

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES OF PHARMACY

"PLUGGING" SCHOOLS.¹

BY ZADA M. COOPER, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA.

(The members of the Association of Colleges of Pharmacy will remember Miss Zada M. Cooper's efficient work as chairman of the committee to investigate "cram" schools and her excellent report for this committee. In this issue Miss Cooper extends her remarks concerning these schools and I am sure you will all be interested in the contribution.—C. B. Jordan, Editor.)

Some years ago the writer was chairman of a special committee of the Association to investigate the "cram" schools of the country. It was interesting work and we secured considerable information but, doubtless, our information was far from comprehensive, because nearly all of it had to be obtained by mail. For the most part, the people operating these so-called schools were eager to tell about the wonderful things they were able to accomplish, because their inquirers were to them just more prospective students—gullible, ready to swallow any statement whole and call for more.

Lately I have wondered how these institutions are getting on since prerequisite laws have been enacted in more than half of our states. Judging from a few of them about which I have first-hand information the enrollment must be somewhat reduced, perhaps considerably. It is quite impossible to determine the number enrolling. One thing is certain, however, and that is that, if as many hundreds are attending them as there were a decade ago, the states that do not have prerequisite laws are literally a dumping ground for the output of these institutions. It is altogether probable that not so many are attending them, for some young people like to stay in their home state and so, when they really want to practice pharmacy there, and there is no short cut available, they will go to a real college. Their attitude towards their work may remain unchanged. We, who teach, know that we always have some students whose sole ambition is to "get registered." Such would go to the "plugging school" if the law recognized that sort of preparation. Barring that, they take the only alternative.

In view of this curiosity about "plugging" schools I recently undertook another long range survey. As yet I have made no attempt to get in touch with the institutions themselves though, if time permits, I may try to do that. I have simply tried to determine where these schools still exist. Most of my information has come from secretaries of State Boards and I wish to thank them in this public way for their kindness in responding to my request.

There are, I believe, few, if any, new "cram" schools. The present ones were operating ten years ago and their policies now are pretty much the same as they were then. In a few instances attempts have been made to appear more like real colleges. Courses have been outlined, on paper, and catalogs printed. Statements are being made that the institutions are meeting Association requirements but they are not applying for membership or even inquiring what is necessary to get in. It is just an advertising "stunt." Those in charge know too well

¹ Reprints can be secured free of charge from Prof. Zada M. Cooper, Iowa City, Iowa.

that the most casual inspection would show them up but this sort of advertising does get some students for them that they otherwise could not get. Every now and then Board secretaries tell me that they are asked by students at some of the worst of these places, if the work is recognized.

Digressing a moment, it is becoming very evident that recognition of Association standards by law is forcing a number of second-rate and third-rate schools to meet Association standards or quit. When a state passes a prerequisite law, immediately these second-rate schools hasten to inquire how to get into the Association. For the most part these have been two-year courses, possibly short years, given by schools with library facilities that are nil and laboratory equipment that is utterly inadequate and with faculties made up of men and women poorly prepared or giving most of their time and energy to some other enterprise.

To get back to "plugging" schools proper, fifty-two Board secretaries were asked if such institutions existed in their jurisdiction. Not all were heard from, only eighty-eight per cent to be exact. Twenty-six (including Hawaii and Alaska) reported none. Twenty states report a total of twenty-six such schools, this number including correspondence courses, tutors, and "plugging" schools proper. No doubt there are others. In fact, I know of a few in some of the states not heard from.

On the whole they seem to be on a more precarious footing than formerly. That fact and the attitude of examining boards toward them is evident from some of my letters. "Next year will wind it up (referring to the school) as, after 1926, no one can come before our Board unless a diploma from a Class 'A' pharmacy school is evident. Glad to say our state is free from 'plugging' course and short course schools."

These men are resolved to "make hay while the sun shines." When they are forced out of one state they move to the nearest one without a prerequisite requirement. One Board secretary writes as follows: "I am glad to be able to inform you that we have no short term schools of pharmacy but we frequently have applications for examination from students of schools of this character located in At our examination last November we had about thirty applicants who were graduates (?) of School of Pharmacy. It seems that Professor, who was formerly connected with College of Pharmacy, is a migratory sort of bird, as some of his students told me that after 'polishing up' his classes for our examination and for the examinations last fall he had gone to to prepare a class for an examination in that state in the early part of this year." The Secretary of the second state referred to, says, "We have eliminated the short term course. None have operated in our state since November 15, 1924." From the third state mentioned comes this statement: "There is a short course school in operated by a man named, who formerly conducted such a school in When the prerequisite law was passed there, he had to move; he came to" Surely no one can be blind to the fact that there is bound to be some migration from states with college prerequisite requirements to those without. If those states are satisfied with pharmacists of that caliber, those who believe otherwise perhaps should not be concerned though it isn't easy to be complacent about it, if one has any pride in his profession and thinks at all of the right of humanity to be served by competent people when health and perhaps life itself may be involved.

A most interesting circular about one of these schools was sent me by the Secretary of a Board in an eastern state. The director of it apparently is a sort of itinerant vendor of pharmaceutical knowledge. Besides the home office address, seven other addresses are given, all of them in large cities located in four states and only short distances apart. At 8:30 every Monday morning he is in one city, at 2:00 o'clock that afternoon in another city of the same state; Tuesday is spent at the home office, both morning and afternoon; Wednesday afternoon finds the gentleman in an adjoining state; Thursday morning at 9:30 he is in a third state, and at 3:00 the same day in the fourth one. On Friday he goes back to the second state in his itinerary, meeting a class at 8:00 A.M. in one city and another at 2:00 P.M. in the metropolis. The circular includes this statement: "We advise all drug clerks who plan taking the State Board examinations in September or October to enroll this week in our Special Summer Course in Pharmacy. This course will prepare you for the Registered Assistant or Registered Pharmacist examinations of those states that do not require candidates to be high school or college of pharmacy graduates. Some of them are Massachusetts, District of Columbia, New Hampshire, Vermont, Georgia, Delaware, California, etc. Call personally this week at any of our branches for further information. Rates \$15.00 for one month; \$40.00 for three months; \$75.00 for six months. Commencing with September 1, 1925, the rates will be increased to \$20.00 a month." If I mistake not, the man who operates this is the same one who conducted (and I believe still conducts) the famous, shall I say?—(infamous would be more appropriate) correspondence courses which gave advanced degrees, most any degree one wished if the price were paid. For instance "ten large lectures" would give one the degree of Doctor of Pharmacy, to which perhaps it might be necessary to add the name of the state where the degree was operative. But the advertising said, with great naiveté, or colossal sophistication, does not one say he is a Doctor of Divinity from Yale or Harvard or Oxford? An editorial writer aptly describes this state of affairs: "Phar. D. (P.P.) means by parcel post, which is the customary way for holders of the higher degrees to designate the origin of the degrees they claim when they happen to have been obtained by the 'ten large lessons.'" It would be ludicrous if it were not so fraught with the possibility of tragic results.

Quite recently another far-reaching bad result of "plugging" schools came to my attention. A certain large city has one that operates two evenings each week, making no pretense of doing anything more than drill its students on questions and answers. Now it happens that the law in the state where this school is located provides for the registration of assistant pharmacists and also *local* registered pharmacists. For neither of these is it required to present college work. The local registration is good only in towns of less than 1500, but everybody knows there are many such and the people of those communities are entitled to the same sort of service as residents of larger places. Assistant pharmacists have the rights and privileges of pharmacists during the temporary absence of the registered men. It is reported that many are going to this "plugging" school and are succeeding in passing examinations for one or the other of these certificates. There their ambition ends. Many of these certificates are being issued each year. It seems a most indefensible practice from the standpoint of protection of the public to say

nothing about the competition with real pharmacists who have had college training. Doubtless, it helps to keep salaries down, for the man who can prepare for his work by spending a few evenings will work for less than those who graduate from reputable colleges.

I find occasionally a person who feels that these schools fill a real need in serving to review people who are eligible for Board examinations, because college training and experience requirements have been fulfilled. If that is true, it is a grave reflection on colleges and on examining boards. If these "plugging" places are needed for any such purpose there is something sadly lacking in the relations of Colleges and Boards. Secretary Christensen of the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy has said that 95 per cent of the applicants for registration should pass the examination the first time, and he is right. Colleges should know what is fundamental and Boards should know what constitutes fitness for license. If it is necessary for a college graduate to spend a month or two or three in drilling over questions and answers culled from hundreds of sets of Board questions, something is radically wrong. A student who has spent two or more years in a college of pharmacy and has had two or more years of experience in a drug store can do his own reviewing. These "plugging" schools do not exist for such students. They may occasionally get such a one but to say that is their main purpose is mere subterfuge. The people operating them are doing so for the money there is in it. Those who attend them do not really care to know pharmacy—they are primarily concerned with getting the license that will permit them to practice.

OREGON PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION EDUCATIONAL FUND.

BY A. ZIEFLE.

(The following contribution from Dean Ziefe indicates that this support is not by word of mouth only, but is indicated in a very substantial way. I hope that other state associations will be moved to follow in the path marked out by the Oregon State Pharmaceutical Association. —C. B. JORDAN, *Editor.*)

Oregon druggists assembled in convention in the new Pharmacy Building of the Oregon State College and established an educational fund which has been incorporated as the Oregon State Pharmaceutical Association Educational Fund. The purposes are:

- (1) To provide a loan fund for and to loan money to worthy students of the Oregon State College, School of Pharmacy.
- (2) To equip, aid or assist in the establishment, growth and maintenance of a library for said school and to expend money therefor.
- (3) To establish a research laboratory for the physicians and druggists of the State of Oregon.
- (4) To provide scholarships for worthy students of said school.
- (5) To expend its assets and income in any manner which in the opinion of the trustees may be beneficial to the advancement and improvement of the Oregon State College, School of Pharmacy.

The motive behind the establishment of the fund was that the druggists desired to show their appreciation to the State of Oregon for the new Pharmacy