

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE AMERICAN CONFERENCE OF PHARMACEUTICAL FACULTIES

AND WHAT IS CULTURE?

BY J. W. STURMER.

("The American Conference of Pharmaceutical Faculties has given some time and attention to the question of the advisability of adding cultural subjects to the pharmacy curriculum. While the minimum course consisted of a two-year course, it was necessary to eliminate all subjects except those that were professional or were fundamental as prerequisites to professional courses. Now that the curriculum is to be extended to three years, there may be opportunity to incorporate subjects that are not directly applicable to pharmacy, the so-called cultural subjects. Dean Sturmer has set forth in a very good way his ideas of what cultural subjects are, and I believe his article will be helpful to Conference members in determining in their own minds what extra courses should be added."—C. B. JORDAN, Editor.)

The Conference has disposed of the problems incident to admission requirements. It is approaching conclusions in regard to the professional subjects of a pharmacy course. The interest now shifts quite naturally to the more extended courses in pharmacy, in which time limitations are less cramping, and thought may be given to a more substantial foundation for the strictly vocational instruction.

There has been casual discussion of the four-year curriculum in which speakers have referred repeatedly to cultural subjects and to culture as an aim in pharmaceutical education. Culture, however, is a word which has acquired a variety of connotations. It may be used in a sense derivable from its etymology, as in the statement, that training in mathematics affords excellent mental culture—meaning development. A refinement of manners and of social conduct is by some spoken of as culture. The term is used, further, to denote the attainment of aesthetic perception; a taste for the fine arts—music, paintings, sculpture, belles lettres, and the like. Then there are those, who, when they say culture, have in mind accomplishments in the art of living, as contrasted with acquirements which are useful in gaining a livelihood. To them cultural education is a training for a fuller and richer life, in contradistinction to professional or vocational schooling.

What, then, did our speakers mean when they talked of culture and of things cultural? Obviously, we must understand each other if we are to enter purposefully upon a debate in which the discussion has to do with the culture value of particular courses, or with cultural training in general. A confusion of tongues, as at the Tower of Babel, will tend to the development of much heat, with little or no light.

I take it that most speakers used the term culture to designate subjects not classifiable as pharmaceutical; that the training they had in mind bears to the professional subjects of a pharmacy course the same relation which premedical education bears to a course in medicine. And this being the case, would it not be conducive to clarity, and to mutual understanding, if we avoided the ambiguous term cultural education, and spoke of pre-professional subjects?

Medical men call their pre-professional work the pre-medical course. They say little or nothing about its cultural results, but justify every subject on the grounds of its utilitarian value—as a foundation for the superstructure which is the course in

medicine. Thus, physics and chemistry provide the ground-work for physiological and clinical chemistry. Biology prepares the way for bacteriology, and indeed for a number of the strictly medical studies. Mathematics is preparatory to physics and to chemistry. English is in the fullest sense a foundational or basal subject, helpful to the student in understanding his textbooks and lectures, in preparing his notes, in phrasing his answers in the examination, reporting his researches, and in maintaining, after graduation, his position as a member of a learned profession.

If, now, we study the curricula of engineering, or of the other applied sciences taught in the conventional four-year college courses, we find in the freshman and sophomore schedules, a selection of foundational studies which are truly and directly preparatory to the professional subjects in prospect in the higher college years. And no one would accuse our American universities and colleges of being oblivious to the cultural potentialities of a science course.

The problems of a satisfactory four years' course in pharmacy are analogous to the problems of a four-year course in any other applied science; and to the problems of pre-medical and medical education. The Conference can discuss with profit, and with the expectation of ultimate agreement, matters pertaining to pre-professional education for pharmacy students. It cannot, I fear, be expected to deal competently and wisely with the cultural aspects of such education. If we select the subjects with a view to their utility, we are on solid ground. We can compare, and measure, and weigh, and talk about logical sequences. But when it comes to a consideration of the comparative cultural worth of subjects, we are confronted by the fact that these values are immeasurably influenced by the human equation, are, in other words, largely determined by the personality of the teacher. Indeed, we might go so far as to contend that some professional subjects may be so presented as to offer greater cultural possibilities than history or the languages, if the latter be in charge of a teacher not mindful of his opportunities in this direction.

George Bernard Shaw made a profound philosophic observation when he said that "happiness is a by-product." And I am inclined to believe that culture, in the broad American acceptance of the term, is, similarly, not the primary aim of a college education but its by-product.

If then we plan our four-year course as a liberal yet specific training for the tasks of the calling, we may be assured that our students, in their preparation for life's work, will gather also, as a by-product, a fair measure of culture, to enrich their lives, and to augment their capacity for happiness.—And on this basis the Conference can plan a satisfactory four-year course.

THIRD ANNUAL NORTHWEST DRUG
EXPOSITION AND MINNESOTA
PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION
MEETING.

The third annual Northwest Drug Exposition is to be held in St. Paul, Minn., during the second week in February. The University of Minnesota and other educational institutions plan to have on exhibit numerous plants grown in the Northwest and used for medicinal purposes. This display will be supplemented by

similar exhibits of plants grown throughout the world, illustrating the widely separated sources from which the retail pharmacist draws his prescription supplies.

During the week of the drug show, the Minnesota State Pharmaceutical Association will stage its annual convention in St. Paul. The Northwest Branch of the A. Ph. A., the Rexall clubs of the Northwestern states, and the fifth district of the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy are expected to participate.