

## COMMERCIAL TRAINING FOR PHARMACISTS.\*

BY ROBERT P. FISCHELIS.

The need for commercially trained pharmacists is an acute one if the trend of the profession is accurately recorded in the pharmaceutical press and in pharmaceutical meetings. It is therefore no longer necessary for those advocating commercial training to apologize for usurping a place in the "pharmaceutical sun." On the contrary, many close students of the present-day pharmaceutical situation are beginning to wonder whether the time is not coming when those who have scientific papers to present before pharmaceutical associations will not in their turn open their remarks with an apology for taking up valuable time that might better be devoted to a discussion of business problems and financial profit possibilities.

What the whole situation requires is the acceptance of a common sense viewpoint on the part of teachers, retailers, students and others who are interested in the practice of pharmacy of to-day. I am not in sympathy with those who wish to displace a large portion of the present minimum pharmaceutical curriculum with business training any more than I am in sympathy with those who begrudge even the small period of time—about 60 hours—that the better schools of pharmacy are devoting to the subject.

There must be a willingness to give and take in this matter if pharmacy is to be served properly.

We all recognize what pharmacy is to-day and it is foolish to try to make ourselves believe that it is on a higher plane than actual conditions demonstrate.

Our colleges of pharmacy are attempting to elevate the profession of pharmacy to their high standards and practical men everywhere are trying to make the colleges recognize the fact that in order to really serve the profession the colleges should take cognizance of conditions in the trade and adapt their curriculum to the situation in such a manner as to turn out men who would be trained and valuable for the present-day drug store. That, in a nutshell, is the situation and thus far many of the colleges have responded by instituting short courses in commercial training—with emphasis on the short.

It is expecting too much of both student and instructor in commercial pharmacy to feel that just because a college gives a short course in commercial training its graduates should make good as business men. To be sure they are much better prepared for business life after having taken such a course than they are without having taken it, but the other learned professors on the pharmaceutical faculties must also help to make our 1917 graduates and those who follow them good assistants to the average retail druggist of to-day or good business men in their own stores.

Those who advocate discontinuing some of the scientific instruction given in the present pharmacy course and substituting more commercial training for the same are often asked what branch of the curriculum may be eliminated or curtailed. Invariably the first subjects mentioned are botany and pharmacognosy

---

\* Presented at New York Branch, A. Ph. A., December meeting, 1916.

Yet a knowledge of the habitat and characteristics of vegetable drugs as well as climatic effects upon their growth, etc., is quite essential to the shrewd buyer. But how many teachers of botany and pharmacognosy ever handle the subject from this point of view? They are usually profound students of the subject and teach what custom dictates every educated pharmacist should know about these sciences and they usually teach it in a highly scientific way, regarding any commercial consideration of the subject as beneath their dignity.

It is necessary to remember that we are not, in this day and generation, teaching pharmacists who will go out and collect green drugs, dry and grind them and manufacture them into elegant preparations. We are teaching men who tomorrow will be in the thick of the fight for a living out of a business which has some professional trimmings but requires the ability to utilize these trimmings in a commercial way for success.

Chemistry is a big subject which requires four years of undergraduate study and some more post-graduate work in our universities before it is felt that the student or graduate knows enough to speak with authority on the subject. Yet we try to make our men master chemistry in two short years and crowd the work in at an enormous rate with the result that there is little time for absorption because it is all needed for cramming. Chemistry is invaluable to the pharmacy student but it should be handled from the view-point of the pharmacist. Our professors are victims of a system which does not recognize that the object of teaching chemistry in a pharmacy school is not to turn out chemists but to turn out good pharmacists, just as the object of teaching botany is not to develop botanists but better pharmacists.

The time has come when the traditions of the past must be shaken off for they have burdened us heavily for too long a time.

Commercial training must mean more than bookkeeping, accounting, selling and advertising in the future. It should be considered in connection with every subject in the curriculum and the men now teaching the various subjects at our colleges will find a keener interest in their work, on the part of students, if it is approached from the present-day retail druggists' standpoint. And further than this, the colleges will then be fulfilling their mission which is to provide trained men to meet the needs of the hour.

---

#### DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE INVITES CRITICISM OF PROPOSED RULINGS ON STANDARDS FOR DRUGS

UNICORN ROOT.—Samples of true unicorn root, *Aletris farinosa*, obtainable in interstate trade, have been examined. As a result of this study it was found that excessive amounts of total ash and acid-insoluble ash (sand) were present. In a few instances the limit of 16 percent given in the new National Formulary was exceeded. The Bureau is of the opinion that material properly collected should contain not more than 10 percent of total ash and the amount of insoluble ash should be considerably below 5 percent. Of special interest is the fact that one sample which contained about 3 percent of true unicorn root consisted otherwise entirely of false unicorn root, *Chamaelirium luteum*. The Department will regard as adulterated or misbranded under the Food and Drugs Act any unicorn root containing total ash in excess of 16 percent or which contains material other than true unicorn root, *Aletris farinosa*.