

THE PRACTICAL PHARMACIST FROM A MANUFACTURER'S  
VIEWPOINT.\*

BY ROBERT C. WHITE.

Practical Pharmacy and Dispensing suggests chiefly practical pharmacy, as it would seem that practical pharmacy should include dispensing.

Having been away from all dispensing proper for fifteen years, the ordinary process of elimination leaves in the title the two words "practical pharmacy." The personal element involved in practical pharmacy, of course, brings us to the man himself, thus making our subject "The Practical Pharmacist." There may be many definitions for the word practical, but at the present time the writer prefers the definition as applied to a machine. If you asked any one engaged in manufacturing what a practical machine was, the reply would be, ninety-nine times out of one hundred, "one that worked," and yet a modification must be applied to this in that it must be one that works dependably, or in other words one that works all the time effectively. Many manufacturers load a machine down with many parts of nickel and brass, with unnecessary cams and gears, which all tends to make a bewildering array of trimmings. This, unquestionably, may momentarily attract the attention of the ignorant, and even admiration, but machines so constructed will not work day in and day out without trouble. But what a joy to a manufacturer is a machine that day in and day out never fails. How soon the rhythm grows into the makeup of the operator. How month after month its steadfast performance endears it to the owner, simple, unobtrusive, but efficient; daily performing all expected of it, and all summed up in the word dependable. Now of the pharmacist. What is a practical pharmacist? We all know what comprises the pharmacist, but what of the practical pharmacist? Like the fancy machine, we have all seen the fancy pharmacist. The silk-shirted man, with the goatee, the black-rimmed glasses secured with broad black ribbon, whose chief ambition in life is to have his neighbors call him "Doc," but whose ointment is gritty, whose shelves are dusty, whose dispensing sink is full of dirty utensils and roaches, whose cellar is a fire menace to the neighborhood, and who buys his lime water from the jobber. This man makes many motions, uses much energy, appears very wise, but bewails the fact that the doctor sends his patients to other druggists who appear mere plodders, finally gives up, claims the retail business has gone to the canines, and calls on the manufacturer for some kind of a position many of which he understands are obtainable, with short hours, large pay, and no work.

This explains just why the manufacturers find a good retail druggist looking for a position a rarity.

As a rule a practical man makes good anywhere, for practical after all spells success. Successful men in any calling are ordinary men whose development has not been arrested by cigarettes, hops, the cabaret, short skirts and idleness, and who realize that to be something they must do something.

This brings us to a more important part of this subject. Why do manufacturers receive applications chiefly from retail failures, or from men hunting for something easy? Do the greater number of the practical pharmacists, as

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graduated from our colleges, go into the retail business and, proving successful, remain there? And do only the shirkers and indifferent students seek positions with the manufacturers, on the basis that the manufacturing business provides short hours, easy work, and large pay? This is a matter which demands our attention whether we be engaged in the retail drug business, the manufacturing business, or in the teaching of pharmacy in colleges. In fifteen years' of experience in the manufacturing business the writer has been surprised to find how prevalent is the idea that the manufacturing business is full of ease and simplicity, and that the retail business is full of exhausting work and responsibility. This is an idea which must sooner or later be corrected in the colleges where men are trained, and later in the retail or manufacturing business where men become practical. In years gone by the retail druggist was accustomed to look askance at the manufacturer, because his place of business became large, and he created the impression of wealth. There was the age when the retailer preferred to make all the products which he was capable of compounding, and purchased only such products of the manufacturer as the manufacturer's advertising campaigns forced him to handle. The breach between these two great factors in practical pharmacy, it would seem, is now entirely healed, and it is apparent that these two great bodies of business men must view the question of help from the common standpoint of need. How often has the retail druggist disparagingly stated that a large number of bright young druggists are being absorbed by the manufacturing business, yet how often has the manufacturer bewailed the fact that so many bright college graduates possess the ambition to enter the retail drug business in order that they may be in business for themselves. So long as the retail druggist is largely dependent upon the manufacturer for a very large proportion of his merchandise, and so long as the manufacturer must needs be dependent upon the retail druggist for the disposing of his wares, it would appear that their interest, so far as labor is concerned, could be none other than mutual.

A man to be successful in either branch of the business must be practical. Too many of us let ourselves grow with the idea that the colleges should turn out finished and perfected men. This is not the case. The colleges, at best, can only turn out men sufficiently versed in the art of pharmacy to become practical. In conversation with manufacturers, college professors, and successful retailers the impression comes to the writer that there are two different phases to consider.

The student after graduating from college, and passing his State Board Examinations, may engage in business immediately, or more often may serve a certain length of time with a retail druggist in order to become practical in the retail business, to learn the buying, the art of handling customers, the keeping of accounts, etc., but, even so, he may in a very short while, if he has the ambition leading in that direction, become the independent possessor of a business of his own. This may involve tedious work, it may include long hours, and by some it is stated that very large fortunes are not often made in the retail business, consequently a man must, according to the dictates of his ambition, figure on the value of his independence as found in his own business. The manufacturing field, on the other hand, is by no means a rosy path to success. A man leaving college, and obtaining employment in a large manufacturing plant, finds a bewildering array of machinery, numerous people, and intricate methods through which to climb to success. He must shoulder many heavy responsibilities. The difference that exists between these

two fields is no more clearly exemplified than by the fact that very rarely does a successful retailer make a good manufacturer, and more rarely does a manufacturer ever become a successful retailer, allowing that the training in college has been the same. This brings us to the place where we must realize that the practical training of these two classes after college differs radically. To the manufacturer it would appear, at this stage, that the young pharmacist in college has been given a training which leans more to the retail business than to manufacturing, and rightly so, for fully eighty percent of the men graduating from college engage in the retail business. Thus the manufacturer is justified in his claim that he must begin where the college left off, and train the young pharmacist for the manufacturing game. Does this not then suggest to our colleges the need of some modification, whereby additional training could better fit men for manufacturing? When a college graduate enters a retail drug store, he is, or should be, of considerable use to the proprietor from the moment of his employment. This is not the case in the manufacturing business. The college graduate is lacking in many of the practical phases concerning the compounding of drugs on a large scale. Very brief mention is made in our text-books and colleges of the various large appliances and mechanical processes which are necessary for the turning out of goods in a large way. Therefore, for the sake of our young men, who must needs engage in the manufacturing work wherein only a few in a great number may go far in reputation and skill, would it not be wise to make a plea that our colleges of pharmacy give more time to subjects dealing with manufacturing, and thus develop what might be called "the practical all round pharmacist?" The day is not far distant and in fact is beginning to dawn, when all the reputable manufacturers of the country will not only be willing, but glad to reveal, to any one sincerely interested, their methods, and, in the majority of cases, even glad, to reveal the workings of their usually self-invented processes and machinery. There are a number of manufacturers of pharmaceutical machinery who would undoubtedly be glad to place in our colleges of pharmacy more or less permanent exhibits of their machinery, at least those of smaller dimensions, whose catalogues illustrate clearly the uses to which these machines might be put. Would this not prove also a very helpful factor to the retailer who shows his interest in manufacturing things, by giving up yearly a large amount of his already overtaxed time to listen to statements by salesmen and detail men of the various processes used by their respective houses in making goods in a large way?

The question of help for the retailer or the manufacturer is not therefore the vital question. The question is how our colleges can help develop the practical retail pharmacist and the practical manufacturing pharmacist to the end that they may go far in their calling, for it is only from the colleges of pharmacy that the manufacturer and retailer may draw. How many misfits are there in the retail drug business who would have proven great manufacturers if their inherent love of mechanics had not been dwarfed; how many unsuccessful men in the manufacturing drug business would have developed into great merchants had their lot been cast behind the counter where their talent for handling prospective customers could have been developed? How much more successful might be the colleges, and, how many years of a young man's life spent in apprentice work in the manufacturing business might be saved if our colleges attempted to give more attention to the methods used in this large field of practical pharmacy.

But what of the practical man himself? The man himself must possess health, the body demands air, fuel and water in proper proportions; the ideal combination leads to physical health. The practical pharmacist must maintain his health. How many men treat a piece of mechanism with the utmost care and yet are regardless of self. How often we see druggists who give more attention to their balances and microscopes than they do to their own bodies, the most wonderful of all instruments. So much for the body. Next the mind of the practical man must possess inspiration, truth and purpose, yet these must be balanced. Too much inspiration without truth and purpose means lack of common sense. Too much truth and insufficient inspiration and purpose produce the theorist. And purpose without truth produces only the dreamer, and the practical pharmaceutical field is no place for the dreamer.

So the pharmacist after leaving college must develop his practical ability, and ability is practical when it comprehends the relative value of things and accomplishes that which is really worth while.

How much time and effort is wasted by many pharmacists—they weigh so accurately everything used in their business, but rush into plans and schemes involving capital and energy without attempting to place the cost on one side and the result on the other side of their mental balance. Before committing himself to any course of action the practical pharmacist should first reason—is it worth while?

This leads us next to experience, that most costly but most thorough of teachers—the more experienced a pharmacist becomes the better practical pharmacist he should be, and his association with other pharmacists should to a considerable extent give to him the benefits of their experience—hence the value of our many pharmaceutical associations.

And now in conclusion, the practical pharmacist must be a man of good pharmaceutical training, having physical health, in order that he may radiate good health and cheerfulness. His mind must be possessed of inspiration, truth and purpose—creating in him a belief in his business, a belief in himself, and a belief in his fellow men. He must have sufficient experience gained by himself, augmented by the experiences recorded in his association with others to the end that he understands the relative value of things, and accomplishes that which is really worth while. With fifty thousand such men in the United States pharmacy would not have to ask the recognition now sought in the Army, and the never-ending articles on the "Relationship of the Doctor and Druggist" would disappear from the columns of our pharmacy journals forever.

#### DISCUSSION.

JOHN A. HANDY: I would like to say a word of appreciation of this paper. For nine years I was instructor in one of the colleges of pharmacy. I had no business experience except what would naturally be obtained by working in a drug store, and was suddenly transferred to a large factory where I had to take over the duties of handling large numbers of men and women and boys and girls. Instead of making preparations in a small way we manufactured in large quantities. I can appreciate every word that the author has said regarding the opportunities for good live, healthy, well-balanced students of pharmacy in the practical pharmacy fields. I am looking now for such a balanced man to come into our factory and work. Some want to come in because of the shorter hours and larger pay but most of them have been failures in the retail business. This paper is an inspiration.

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