

competing store on the corner the year after you have employed him. Mr. Seltzer wants to make that distinction between the training of a clerk and the equipment of a proprietor. A clerk should be just as well equipped, technically, as the proprietor, but do not let the man who becomes an assistant pharmacist and who does all the duties you may impose upon him, do not let him become a proprietor until four or five or six years have elapsed and he has had experience and has become an older and broader man. We know that this thing of allowing the clerk to be in charge for a half hour when the proprietor is out at lunch is a joke anyhow; that is, that the clerk shall have full charge for thirty minutes while the proprietor is out at a restaurant, or elsewhere. I think that if the clerk is competent he ought to be allowed to have charge for even a day or so, if necessary.

But when it comes to the policy of the store, giving pure and high-class products, and so forth, there is a set of principles a proprietor should have, which it is, perhaps, unfair to expect of an immature person.

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### AN EXPERIENCE MEETING.\*

BY PHILIP ASHER.

At the last annual meeting of the Alumni Association of the New Orleans College of Pharmacy, the President, Mr. J. B. Murphy, introduced an innovation that was instructive and very wide in its application. Mr. Murphy, a graduate of but three years ago, young, bristling with energies and new ideas, and being of the same age as a majority of the past year's class, knew exactly how best to get next to the "boys" and by a process peculiar to himself was able to extract from them many latent ideas and have them unbosom themselves.

Present at this meeting was the entire faculty of the college. To them it was a revelation almost beyond belief to hear these graduates, who but a short time before were their students and from some of whom it was almost impossible to get sufficient expression, in oral recitations, to show that they knew the lesson under discussion, tell their experiences in clear tones and well-chosen words. The title of this paper might lead one to believe that this experience meeting was some spiritualistic conference or religious assembly. It was, however, nothing of that order. It was just a simple, plain, pharmaceutical gathering, though there was sufficient material developed during the session to serve as a text for more than one good sermon.

After the regular order of business had been disposed of, the President, in welcoming the new members to the Association, requested each to tell his or her reason for taking up the study of pharmacy as a life work. At first, "the going was slow,"—to use the vernacular of the race course—but it was not long before the "going was good," and within a short time they all made "fast strides on a good track." After the "experience meeting" was well under way, they became "warmed up" to the subject, and it was not long before all embarrassment had left them, and they described their experiences with perfect calmness and spoke to the assembly with as much ease as they would have spoken had they been addressing their classmates alone.

To the teachers, the descriptions given and the pictures painted were replete with sentiment, determination and color, and in some of them there was sufficient material for a first-class book. We were amazed at the hardships several of these students had to undergo to gain that much-coveted prize, the diploma. At times

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\* Read before Section on Education and Legislation, Atlantic City meeting, 1916.

we were almost moved to tears by the experiences that were related, and sometimes, when we consider their every phase, we wonder if the efforts are worth the gain.

Those present were loud in their praise of the innovation and left after the meeting feeling that the time was well spent and the narrations replete with morals and lessons for the advancement of our calling.

We also felt that if this meeting should pass without wide publicity being given to it, it would result in little good, for viewing it from its many angles one is surprised how broad is its scope for practical good.

The writer in viewing it from some of its aspects became deeply impressed with the difference in behavior between the recent student and the new graduate, and his impressions have led him to reflect what may have been some of the causes of the changes in the address and bearing of the student.

Let us first analyze it from the angle of pharmaceutical teaching and see what factors it may contain to enable teachers to get better results from the efforts they put in their work.

Efficiency is described as the ratio of work gotten out of a machine to the energy put into it. Do we get the highest degree of efficiency out of our students and is it proportional to the energy we put into our work?

What are some of the factors that decrease the efficiency of the human machine, the student? They may be enumerated practically as in physics: friction and deficient power.

Regarding the first factor: this condition in a well-regulated classroom should not exist, as any discord between pupil and teacher not only proves harmful to both, but as one piece of machinery out of harmony with the balance of the workshop will lessen its total efficiency, so likewise any discord between teacher and pupil will have the same effect upon the whole class.

Why did these young men upon this particular occasion show one hundred percent efficiency? Because all parts were working in perfect accord, and they now felt themselves upon the same plane with those who taught them, and the feeling of uneasiness which naturally exists on the part of students towards their teacher was lacking. Such uneasiness is an element of friction, and that condition being removed the machine worked smoothly.

This observation shows a common fault of some teachers in not getting the fullest confidence of the student. While there is a line of demarcation between student and teacher, this line must only exist insofar as the decorum of the classroom is concerned. The false dignity of position that some teachers assume should be swept aside and nothing should stand in the way of permitting us to bring the machine placed in our hands to the highest degree of perfection.

What is the power a teacher should possess to bring out the best efforts of his charges? The ability to present his subject in a manner that will keep his pupils constantly interested. A great number of teachers are thoroughly conversant with their subjects, but they lack the above requisite and, as a consequence, a lessened degree of efficiency in the student results. Merely to deliver a lecture and feel that one's duty is done, is far from the province of a teacher. The instructor's aim should be to see that the lesson is driven home and thoroughly comprehended. His presentation of the subject should be clear, concise, forcible and supplemented by appropriate and practical illustrations and examples. To speak over the heads of the students defeats the purpose of the instruction. We must bear in mind that the students come to the teacher for instruction, and *the teacher should not take it for granted that because the entrance conditions of the school exact that the student possess a specified amount of preliminary training, he*

*measures up to such qualifications.* Consequently he should present his subject in such a manner that not a single point will be lost by any student. If the subject is clearly set forth and the student made to understand each step in the matter, his interest will naturally be aroused and developed as the subject progresses, and that he has sufficiently understood the lesson will be shown by his satisfactory recitals in the quiz-room.

If, however, a single cog in one of the great wheels of education should slip, it would throw out of gear the whole machinery of that particular subject, and the student, failing to understand, would lose interest and courage, and so would not be able to put into his work his fullest power. The consequence would be a loss in efficiency.

The student attends college not merely to be shown what is in the text-book, but also to derive such benefit as he may from the teacher's practical knowledge and experience and his manner of handling the subject. The narration of the teacher's own experiences in an interesting and instructive manner holds the student's attention and impresses him more strongly than the prosaic matter of the text-books, and the enhancement of the subject with an occasional joke enlivens the hour and removes some of the humdrum of the lesson. There is not *one* single subject in the curriculum of a college of pharmacy that cannot be made interesting, if the teacher will inject his own personality into the topic.

Is there still a wider range for this "experience meeting" and can it be applied to any of our national, state or local pharmaceutical meetings?

Why is it that so many of our pharmaceutical meetings are so uninteresting and their attendance at an ebb? Because the average pharmacist dislikes to write papers and is often at a loss for a proper subject. If, however, this innovation were introduced, it would not be long before the time for discussion allowed each member would have to be limited. Let some member get up and describe some of his everyday experiences and we would soon find that nearly all would desire to tell about similar experiences. We are all familiar with the scenes that take place in the smokers of railroad trains: how when some jovial fellow starts the ball a rolling with a rattling good joke, it is only a moment after he finishes that half a dozen others will say, "that reminds me." Each has a joke to tell and all are willing and interested listeners, and soon all become oblivious to the flight of time. Likewise, with the experience meetings at pharmaceutical conventions. Let John Brown start the ball a rolling with the narration of something that has occurred to him in his business, and Jones and Smith will have a hard time getting a word in edgewise; and we would have, instead of a long drawn out and tedious session, a lively, interesting, useful and instructive meeting.

Program committees of various organizations have labored earnestly in trying to arouse interest, and have formulated lists of questions to be written and discussed by their members, and time and time again no one has seemed disposed to undertake the task. But if the program committee would direct its energies toward relating particular experiences that have occurred to them, they would bring about an entirely different condition. It is a well-known fact that a large number of pharmacists cannot write an article upon any particular topic, yet possess the ability of orally discussing it in an entertaining manner which would elicit the keenest interest from those present.

In no calling is the opportunity for experiences greater than in pharmacy. There are both the bright and dark sides. These experiences may be regarding the funny side of our profession and produce a spirit of hilarity, causing us to forget, at least for the moment, our greater responsibilities. Are there any among

you who cannot tell some tale out of the ordinary, or something about the sale of that great article of commerce from which we derive our large profits—postage stamps? Or about some outlandish request we received over the 'phone to deliver some foolish message? Or a story regarding another source of income,—the directory? Could not some one get up a symposium about how they collected bad debts, and could not his listeners profit by his recital? The number of topics could be multiplied *ad infinitum*, and the details would work out themselves. We need not have these meetings confined to levity alone, but with the responsibility attending our calling we could also add experiences relative to serious matters affecting the professional and ethical side of our activities.

Is it not only natural to infer that if these young men of the college alumni, without any experience of speaking before an audience, could give a talk that interested their hearers, there might also be found among the rank and file of the pharmacists many who could relate to their confreres experiences which would carry with them food for reflection and redound to the betterment of pharmacy? Let us try to work together towards this end and inject more "ginger" into our proceedings and thus instil a greater desire in our members to attend our sessions and make them feel that the time, money and energy spent in coming to them will be more than repaid.

#### DISCUSSION.

L. G. BLAKESLEE: I have in mind an incident that perhaps typically applies, or, rather, this paper applies to that particular occasion. It was at our meeting in Denver and the Commercial Section was dragging along very slowly, and the Chairman asked for a topic for the afternoon discussion, and I think it was something relative to Commercial Pharmacy. In any event, it was of a nature that raised considerable interest and it developed into exactly the kind of meeting Dr. Asher has described. It developed into an experience meeting. They asked me to do a little something. I went to several of the largest drug stores there and asked if they would let me look at the first fifty prescriptions they had dispensed, and I noted there the relation between the prescriptions actually compounded and those merely counted, or, so to speak, poured from one bottle to another. That was one thing. But before the afternoon passed, that little room—about the size of this one—was packed to the doors, and one of the larger sessions sent their compliments to us; they imagined that we were conserving interest, and said that when we were ready to adjourn they would be glad to have us call on them. The Chairman sent his compliments and said that when they adjourned we would be glad to have them call on us, if they could get into the room.

I never attended a more interesting meeting. It brought nearly everyone to his feet, nearly everyone had some good idea. Dr. Asher's paper, it seems to me, hits the nail on the head. We could have many of these meetings, get the members interested and hear what they have to say.

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**SOME OF THE FORMER CHAIRMEN OF THE SECTION ON PRACTICAL PHARMACY AND DISPENSING.**

Seated, Louis Saalbach, Pittsburg, 1910; P. Henry Utech, Meadville, Pa., 1911; J. Leon Lascoff, New York, 1912; Standing, H. A. Brown Dunning, Baltimore, 1906; F. M. Apple, Philadelphia, 1907; Henry P. Hynson, Baltimore, 1900; Leonard A. Selzer, Detroit, 1908; Otto Kaubenneimer, Brooklyn, 1909.—*Courtesy of American Druggist.*