

ADDRESS OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE HOUSE OF DELEGATES OF
THE AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION.

BY LEONARD A. SELTZER.

Gentlemen of the House of Delegates of the American Pharmaceutical Association:

In the list of resolutions adopted by the N. A. R. D. at its last annual meeting was the following:

WHEREAS: The major menace confronting the retail druggist to-day is the ever-increasing multiplicity of new stores and,

WHEREAS: This condition is in a measure due to a desire on the part of students of Pharmacy to embark in business immediately upon graduation,

Be it resolved that college professors, wholesale druggists, representatives of manufacturing pharmacists and others interested be requested to acquaint future pharmacists with the deplorable state of things, the while urging said future proprietors to acquire stores already established.



LEONARD A. SELTZER.

I take this as the theme of this discourse: suitable because, having been recognized by the N. A. R. D. as a *major* menace and having occupied the attention of the profession for at least a generation, possibly longer, its importance matches the opportunity which comes to one addressing delegates representing STATE PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATIONS from every state in the union.

I choose this particular resolution because in its preamble it cites the cry of the ages and in its conclusions (the quintessence of ineffectiveness) it typifies the futility of the efforts toward a solution of the problem suggested thus far. I presume to discuss it because it has been my privilege to hear it debated on the floor of this ASSOCIATION by leading minds in the profession including Ebert, Oldberg, Mason and others for a period covering the span of a generation; to have studied it from the standpoint of the idealistic vision of a teacher; to have observed it from the viewpoint of general expediency of a board member; and to have experienced its specific efforts for over thirty years from the angle of a pharmacist limiting his work to that phase of the drug business which is most delicately sensitive to regulations affecting it.

The problem stated is the excessive number of drug stores; the solution sought a means of limiting them. Any proposition which does not successfully address itself to limitation does not meet the requirements of a solution. A steam engine needs a contrivance to control the amount of steam entering its cylinder. If instead of the governor balls a device had been conceived so that the escaping steam might render perfectly the Fifth Symphony of Beethoven and yet fail to control the volume of steam, the problem of a safety device would have remained unsolved. Phar-

macy needs the limitation of the number of stores. A device involving higher standards, prerequisites or store ownership, the wisdom of which, since in logic they have no vital bearing on the subject and in practice, as shown by experience, they have no appreciable effect on the solution, will not be taken up in this paper in which the writer shall endeavor to confine himself to the problem at hand.

The excessive number of stores is a serious problem because the amount of professional work is admittedly insufficient to support such a number, rendering it necessary to invade other lines of business to supplement the volume required. It spreads the element of professional business in a very thin film over a large area, so as to make it a matter of minor importance in any one store, notwithstanding the almost ironical slogan "Prescriptions a Specialty!" It lowers the quality of the service to the public; it diversifies the interests of the trade so as to make the problem of legislation, which should be beneficial to both it and the public, complex almost beyond human comprehension; it makes regulation and enforcement of law more difficult and, by its demands upon the board for clerks to man existing stores (under present restrictions), it interferes with the maintenance of standards.

Present methods not only do not solve but increase the difficulty. They work from the top down instead of from the bottom up. They are concerned with who shall *own* the stores and with the enforcement of the irrational requirements for its management: ignoring or assuming a contemptuous attitude toward those auxiliary factors upon which not only the immediate manning but the supply of future managers should and to some extent even now does depend. As though in a military organization no subordinate officer could assume responsibilities until he had attained the rank of general. Under such a plan how could the army be manned with subordinate officers? As a matter of fact one of the reasons a general is an efficient general is on account of his familiarity with the details resulting from his close contact with them while in training as a subordinate officer. The effect in the army of refusing to delegate responsibilities to subordinate officers would be to produce, on the one hand, unseasoned commanding officers who had not had the proper experience, and to produce on the other hand the situation in which none of those who had met with the coveted qualifications would be willing to serve in subordinate positions. Every general would want an army of his own. *Exactly this method and exactly these results obtain in the drug business to-day.* This situation is specifically recognized in the second paragraph of the preamble of the resolution quoted: On the one hand the subordinate service (which if conserved would constitute a reserve to be used to man existing stores), is not required as a prerequisite to the assumption of supervisory service and on the other hand relatively few having qualified legally for the latter, are willing to serve in a subordinate position. The critical problem of manning our stores is upon us and while we have our attention fixed on building higher standards for our profession it is undermining the very foundation of the structure. Upon the solution of this problem hangs the desired curtailment of the number of stores.

When Archimedes discovered the power of the lever he also discovered the necessity of the fulcrum. "I can lift the world with a lever," said he, "if I have a fulcrum." He might have added the converse had he known of microbes, that even a microbe cannot lift itself by its bootstraps. The problem of Pharmacy is by no means so trifling as the lifting of a microbe but the bootstrap method of lifting is the

one at present in vogue. We must have a fulcrum if we are to lift the drug business out of the predicament in which it finds itself.

Now the fulcrum is the assistant pharmacist; "he is the stone which the builders rejected but is become the head of the corner." The objection to him is clearly expressed by Professor Beard in his address as Chairman of the Section of Education and Legislation two years ago when he says, "If prescription filling and poison selling are sufficiently important and so fraught with danger as by law to invoke the services of a registered pharmacist, the very purpose of the protection is destroyed when persons less well trained and competent are permitted to act as substitutes." This academical statement does not necessarily condemn the principle upon which the idea of the assistant pharmacist rests, because one of the first things to learn in becoming a pharmacist is the points which are "fraught with danger," as soon as he knows anything, he knows that; it does, however, criticise its present status.

The reason that the status of "registered assistant" is in disrepute is because his grade at present in most states has no recognized standard, his prerogatives are not clearly defined or rather he is denied any, and no function is allotted to him, such prerogatives and functions as he does exercise being surreptitiously assumed. Under such conditions of what service can he be?

If on the other hand his grade were given him when and as he qualifies as a competent technician (which is the very qualification present methods are suited to determine) we could then grant him very specific prerogatives and he could exercise a very definite function. I am ready to state from observation and experience, without fear of intelligent or successful contradiction, that an intelligent observant young man can be trained to efficiently meet all the problems that arise at the prescription desk with safety to the public. Many of our best pharmacists practicing to-day were so trained. The man in active management of my store to-day and who is in authority over all the other men no matter what their training may have been was so trained. Every practical man knows that the technical competence, and I lay accent on the word competence—the ability to discriminate between the technically right and wrong, between safety and danger, *is attained long before that maturity is achieved* which qualifies him to pass judgment on questions of finance, of public policy, of moral responsibility with respect to his relations with the community he serves and of many other details, all of which are the result of contact with the public and learned during *his service at the prescription desk* and nowhere else so well; this is my personal experience and I believe it is the experience of every man, and the statement of it is simply the expression of common sense.

There is no reason in the world why a technically competent man not yet matured to the point of assuming managerial duties may not be even more efficient at the prescription desk than the one whose mind is taken up with managerial duties—here again I cite my own personal experience. This being the case and the difference between the technical and managerial function being conceded, is there any doubt that my store or the store of any one here where those regulations rule that were developed as a result of our experience covering years of careful thought; stores in which the policy is the result of our observation and study; the product of our painstaking endeavor; stores in which the employees hold their positions as a result of our careful selections are under our supervision? Can anybody deny that

we are at present in charge of and responsible for our respective stores even though thousands of miles away, even though we stay away a week or more, even though the men in charge of the work are only assistants although perchance more competent to perform technical work than we are? I have had men in my employ, technicians of such high order whose work and quality of mind were such that, although not formally registered even as assistants, they drew larger pay than any full registered man in my employ. Can any one suggest a more rigid or efficient test than my own interests and the reputation of my institution in such a case? Who, for instance, would not rather have a prescription filled in the drug store of a Hilton or a Raubenheimer or many others we might name, by technicians whom they had selected solely on the grounds of technical efficiency even in the absence of the proprietor, than to have it filled in some other store where nothing more than the present requirements were taken into account, although everybody from the porter to the proprietor bore the title of "Registered Pharmacist" as that title is and under present conditions must be conferred?

The battle is not won at the time of action. Sampson was not present when Cervera's fleet was destroyed but it was never-the-less *effectually destroyed* and the credit of the destruction was attributed to his discipline, his preparation and his strategy. *Neither is the character of the pharmaceutical service determined at the time the prescription is compounded.* Although a registered pharmacist I have not "compounded prescriptions nor sold poisons" for at least three years—how much longer I do not know, yet being released from this routine work does not mean abandonment but rather the opportunity, otherwise precluded, of undertaking pharmaceutical work of a comprehensive or general type which *having been done* is reflected in the particular work which is *being done* by the technicians, *i. e.*, the compounding of prescriptions and selling of poisons.

With the responsibility of the assistant established we now have the means of manning existing stores without *flooding the trade with potential proprietors*. And what is more important we have at our command the proper setting for a training period for all, from which only those showing the necessary qualifications may be advanced to the grade of "Registered Pharmacist."

The training which should be required as a prerequisite to final registration is that obtained in the service as an "Assistant Pharmacist," a specification in the interest equally of the trade, the clerk and the public. Under the present conditions the value of the training is as attenuated as the proverbial oyster stew at a church supper. Recently I was requested to and did sign up for time for a bookkeeper who desired to appear before our board and who had been in my employ for upwards of ten years but who may never have had a spatula in her hand. The fact that she was intelligent and was much more deserving than others for whom I had signed, whose service consisted in working the crank of a bicycle or pushing a broom for a much shorter period, does not make the incident less significant.

Having thus made provisions for technicians and also for managers, and as there are registered pharmacists in sufficient number at present and for some time to come a very careful selection could from now on be made of those receiving advancement. The immediate curtailment of the number of drug stores could be accomplished (since no store can operate except under supervision of a "Registered Pharmacist") without injustice or hardship to any one already in business. The public

would benefit by ultimately having an outstanding, educated man, a man of broad culture and matured experience, in charge of every store; which statement does not involve the absurd requirement of his physical presence every minute, a requirement which in fact would render its realization impossible and one which is the precise point which those holding the views embodied in the expression of Professor Beard insist upon as essential. The title "Registered Pharmacist" would have a new significance; the dignity of the profession would be such as to attract the keenest and most ambitious minds. Thus, limiting the number of stores, and incidentally raising its standard of pharmacy is almost as simple, when shown how, as Columbus' problem of standing an egg on end, or raising the earth with a lever if the fulcrum is provided.

For the body pharmaceutic has many members yet all the members do not have the same office. To some is given the work of teaching, to some administration, to some compounding—diversities in operation but the same common end worketh in all. The technician cannot say to the manager "I have no need of you," nor the manager to the teacher "I have no need of you," if all were managers where were the compounding; if all were teachers where were the managing? Let not one member assume that because another member seem to him to have no function that hence he has none, even those members which seem to be more feeble are necessary and upon them we should bestow more abundant attention.

Let us not continue to follow erroneous procedure such as the removal of ductless glands because their function is not known nor make the same type of error with the members of our profession. Having then functions differing according to the office that is given us whether teaching, let us teach; or he that dispenses, dispense; or on administration, with diligence; efficient in business, fervent in spirit, serving the public, rejoicing in the hope of a body of pharmaceutic fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part making increase for the body and a larger and more efficient service for the public and for humanity.

MERCER'S APOTHECARY SHOP IN FREDERICKSBURG, VA., RESTORED.

A brief sketch of Dr. Hugh Mercer and a picture of the building in which he had his apothecary shop will be found in the *JOURNAL* for June 1926. The writer possesses a statement of Mercer & Julian—reduced copy will be found on page xxiii in the *JOURNAL* for August 1927. A press report of the restoration of the Apothecary Shop follows:

"Hugh Mercer's apothecary shop at Fredericksburg, Va., in which General George Washington maintained a desk for twelve years, has been recently restored to its former condition at a cost of \$20,000 through the activities of the Citizens' Guild. Electric lights have been removed from the front and every effort has been made to give the building the appearance it had during the days of the American Revolution. Period furnishings gleaned from far and near, including bottles used prior to 1775, have been used in the restoration.

"The building was erected before 1750, and Washington had a desk in the apothecary shop from 1764 to 1776, at which he transacted business whenever he went to Fredericksburg, where his mother lived until her death in 1789. It has been assumed 'that part of the business was concerned with the Washington estate, but much of it related to the services for state and country, in which he had the counsel of compatriots who met with him in Mercer's apothecary shop and around the open fireplace at Rising Sun Tavern.' General Mercer was a native of Scotland and was graduated from the School of Medicines at the University of Aberdeen in 1774. He died from wounds received at the battle of Princeton in January 1777."