

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES OF PHARMACY

COLLEGE PREPARATION VERSUS BOARD EXAMINATIONS.

BY ZADA M. COOPER.*

For several years there has been a great deal said about the necessity of faculties of colleges and boards of pharmacy getting together and understanding each other's tasks better, if the percentage of failures among college graduates taking board examinations is to be reduced to what seems reasonable. Though this anomalous condition does not exist in every State it does exist in all too many and board members and teachers alike concede that something is wrong.

Conferences of individual boards and members of faculties of the colleges in that State, first suggested, I believe, by Dr. R. P. Fischelis, at the joint session of the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy and the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy at the Buffalo meeting and by others at each succeeding meeting, is a splendid idea. Such conferences can be productive of nothing but good.

As I read the minutes of the joint session of the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy and the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy at the Philadelphia meeting last fall, one thought recurred over and over, and that persistence is the reason for this article.

One of the questions discussed at the session was "To what extent shall correlation of schools and boards exist?" and many splendid ideas were presented and those of us who heard that discussion will profit by those ideas. In writing an abstract of that discussion for use in the printed Proceedings of the Association, in endeavoring to get and to express the point of view of each speaker, regardless of my own opinion in the matter, this same thought was constantly in my mind. The questions which came to me may not have come to others—perhaps what was meant was perfectly plain to everybody else, perhaps all I need is a good dictionary. However that may be, I wish to present my thought with the hope that, if it is worth anything, someone or several will take up my question and answer it.

It is this: that an analysis should be made of the types of questions candidates fail to answer. I know that compiling statistics involves a lot of work, but I can think of nothing that would help us, who teach, so much as to know the questions that are answered incorrectly, to have them grouped and to have figures on the percentages who fail to answer. For instance, one of the subjects I teach is pharmaceutical arithmetic; the fatalities are always high and I have only a vague idea as to why, and that idea was obtained from what candidates have told me after taking the examinations. Sometimes I do not even know what is considered right and what wrong. Now, I can hear some one saying right is right and wrong is wrong, and I agree perfectly, but let me illustrate. There is the much disputed percentage solution question. Those who teach arithmetic and, probably, many others know that there are several ways of going about the calculation of amounts required for percentage solutions—several ways that give abso-

* State University of Iowa.

lutely correct results and some that are approximately correct, "correct enough for practical purposes," I am sometimes told. Do I know which way or whether all ways will be given credit? I do not, and I'll venture to say that there are other teachers of pharmaceutical arithmetic who could testify to the same lack of information, if they cared to. But there are a lot of subjects upon which we know much less than we do about arithmetic, subjects more truly applicable to my original thought—of our needing to know the *kind* of questions our graduates fail to answer. Is it official Latin titles, is it doses, is it synonyms, is it the medicinal action, or is it something else? Just what sort of thing is it that stands out?

Going back for a moment to the discussion at the last joint session, to which I have already referred, one speaker said that the reason why these graduates of universities cannot "pass very simple examinations" is that members of boards and members of faculties have entirely different viewpoints, that our class-room work is presented from an entirely theoretical standpoint, while men who serve on boards of pharmacy are practical retail men who prepare their questions from the standpoint of the store. Unfortunately for me, he gave no illustrations. Just what he meant may be perfectly obvious to everybody else, but I must confess it wasn't to me. As a generalization it was perfectly lucid, but as a demonstration of why my questions are high-brow, theoretical, impractical, it was about as transparent as the Missouri River. Another speaker said that boards are trying to determine—not how well a candidate has been *educated*, but how well he has been *trained*; that candidates are failing, because they have not been properly trained in the technical side of pharmacy. "Boards," he said, "still recognize the necessity for practical training." Here again I need elucidation of "technical pharmacy" and "practical training."

Reiterating what I said in the beginning, if members of boards could find the time to classify the questions which students fail to answer and to report on the percentage of failures we, who teach, could decide for ourselves whether we are "theoretical" at the expense of the "practical" and just what is meant by "practical training in technical pharmacy." Or, we would gladly make our own classification if the questions which large numbers of students fail to answer could be supplied through the pharmaceutical press, or otherwise.

Very closely associated with this question of the *sort* of thing that students are failing to answer is another that this analysis or classification of questions which I am proposing would illuminate. I refer to the comparative value of store experience in teaching the things that boards are asking. For the most part, a simple reading of a question tells at once whether the correct answer is learned in a store or a class room.

Let no one for a moment infer that I think store experience is valueless. Every teacher knows that the things our graduates have to learn in a store are almost infinite in number, but we wonder how many of these things help in passing board examinations. Before an individual can be worth very much to a proprietor he has to learn many things, especially about the conduct of a pharmacy, with all that it involves, but if those self-same things are not being asked in examinations most of the reason for the law of most States, not permitting board examinations to be taken immediately after graduation, would go aglimmering. If that were shown to be true it would shed considerable light on a very much

disputed question. In view of the fact that a paragraph of Article II of the By-laws of the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy, which has to do with reciprocal registration, says that "an applicant must have passed an examination at least in pharmacy, chemistry, materia medica, pharmaceutical and chemical mathematics and practical work," and with the further evidence to be obtained from published lists of questions of various State Boards, it seems to be a perfectly logical conclusion that very few questions are being asked of candidates, the answers to which are learned in stores. Statistics about questions which students fail to answer would refute or prove this. There might still be ample reason for withholding the certificate of registration until the store experience had been completed, but there would be no reason for deferring the time of taking the examination—a requirement which makes candidates complain rather bitterly—because they know that in medicine, a man takes his examination at the end of his college training, but his certificate is withheld until his internship has been served. Furthermore, it puts a premium upon dishonesty.

Is it not possible, then, to have a sufficient number of these questions which students fail to answer published, or some statistical information given about the *type* of questions (if there is objection to publicity for the questions themselves), so that we can modify our teaching accordingly? It is rather heartrending to see this "slaughter of the innocents" go on, when we who teach would gladly remedy it, if it is our fault. It all has a bad effect upon pharmacy as a calling, aside from these personal phases.

To my mind, no greater service could be rendered than to bring about an understanding of this matter.

LEADERSHIP THAT DOES NOT LEAD.

BY WORTLEY F. RUDD.

Disillusionment it seems is at least a part of the price we must pay for whatever of wisdom may come to us as we grow older. The story books of our youth built up as they were around heroes that always did right and incidents that turned out as we wanted them to do naturally gave us a fine idealism. This is as it should be. Without such a spirit youth would neither dream nor dare and both of these are manifestly necessary to progress. Fortunately too we give up our idealism slowly, so slowly in fact that most men have enough to furnish some degree of motivization even to the end. We can name almost in chronological order when our idols were broken. First the fairies went, then Santa Claus and the stork. These were shocks, each of them leaving us wondering what would be the next to go. And too, we began early to have our heroes in actual life, men and women, boys and girls, selected from the crowd and set apart as different, better, smarter, truer; it is just human nature to be hero worshipers and we all are more or less. Our heroes too go, not all, but many of them, and in middle life most men and women probably have very few left in this class. This too is as it should be for comparatively few are made of the stuff that we demand in those whom we would thus continue to honor. I venture, however, to say that there is not one who cannot name a few men and women in whom are all the qualities