

Contributed and Selected

OBJECTS AND LIMITATIONS OF PHARMACEUTICAL EDUCATION.*

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On very good literary authority we are informed that "one man in his time plays many parts," and I am bound to say that my personal experience forces me to the conclusion that when a man or woman enters upon the pharmaceutical stage he or she is certain to illustrate and confirm that Shakespearean dictum. Forty years ago I was a pharmaceutical student within these walls, and, in all probability conducted myself with that impropriety and lack of reverence and decorum characteristic of students in all ages. You will look in vain for my name on these tablets of the famous that adorn these walls, because it is not there.

" 'Tis not for me to "reason why,
Perhaps "someone has blunder'd."

Now, after playing every conceivable character in the repertoire of the Pharmaceutical Society, including, I am glad to say, the extremely pleasant part of presenting rewards to successful workers so gracefully performed today by the President, I am charged with the grave and important rôle of Official Preacher, and I am expected to inculcate the very educational and other virtues which appealed so very lightly to my ethical sense in 1870. There may appear to be an element of Gilbertian humour in selecting me—of all people—to give this inaugural address; but perhaps it indicates that my friends and colleagues recognize that I have now reached that stage of existence when the iteration of "wise saws and modern instances" is the only mental exercise within my declining powers. As that terribly disconcerting master of the art of undressing Truth, G. B. Shaw, says, the man who can—does; the man who cannot—preaches. No doubt the Shavian wisdom was in the mind of the Council when I was asked to discourse to past, present, and future students of the School of Pharmacy gathered here this afternoon, but I must put up with the implication of political superannuation so subtly and gracefully conveyed to me, and must endeavour to convey by verbal (and I hope not verbose) media, those essentials, principles, and truths which, did fate permit, I should like to practise, employ, and illustrate by personal example amongst the younger generations of pharmaceutical aspirants. *

* * * * The objects of true pharmaceutical education are, in my view, not to evolve a mental acrobat, a creature which can swallow unlimited syllabuses, digest them with apparent ease, and convert them into brilliant examination re-

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plies, but to produce worthy pharmacists who shall be, by their art and by their personality, respect-compelling citizens of the community they desire to serve. Some of the most egregious asses in creation are to be met with amongst the scholastic successes of modern educational life—they are plentiful enough, goodness knows—and if I thought the time, money, and energy expended by generations of pharmaceutical Councillors on this School of Pharmacy of ours merely meant the subsidizing of machine-turned medicine handlers, I should grieve over every hour and every coin and every effort recorded in the seventy-one years of official history. Fortunately for those who have emerged from the pupilage state, as well as for those who are now entering upon their technical work here, the Bloomsbury professors and their demonstrators manage somehow to impart something more than the contents of text-books into the minds of those under their charges, and something more than mechanical skill into the manipulative work taken in the laboratories—I mean some of the character, enthusiasm, and some of the personality of the teacher, so that the danger of turning out veneered specimens of pharmaceutical donkeyhood is greatly eliminated. * * * * *

The policy of the Pharmaceutical Society from the very first has been educational, in its best and most rational sense, and during the early years of its existence that policy was one which commended itself to high and low in the calling. I am sadly afraid it is not universally so now. A growing number are always clamoring for what is sometimes called a “bread and butter” policy, which, being interpreted, means, a policy of light exertion and quick returns. I verily believe that the high priests of that policy would not be averse to exchanging their status as registered persons for the possibility of a slightly increased commercial profit. In other words, they are willing to accept the position of pharmaceutical Esaus. The general standard of luxury having risen so high, it is not surprising that pharmacists find the profits of yore inadequate to maintain the comforts demanded by modern convention. Of course, *someone or something* must be blamed for this condition of things, and so “education” comes to be regarded and described as a taking of the financial bread from the pharmaceutical mouth. But it is no more reasonable than it would be to blame a Government Department for a wet summer; or the present Chancellor for bad crops. Much diversity of opinion exists as to the necessity for all the training and drudgery imposed by the Society’s examination requirements. “Why should a man be forced to spend three years’ hard labor in grinding for a qualification to fit him for the retailing, at cost price or thereabouts, packed parcels of George Washington’s Curative Compound?” asks one set of inquirers. “Over-training and scholarship spoil a man for business,” is the dogma of another set. “Teach the young men to make a good living instead of dosing them with super science,” advise a third set of the practical—or so-called practical—school. But what does it all mean but unreflective and puerile protest against the inexorable fact that “art is long” and that there is no short cut to remunerative excellence in any vocation. Preparation is the only sure basis of success. As a matter of fact, if the “bread and butter” school only knew it there is no better policy for commanding commercial success than rational education. I do not mean the mechanical teaching of dexterity that makes a man into a smart substitute for machinery, but the development and cultivation of mental and moral faculties that enables an average mortal to even-

tually fill his destiny in the work-a-day world, and become "the master of his fate—the captain of his soul."

Education should be a guiding of *existing powers* to their highest forms of expression, not the mere grafting of dead fact upon the tree of life; but in modern practice it too often means the substitution of conventional formulæ for the natural exercise of the thinking and reasoning faculties. Thinking is, thank God, not an exact science, and ought never to be treated as such. Its domain commences where science (by which I mean exact knowledge) ceases, and there are no finite borders within its realms. The courses of study to which a student submits himself should be simply regarded as the alphabet of thought—the A. B. C. which will enable him in due time to become articulate and express his personality in the calling he has chosen—to exercise, in fact, the power of allowing his natural self to dominate his artificially acquired accomplishments. As Sir Thomas Brown says, in language described by a distinguished physician and writer as more admirable than anything in English literature, "Every man truly lives only so long as he acts his nature or in some way makes good the faculties of himself." Depend upon it, if a student is so trained that his personality remains mute under the burden of partially digested data, he will, and can, be nothing more than a servant to his memory, however brilliant his examination record may be. Therefore, I implore every student to be a master of his knowledge rather than allow his facts to enslave his mental and intellectual outlook—in other words, scholastic pabulum should be absorbed as physical luncheons are, that is to say, to "keep up the tabernacle." It is the material from which thought may be developed, and is no more intended to dominate reason than the restaurant is to determine the policy of life. If either gets the upper hand it is bad for the student, for he becomes either a pedant or an epicure, and I do not know which is the more contemptible or useless of the two—both are abominations. If this conception of training and scholarship can be adopted by those destined for a pharmaceutical career and if they mould all the energies of which they are capable into methods for giving effect to the conception in their studies, then most assuredly will it be found that education is no expensive and useless vanity, but the best commercial asset a business man can possess. The modern idea of life is represented to be a mad hustle for money. This may perhaps be a fair representation, I do not know—but what I *do* say is that if it is ordained that man must henceforth coin his brain in drachmas, there is only one successful minting process, and that is the one by which rational education is the main transmuting agency. Before turning to the limitation of education I should like to voice a warning to those embryo Galens, Greenishes, and Tildens who add dignity and picturesqueness to those benches on the left. Don't overdo your work—this caution is probably superfluous, but don't.

"Run if you like, but try to keep your breath;
Work like a man, but don't be worked to death."

In other words, let football and other recreative delights alternate judiciously with the more exhausting pleasures of quantitative analysis, so that with the aid of this happy blending of opposing joys you will not only *do* the right things in after life, but what Ruskin thought more important, you will *enjoy* doing them.

Now as to limitations, if you are not already feeling a desire to place one on me. Education, like the brain ointment of the market-place quack, cannot do everything—there must be *something* to work upon! It has been said that “he who would bring back the wealth of the Indias must first carry out the wealth of the Indias,” which, being translated, means that what you get from the class, lecture, or laboratory bench depends very considerably upon what you bring to it. To treat the School of Pharmacy as an automatic machine into which guineas are put into the slot in the hope of pulling out a certificate of qualification is to invite disappointment and all the attendant evils of misplaced confidence—nothing can come from nothing; but put into the educational crucible the best of the crude, untutored forces of yourselves, and whether a statutory qualification results or not you will emerge with an invaluable possession that will last while life does—the competent skill and knowledge to employ wisely whatever faculties you may have been endowed with. Is that not worth money, oh, ye votaries of “bread and butter” worship?

The moral that I desire to point is one that is applicable to us all, for are we not as a class, nay, even as a nation, drifting into the habit of expecting too much from others—from the Society, from the Government, from the schoolmaster—and too little, much too little, from ourselves? The moral is, trust not to vicarious salvation, but *earn* it by personal worthiness and individual effort. Another limitation of education is that it cannot supply those finer shades of courteous and civil bearing to which we give the name of “breeding.” I do *not* believe that “manners make the man,” for who has not met with polished ninnies?—there are plenty about—but I do hold strongly that a courteous, sincere and respectful habit in one’s relations to others is a very powerful adjunct to the armory of weapons with which one has to fight the difficulties of commercial or professional life. Knowledge does not furnish such an addition, nor can it be obtained from the Turveydrops of today; it can only be acquired, and then perhaps unconsciously, by constant association with the Bayards of the community in which one’s work and one’s play is done. It is a contagious virtue, and I commend in the strongest possible terms the value of choosing for colleagues in school or in life those who carry the bright and attractive outward signs of inherent good breeding and good manners.

I do not wish to weary you by running through the whole category of limits to which education is subject—Heaven knows it is a longish one—but I desire to touch lightly upon one more. All the schools of pharmacy in the universe cannot guarantee to the best of its graduates the gratitude of the public when business life has commenced. Pharmacists need not look for gratitude for, or even recognition of, the public services they render, for they will not get it. Three score years of persistent endeavor to fit themselves for the position of trustees of the public safety have left them indistinguishable, for all practical purposes, from the mass of unqualified adventures in the domain of pharmacy with which this great and free (and foolish) country is swarming. Why, even a brand new, enlightened, up-to-date State system of insurance, admirable as it may be in principle and in conception, places on a dispensing level a man like your President and the man who for three years has juggled with a few stock mixtures in a rural surgery! Could anything be more grotesque? No, there are no laurel

wreaths for pharmacists; there is no popular applause or reward from the exercise of pharmaceutical virtue as inculcated here in our School, and if any would-be student is so constituted as not to be able to exist unless placed in the draught of the *aura popularis* I should advise him to get his money back from the Secretary, if he can, and flee from the precincts of Bloomsbury to the region sacred to the profession. But *do* we want the unstable rewards of the gallery when we can, by ourselves, command by courage, sincerity, and straight dealing the respect and confidence of the people in the midst of whom we have our temporary, and temporal, pitch? Personally, I do not think we do, for with the belief of one's fellows in one's integrity and veracity all that is worth anything will come in due season and in due sequence, even unto adequate remuneration.

It seems to me necessary that I should bring these thoughts into my remarks, as my experience as a past-President brought me into contact with many pathetic instances of the Society being blamed for the ingratitude of a locality towards a hopelessly impossible chemist and druggist.

I have already said that the policy of the Pharmaceutical Society has always been, and still is, educational, and for this there is occasion to be grateful; but we cannot, of course, afford to ignore the fact that there is a commercial aspect of affairs that demands consideration, and in this, quite naturally, your professors and School are powerless to help you. It must not be forgotten that nowadays capital is absolutely necessary in establishing and developing a good sound business. Of course, it was always so, more or less, but more, much more now than ever before. I am fully aware that it does not require any great strain on the exchequer in order to dispense the average prescription, and you may have satisfied the Board of Examiners as to your fitness for *that* particular class of work, but you have yet to satisfy a critical and often very unreasonable, sceptical public as to that same fact—a much more difficult task, I assure you—and to do this you will need tact, perseverance, enterprise, patience, and time. In addition, and quite as essential, you must have a well-equipped pharmacy, in a good, likely position. Obviously all this means money. I do not forget that many excellent businesses have been built up, the proprietors of which commenced with practically nothing in the way of pecuniary advantages. All honour to these men of grit and pluck. On the other hand, the fact cannot be overlooked that there are instances, familiar to us all, where with capital ample, position good, pharmacy quite first-class, and introduction influential, yet withal the owners thereof seem to have made a wretched botch of things. I am conscious of all this, but I am not dealing with the exceptional and abnormal, but with the rank and file, with the majority, the normal; and I repeat that unless furnished with a fair amount of the needful the budding pharmacist is terribly handicapped. In such circumstances the game, in my opinion, is not worth the candle.

It is common knowledge that not more than 25 per cent. (probably not so many) of the chemists in business in this country find it possible to extract a decent living out of pharmacy pure and simple, and by that I mean dispensing and the sale of poisons; the rest of us, including myself, have to augment our incomes as best we can by sidelines and other departments, which are legitimate and appropriate enough, but it must always be remembered that we are thus

brought into direct and severe competition with huge resources and unlimited capital.

Will you now forgive me making an appeal, a final appeal, to the young men and women who enter upon their finishing course today? There is nothing so likely to return a heavy dividend upon a small capital outlay of trouble as the cultivation of a habit of clearness and lucidity in speech, in writing, and in thought. Half the troubles of the business world would not occur if everyone spoke with knowledge and directness, and wrote his epistles so that the recipient can decipher and understand them readily. May I recall the story of a celebrated ecclesiastic who was trying to read a letter from Dean Stanley, who was a notoriously bad writer? "This is a lovely letter of Stanley's," said the dignitary, sweetly, "but so far I have only managed to read one word, and that *looks* like 'damn.'" In regard to clear thinking, I do sincerely hope you will not confine your powers of concentration to the detection of subtle differences between COOH and CHO₂, but will extend them to political and other extra-pharmaceutical matters, so that future Presidents may not have to face the painful experiences I had to wrestle with in 1908, when many registered men appeared to be incapable of grasping the radical difference between economic adjustment and cowardly surrender, betwixt equitable compromise and disgraceful betrayal. I want the future pharmacist to be a man of the world and a man of common sense; firm without narrowness, progressive without rashness, I want him to become what Professor Remington said of Michael Carteighe:—

"A man whose soul is pure and strong,
Whose sword is bright and keen,
Who knows the splendour of the fight,
And what its issues mean."

So shall he become a power in the land, a pride to pharmacy, and a blessing to his day and generation.