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THE STATUS OF THE HOSPITAL PHARMACIST.*

BY EDWARD SWALLOW.

The profession of pharmacy, like all other callings in life, needs individual effort of no mean strength to bring success and honor in the exercise of its duties. Modern progress is such, both in science and business methods, that industry, generally, is no longer content with a portion of the individual, and to keep up with the times it behooves one to exert all his powers in the performance of his obligations.

Connected so closely with the art and science of healing as the profession of pharmacy is, when it comes to a final analysis we have to admit, willingly enough, that we are part of the great and glorious army of men and women enlisted in the battle against disease which humanity has to contend against. This knowledge and spirit it is which makes every pharmacist in the retail drug business "more than a merchant," more than a mere trader in medicines and other goods. In the compounding of medicines, the pharmacist not only exercises his skill and brings all his science into the work, but, also his desire to be of service in the cause of suffering fellow creatures. In this way he gives more than mere mechanical business service. He feels that his work means the ease of pain, the cure of disease, the adding to the happiness and bodily welfare of his fellow man. Down in the bottom of the heart of any worthwhile pharmacist lies this blessed truth "that in the exercise of his art he knows that he is engaged in a work governed by the fellowship of love and service of mutual aid and sympathy."

A knowledge of conditions in the retail end of pharmacy teaches us that there is considerable pure trading to be done nowadays by the pharmacist if he wants to succeed in a financial way. Things have evolved that way it seems naturally and it is only common sense to meet the conditions in the best manner possible by a proper amount of commercial training in addition to that of a highly trained pharmacist.

But the hospital pharmacist, future standard-bearer of his profession, representative solely of American pharmacy in its purely professional sense, is not called upon to exercise an up-to-date training in the art of selling for profit and func-

* Section on Practical Pharmacy and Dispensing, A. Ph. A., Buffalo meeting, 1924.

tions as a professional man in the exercise of his calling. He represents, or should represent, in his person all the science and knowledge obtainable from the colleges of science and pharmacy, and it would seem to anyone conversant with the education now demanded by these colleges that the hospital pharmacist is entitled to all the emoluments, dignity and respect that any other professional man gets from the public and those with whom he is brought into contact.

For the purposes of this paper the following points will be considered: (1) Where does the hospital pharmacist come from and why? (2) Does his training justify the honor and privileges being extended to him as a professional man? (3) Is the hospital pharmacist treated generally as a professional man? (4) Are the salaries paid for hospital pharmacy enough to encourage men of scientific attainments to take up this vitally important branch of pharmacy? (5) Seeing that the hospital pharmacist does represent professional pharmacy only in regard to his work, is the present condition of affairs in a great many hospitals, where persons unqualified to do so compound and dispense medicines for sick people, not only a reflection upon professional pharmacy but constitutes a menace to the public welfare and security?

(1) In regard to where the hospital pharmacist comes from the writer, after many years' experience as a hospital pharmacist, can safely assert that he comes into this work from the retail drug trade chiefly because the hours are, as a rule, shorter, the positions permanent and the work not so exhausting, physically. It may be stated in this connection that recent years there has not been a sufficient number of men who felt like giving up good paying positions in the retail to take up hospital pharmacy work. The city of New York has not for quite some time been able to fill up vacancies occurring in city hospitals from the civil service list as such positions call for.

(2) In regard to whether the previous training of the hospital pharmacist entitles him to the honor and recognition accorded other professional men engaged in hospital work, doctors, dentists, nurses, etc., is touching upon the delicate question of what his status was when engaged in retail pharmacy. Was he considered a professional man there and honored as such? In a few isolated cases in the retail trade we know there are men who are afforded the honors due to being highly trained professional pharmacists who function as such, but the majority of pharmacists are looked upon with much less respect than a banker or an architect obtains.

We know that, fortunately, there are a number of men and women of the highest pharmaceutical training and knowledge engaged in the work of hospital pharmacy and these are shining examples of the kind of pharmacists required in all hospitals throughout the country. According to recent statistics there are now 6,830 hospitals in the United States, which have a total capacity of 755,722 beds which are occupied on the average by 553,133 patients who are entitled to all the care and science possible from all engaged in hospital work. It probably is a fact that, as far as the medical attention is concerned, the science and knowledge is of the highest and most modern form in all these thousands of institutions for the care of the sick. Can we claim the same high honors for the profession of pharmacy? Does our profession function 100 per cent. perfect and thus keep pace with the medical profession in caring for these half million patients who lie sick and helpless in our hospitals? If it does not it is evident there must be something lacking

in the previous training of the majority of hospital pharmacists before they entered upon this important, most important, branch of pharmacy.

(3) Regarding the professional status of the hospital pharmacist in the hospital itself with a few exceptions of the able and really scientific men and women mentioned above, it is safe to assert that the hospital pharmacist gets no more recognition for being a professional man, as a hospital employee, than he did when engaged in the retail trade, from all concerned. Statistics show that of the 6,761 hospitals reporting as to who were superintendents or administrators 39 per cent. were physicians, 18 per cent. were registered nurses, and 41 per cent. were persons not having degrees of M.D. or R.N., nothing being mentioned of the existence of the hospital pharmacist. In this connection it is worth while mentioning that a close study of the medical journals for the past year of 1923 failed also to show the existence of the pharmacist. Nurses, dentists and others are named in connection with medical matters, but the pharmacist never!

Look over the journals devoted to hospital interests and you will find the same state of affairs, dietitians, nurses, and laundry men are very much in print but the pharmacist might as well be lying dead in the morgue all the time for all the publicity or recognition he gets. Here in these hospitals where registered pharmacists are representing purely professional pharmacy, in the great majority of cases, these men have no professional standing and honorable recognition, any more than ordinary employees. In Bellevue Hospital, for instance, only one registered pharmacist (the chief of the department) is allowed the privilege of dining with the professional help, and there are five registered pharmacists employed there, four of whom eat with the ambulance drivers, clerical force and other employees who cannot claim any professional privileges whatever.

This is mentioned to show the kind of standing the hospital pharmacist has in a large educational institution where there are hundreds of internes, visiting physicians constantly being brought into contact with him, the representative of the profession of pharmacy.

(4) In connection with the salaries paid to hospital pharmacists, we touch upon what is very probably a vital point in regard to the conditions generally, as far as our profession is concerned. When good men and women pharmacists can command \$50 to \$60 per week for their services in the retail drug trade, with the added opportunity of some day getting into business for themselves and providing for their old age, it is against reason to suppose these same able pharmacists will leave all of this and take up positions in hospitals where they will receive not much more than half they could earn in the retail store and have nothing but this kind of salary staring them in the face for the balance of their lives, or until the time comes when they are too old or sick to work any more. The hospital pharmacist has the same right and duty to himself, as any others, to be paid for his services so he can support himself (and family if he has one) in comfort and provide for his old age. Generally speaking the salaries paid to hospital pharmacists are totally inadequate for these necessary requirements for all engaged in earning a living. While it is not claimed that the small salaries only command the services of a very ordinary type of pharmacists, it is stated as a fact that these salaries keep very able men and women from entering this representative branch of the profession of

pharmacy and, consequently, the profession is not represented so as to bring the highest honors and recognition to our profession.

(5) Seeing that the hospital pharmacist represents professional pharmacy only in the character of his work the whole pharmaceutical body is interested in helping him function along the lines of progress and contentment in his work so he may reflect honor and dignity upon the profession as a profession. Where unregistered persons are allowed to perform the duties peculiar to the pharmacist, as is done in only too many small hospitals, each it is to be remembered having sick persons requiring the maximum amount of scientific care, the dignity and prestige of the whole profession of pharmacy suffers and the safety and welfare of our fellow citizens are distinctly menaced.

It is submitted that were every hospital required by law to employ registered pharmacists, always providing the proper kind of salaries were paid, there would not be enough good pharmacists left for stores; the badly conducted ones would pass out and those left, to quote from a recent letter of Dr. Robert J. Ruth, Chairman of this Section, "would be so busy doing a professional business that they would not find it necessary to highly commercialize their stores to make them pay."

ABSTRACT OF DISCUSSION.

H. J. Goeckel stated that the hospital pharmacists should have an association; the nurses, superintendents and others of the hospital organizations have. The dietitians have an association and are recognized in the American Hospital Conference and Association.

RETAIL SELLING.*

BY TURNER F. CURRENS.

In the last few years the term "Merchandize" has been broadened. To-day we hear that this or that thing "can be merchandized," or that "Smith is a good merchandizer" or "Brown does not know how to merchandise his store." There is a seeming desire on the part of some writers, or men interested in sales work, to throw an air of mystery over this merchandizing thing. Merchandizing is simply a present-day term for aggressive, intelligent selling. A live-wire druggist can merchandize his Prescription Department just as he can his candy counter or soda fountain, by playing up quality, care and accuracy; by impressing customers so that they believe prescriptions filled at Jones' are more likely to be right than if filled at Brown's. The druggist who so merchandizes his Prescription Department that people have this faith, reaps his reward in many ways.

However, many successful druggists to-day pay secondary heed to the prescription business, looking upon it as a necessary evil. In such stores, Retail Selling is generally given a greater study, with comparatively greater success. But aggressive merchandizing, or aggressive intelligent selling when applied to a prescription department, or any other department, in a store, always yields results in the way of increased sales and resultant profits. No matter what the nature of the store, retail selling is always more successful where the proprietor or manager has some idea of the direction in which he is heading.

To merely open up an attractive, well-appointed store, properly clerked, and

* Section on Commercial Interests, A. Ph. A., Buffalo meeting, 1924.