

COMMERCIAL SECTION

THE PRECEPTOR—AN ASSET OR A LIABILITY?*

BY FRANKLIN M. APPLE.

From the definition of the word "preceptor" given by standard authorities, theoretically, there should be but one answer to this query: an affirmative one as an asset; but from customs in vogue in some establishments, branded drug stores, and from experiences had with employees from such shops, one is compelled, with reluctance, to decide that some preceptors are liabilities to those who have the misfortune to be in their employ.

The preceptor in the drug business should realize that he assumes a moral responsibility to his employees, who place a measure of faith in his integrity and business judgment when he takes them into his employ; hence he should exercise great caution that the embryo pharmacist, at the most impressionable time in his life, be directed along proper lines of action, which action upon the clerk's part will depend in large measure upon the customs that prevail in the establishment over which the proprietor has supreme command, as the rules of the store will automatically be indelibly impressed upon the mind of the faithful employee.

The advantages (or disadvantages) of the direction of the preceptor will be in direct proportion to the faithfulness of the employee, and we all know that the faithful employee is the only sort the good pharmacist is solicitous of employing.

When serving my apprenticeship, I was skeptical concerning rumors to the effect that in some few establishments very low wages were received by the tyro-pharmacists there employed; but after a quarter century's active service in the role of a pharmacist, and observing the varying value of various employees, I have no doubt as to the aforesaid rumors, and the great advantages enjoyed by those who had the good fortune to be under the direction and supervision of truly representative, responsible employers, who were mindful of the obligations to their employees. The advantages of such a line of action are not unfair or unbalanced ones, as far as the preceptor is concerned, for the the proverbial shortage of *good* help is one that does not annoy such a one; because there will be competition to enter his employ upon the part of intelligent employees, and other employers make appeals to him for positions for their wards when attending college, if located in a city where a college of pharmacy is operated.

As it will be necessary for the employee to carry out the processes of manufacture in a drug store that is properly conducted, it is self-evident that he will become familiar with such processes and facilities for manufacturing, which knowledge and practice will prove to be of lasting benefit to him as a clerk or as an employer.

It is said that the clerk of to-day is the proprietor of tomorrow, hence it can readily be seen that he stands to gain very materially by having been in the employ of a first-class pharmacist.

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Reversely, it is advantageous to the employer to properly train his employees, for, if they become proprietors, they will assist in keeping up the standards of the business as a matter of custom or second nature, and he surely will feel the advantages that such customs will produce.

If the clerks have had desirable practices to follow when employed, they are not likely to want to follow less desirable ones when directing their places of business. They will be more prone to yearn for, and determine upon more pleasing and more comfortable conditions, which will lead to a far better state of affairs for all followers of the calling.

As a nation, we have been notorious as squanderers of our resources, showing but little regard for the affairs of to-morrow, but, with the advent of the unprecedented conditions that prevail to-day, it is very important that we take time to take account of stock, as it were, and plan with far more deliberation for the future than we have done in the past.

These are stirring and heart-rending times and each and every one should as a patriotic duty seriously consider how he can contribute to the welfare of the nation.

If careless financial methods have been followed, they should be discontinued immediately in self-defense to proprietor and clerk, for then the proprietor may be able to pay the clerk a better salary.

If slovenly practices have been followed, to the great detriment of the budding pharmacist, the proprietor should "wake up" or competition will eliminate him as an employer in the near future, for business is making very rapid strides along the lines of cleanliness and order.

If questionable business morals are the basis on which a drug store is conducted, the sooner a clerk severs his connection with the place the better it will be for him, as he cannot afford to run the risk of the evil effects of such environment.

If an employer does not prove to be what he morally obligates himself to be to the clerk—a preceptor or teacher—when he requests him to enter his employ, the drug clerk is being treated dishonestly and unfairly and should keep on the lookout for an employer who will faithfully carry out his part of the bargain made when hiring the novice.

As the majority of employers are close observers of the habits of their employees and realize their obligations to their worthy employees, it is incumbent upon the latter to prove their worthiness of confidence, and to instill into the minds of their masters the fact that it will not be a waste of time and effort upon the part of the preceptor to allot a certain portion of each day's time, if possible, to the improvement of their pupils, realizing that they will receive the benefit from such action by the improved service the employees can and will render to them.

I shall never forget the systematic course of study I was compelled to follow by my first employer in the drug business, and I feel certain that the habits then formed have been a lasting benefit to me; and I certainly recommend that all employers, if possible, demand that a certain course of reading and study be followed by their employees—particularly so by those just entering the drug business.

The ex-employees of some of our first-class drug stores are known as one of —'s boys, to which they allude with pride (and in many instances with great

profit), as they now appreciate the great opportunity it was to them to have been in the employ of such an employer.

As the brand trade-mark on some lines of manufacture inspires confidence in the goods bearing said marks, so the record of having served a satisfactory apprenticeship with proprietors of certain standing gives their ex-employees credentials that are of great benefit and value; hence the selection of a preceptor is a very momentous question for the young man entering pharmacy, and no hasty decision should be made upon this question, for the years of employment, while acquiring the degree of pharmacist, are but a small portion of the years the average clerk is connected with pharmacy.

Preceptors in pharmacy should realize the moral obligations they assume when employing clerks and should govern themselves accordingly. A full realization of those obligations will soon bring about a decided improvement in the quality of clerks; also establish the drug business upon a higher plane, with better financial rewards.

The opportunity is at hand. Will it be embraced?

Time only can give the answer; but may our generation not be compelled to be ashamed of its record, and deliberately throw away the golden opportunities that are at hand, for America has a new era awaiting for all alert, honorable, intelligent workers.

WOMEN IN PHARMACY TO-DAY.

BY R. A. KUEVER.

During the past three years European countries have witnessed the advent of women in fields hitherto controlled entirely by men. Inspired by patriotism, women offered their services in offices and factories where their help, at first a grateful addition, soon became a real necessity. With the duration of the war came multiplication of their tasks, until women's sphere included the most menial labor in mines and ammunition plants. They have borne their added responsibilities bravely and capably, sacrificing equally with the men folk in order to do their bit.

America will witness the same spectacle in the months to come—is witnessing it now in a small way. With us, however, it is different in that our women are afforded time to fit themselves for the work. The delay in placing our fighting forces in the field has enabled the majority of our men to continue their business undisturbed, or to substitute other men in their places. Women have shown an ardent desire to serve, and in many places girls are being employed to run elevators, page lobbies and perform similar tasks. But by far the greater number are serving by conserving and knitting—nor would I undervalue that service—but it must be materially increased and broadened as our man power decreases.

How can I best serve is the question confronting thousands of wide-awake American women, who are looking into the future welfare of our country. There is no field which offers greater opportunities than pharmacy. The demand for skilled pharmacists has never been as great, the salaries have never been so large,