

CODES OF BOTANICAL NOMENCLATURE IN THE UNITED STATES
PHARMACOPOEIA.

BY H. H. RUSBY.

Two codes of botanical nomenclature are commonly spoken of, the so-called American Code, and the so-called International Code. Both names are misleading. The former is not American, because it emanated with a group of especially eminent botanists equally representative of Great Britain, Germany and France. It has come to be called American because it is followed in all branches of the U. S. Federal service, and in most of the States—the principal reason why the U. S. P. should not depart from it. It is also followed by an overwhelming majority of the individual botanists of the United States. Those who do not employ it in its entirety, apply its principles as to a part of the name.

The International Code is misnamed; first, because it is not a code in the proper sense of the word. The first named is a code, because it is based on a governing principle, namely, that priority of publication determines the name of a group or a species. This principle is as fully recognized by the authors of the International Code as by others, but they seek to avoid inconvenience in usage by deviating from the message in those cases where conformity would involve the change of a large number of names in common use. Even in such cases, they do not object to assigning the correct names in an authoritative list, but hold that public convenience would be subserved by treating such names as *excepta* in common use, the incorrect names being then employed, by common consent. For example, a genus of orchids was dedicated to the great scientist under the name *Humboldtia*. Subsequently, through ignorance or perversity, most of the hundred or more species have been described under the name *Pleurothallis*. There are very few botanists who do not admit that scientific accuracy in identification requires that these should be reassembled under the proper name, but that some authoritative and representative international body should make a list of *excepta*, comprising those cases in which the change would cause great inconvenience, and should authorize the current use, in botanical literature, of the incorrect names that have come into common use. So far as I am aware, I was the first to make a definite proposition that this should be done, so that I take a peculiar interest in the proceedings by which the plan was supposed to be executed. Since a large part—much the larger part—of the complete list of plant names, followed the code, the others being merely exceptions in usage, it does not seem proper to call such an international list a “code.”

It was assumed that this list of exceptions would be formed by an impartial representative body, and this in conformity with the principle under which the work was done. As a matter of fact, it was done in Vienna by a packed convention, nearly all of the members being Pan-Germans, and it was executed on a thoroughly non-international basis, and in disregard of the principles that were supposed to govern. This actually went so far that the incorrect name was selected in cases where there was but one species in a genus, the only consideration being that Pan-German interests should be conserved. It is quite impossible to substantiate the claim that the work was international in the sense that it was the work of, or had the approval of, the nations that are interested. It would be a

strange proceeding for Americans to sanction officially a procedure so opposed to the spirit of scientific sincerity.

So far as our Pharmacopoeia is concerned, there is no ground whatever for seceding from the method of our National Museum, Bureaus of Plant and Animal Industry, Smithsonian and Carnegie Institutions, Department of Agriculture and other National bodies, and from the code employed in all the vast literature of the Federal Government. Indeed, to do so would be to frustrate the object for which the list of *excepta* was formed. That object was to further convenience by avoiding the necessity for making changes in current usage. To introduce changes in the names of the Pharmacopoeia to which we have become accustomed would certainly promote inconvenience, and such inconvenience would not have the justification of being incurred in the interest of principle.

POPULAR NAMES OF CRUDE DRUGS.*

BY ARNO VIEHÖEVEER.

It is not the intention to discuss the merit of popular names for crude drugs. No one familiar with the subject will deny the need for a common name, in addition to or substitution for a scientific name, which is often necessarily highly technical and too involved to be readily understood or remembered in common trade.

The purpose of this note is simply to advocate greater care in the use of common names. Where the product is already well known, even by a name which is obviously unsatisfactory, the desirability for another, though proper name, might not be so apparent. In cases, however, where new products are introduced, it is essential that some thought be given to the proper common, as well as scientific, name. A name may already be attached to the product, given to it by some one qualified or not qualified. Discrimination must therefore be used in the choice, and great care in the creation of a name, if no suitable trade name is available.

The common drug names used by the trade and adopted in the Pharmacopoeia and National Formulary probably represent sufficient examples for the very varied bases underlying the selection of common drug names. Further examples may readily be found in pharmaceutical dispensatories and in books on floras¹ and on common names.^{2,3} The general subject of common plant names is interestingly discussed in recent articles in *Science*⁴ and elsewhere.⁵

* Read before Scientific Section, A. Ph. A., City of Washington meeting, 1920.

¹ Britton and Brown, "Illustrated Flora of the Northern States and Canada," Vol. I, II, III (1913).

² Lyons, A. B., "Plant Names Scientific and Popular," 1907.

³ Zimmer, George Frederick, "A Popular Dictionary of Botanical Names and Terms," 1913; Miller, William, "A Dictionary of English Names of Plants," 1884; Schelle, Solomon, *Wörterbuch der Botanischen Kunstsprache*, 1886.

⁴ Adams, J., "The Popular Names of North American Plants," *Science*, 45, 114-115, 1917; Bigelow, M. A., "Popular Names of Plants," *Science*, 46, 16-17, 1917.

⁵ Chase, Agnes, "Some Causes of Confusion in Plant Names," *Journal of Forestry*, 159-162, 1919.