cœ, and to the new method of preparing compound spirit of ether so that only ether makers can produce it. Millard has proved that the specific gravity of liquid paraffin is incorrect and Stern Brothers, the largest makers of this article, have confirmed it. Schimmel & Co. have criticized the particulars given respecting oil of juniper and the specific gravities of oil of dill, etc. Naylor and Bryant have made out a strong case for the standardization of the green extracts of belladonna and henbane. Bird pointed out the well known defects in the formula for syrup of rhubarb, and criticized the omission of boric acid from hemlock ointment which now soon goes mouldy. Gadd stated that glycerin of boric acid turns pink on keeping, but this is unconfirmed. Stanford does not consider that the dried thyroid gland is so effective as thyro-glandin.

AND RETAILERS

Some excellent points have been made by retail pharmacists and analytical chemists. The general complaint is that although not intentional the new B.P. makes it imperative that the pharmacist should more than ever purchase all galenicals such as tinctures, concentrated liquors, etc. Wilson has not only criticized the assay methods for liquid extracts of belladonna and ipecacuanha—which was easy—but has suggested improvements and modifications that render the process much more simple and exact. Bird suggested an improvement in the method of making ung. hyd. mt., by heating the lard and intrals of mercury together to a high temperature until the reaction nearly ceases and then adding the olive oil. Jowett has given an improved method of estimating the purity