

Section on Commercial Interests

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CAUSES CONTRIBUTING SUCCESS OR FAILURE IN PHARMACY.

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It may be of some value to some future pharmacist if I should sketch out the conditions which make for success or failure in pharmacy. First let us consider those which influence success.

A Good Physique.—It goes almost without saying that one intending to take up pharmacy should have a sound physique, as it can scarcely be claimed that the long hours and close attention to business demanded of the busy pharmacist are conducive to health. It is not the smell of drugs that is prejudicial to health, as we are so often told, but the deficiency in oxygen through poorly ventilated stores. Of course this can be remedied to a considerable extent by careful attention to ventilation, especially during sleeping hours when plenty of oxygen should be secured, with but little draft. In the writer's opinion, some daily systematic outdoor exercise would be invaluable to many pharmacists. For this reason having store and residence in the same building is objectionable.

One pharmacist, known to me, who is over sixty years of age, walks five miles daily in going to and from his meals. Unfortunately there are other pharmacists who have been so long immured in their pharmaceutical cells that it seems almost impossible to overcome the inertia which chains them to their stores.

General Education.—Granted a good physique, one should also have a fair mental development, in fact the laws of some of our states demand it as a sine qua non to the study of pharmacy. While the amount of general education demanded of the embryo pharmacist is not yet large, it would be a great gain to him if he could be made to see that a still greater amount of education would open many doors of literature and science through which it would be both a pleasure and profit to enter.

Pharmaceutical Training.—Granted a good physique and a fair education, the next most important thing is the pharmaceutical training. In many cases the young man does not have much choice as to where he will secure his pharmaceutical training, he must take what he can get in his home town. If this is so in a small town, it need not be so in a large city where there are stores that have had an enviable reputation for years in turning out excellent pharmacists, the very fact of having been trained in such a store will at once secure a profitable situation.

Pharmaceutical Education.—It is our impression that young men frequently go to college too soon, frequently before they have acquired sufficient pharmaceutical experience, or an extensive enough vocabulary to understand many of the

things which it is tried to teach them ; that this is so has been demonstrated by tests applied at different times to students.

Pharmacy is hedged about by so many laws that one hesitates to recommend additional ones, but it is our experience that a two years' pharmaceutical experience had best be had before entering a college of pharmacy. It is past our comprehension how a student without any experience can profit as he should by a pharmaceutical course, in fact the writer knows that some do not, but go limping throughout the course.

The College to Attend.—It would be treading upon dangerous ground to indicate the college of pharmacy that a student should attend. This much, however, may be admissible. According to the old adage, "you judge of a man by the company he keeps," so you can judge of the character of an institution by the character of the men that it sends out.

Clerking or Going into Business.—One can not lay down absolute rules about the matter, whether it is wiser for a clerk to endure the ills he knows of, or fly to those he knows not of and by plunging into business attempt to end them. That a clerk may save money without going into business is quite possible; the writer knows of a clerk, (unmarried, however) who has had a good situation for years, who through saving and wise investments has accumulated nearly \$10,000, but he still clerks. One of the chief impelling causes of the young pharmacist rushing into business is his desire to get married, he has the marriage fever so badly that nothing that can be said to him will alter his mind, he has to be allowed to make his plunge into the sea of matrimony.

Location.—An important question is, where shall the young pharmacist that is going into business, locate. Too many graduates both of pharmaceutical and medical colleges locate in the city of their graduation and crowd the ranks already full to overflowing. There are localities especially in some of our newer states where their services would be in much greater demand. It is our opinion that the country town frequently offers superior opportunities to a well equipped graduate. If well trained in chemistry and bacteriology a business might be built up that would speedily bring both fame and fortune.

Adaptation to the Business—The Locality.—The character of the business will depend to some extent on the environment, but to a still greater degree on the pharmacist's own efforts. Some prosperous pharmacists in country towns make little effort to attract prescription business, they claim that commercial pharmacy is much more profitable, and that the time spent in putting up a fifty cent prescription would bring in several dollars in some other department. The writer knows of one pharmacist who nearly controls the sale of paris green in his county, all the granges buy of him, his annual sales amounting to quite a number of tons. But even to a commercial pharmacist a chemical education would be of much value, he could determine for himself the percent of arsenic in Paris green, and the strength of many other chemicals and preparations the sale of which depends upon quality.

Our position has always been, that if a graduate of pharmacy does not care to run his business along pharmaceutical lines, he has wasted time in his apprenticeship and pharmaceutical education, he had better have taken a short cut to a department store. At the present time, many of the so-called drug stores are

such only in name, they could not maintain themselves a week on their drug business.

The time seems to be rapidly approaching when there will be a complete differentiation between the commercial and the ethical pharmacy, the latter will have complete outfits for making chemical, urinary and bacteriological examinations.

Parenthetically it might be said, that we have somewhat wondered, what the effect of the increased medical requirements will have upon the medical practitioner of the future. A young man who has to spend ten years of his life in acquiring a collegiate and medical education can not afford to practice medicine at the prices formerly in vogue; neither will he have the time to do so, as the accurate physical examinations which the advanced physician will be required to make, will consume much time. One of these up to date physicians said to me that he could only examine half a dozen patients of a morning. The question naturally arises who will look after the respectable poor, will they be turned over to the tender mercies of the dispensary, or will they receive their medical aid from the family druggist?

Character.—Of all the essentials to success, probably the most important is character. A pleasing personality is of great value, but a character for probity is worth more. It must, however, be real; it cannot be assumed. It is related that a customer objected to the price which his druggist (a man of fine business reputation) wanted to charge him, saying that he could buy the article twenty cents cheaper down the street. The druggist said, why didn't you buy it there? The customer replied I would rather buy it of you, then the druggist said, "that *rather* will cost you just twenty cents."

We have thus far tried to sketch the causes underlying success in pharmacy, now we would briefly enumerate those tending to failure.

Poor Health.—The writer has frequently seen young men enter the drug business whom he knew would be forced out of it in a few years by the condition of their health.

Deficient Education.—This is not as frequent a cause at the present time as was the case some years ago, owing to the requirements of both state and pharmacy boards. However, a young man, if aware of his deficiencies, can afterwards make good by study and application. The writer knows of a graduate of pharmacy of some twenty years standing whose preliminary education, through lack of opportunity was quite meagre, who got through a college of pharmacy with difficulty, but since by his own efforts, aided by a well educated wife, has made a great success.

Poor Pharmaceutical Training.—The writer considers a good pharmaceutical training of so much importance that he pities the young man who makes dollars and cents the controlling factor in taking a position.

Second-Rate Colleges of Pharmacy.—Many a young man in selecting a college of pharmacy at which to acquire his education, makes but little effort to ascertain the best one, but is influenced largely by convenience and cheapness. The writer knows of a college of pharmacy that advertises a microscopical department where not a member of a recent graduating class had the chance to see through a microscope. Hardly second to the choice of a college is the question, what will the student get out of his college course; will he acquire barely sufficient to secure his

diploma and pass the state board, or will he secure a maximum of knowledge that will go a long way to making his future a success.

Insufficient Capital.—Insufficient capital, caused by undue haste to go into business, is frequently a cause of failure.

Fifty years ago a cash capital of \$500.00 and good credit were often sufficient for a start in business. At the present time, ten times \$500.00 is barely sufficient. The elaborate manner of fitting up stores, the varied stocks and cash payments, all call for greatly increased capital.

Poor Location.—Stores are frequently started, especially in cities, where there is no chance for success. Inducements are often made by operation builders to druggists to start stores where they are not needed and must come into competition with older and better equipped stores, and hence are doomed to failure or a pitiful existence. I have been told that half the retail drug stores of Philadelphia are mortgaged to the wholesale houses.

Not infrequently a young man who has clerked in a prosperous store for some years, overestimates his popularity and starts in business, as near the old stand as possible. As he tries to outshine the old store, his expenses are frequently greater and his business less, so that his profits may not equal his salary as a clerk, plus all the responsibility of the business.

Undue Competition.—We often hear it stated that competition is the life of trade, but it is quite as likely to be its death. A pharmacist who complies with the law has the legal right to open a store where he may choose, but it is another question whether he has the moral right to start a new store that he knows will seriously injure one long established. If taken to task about it, he would no doubt say like Cain, "am I my brother's keeper?"

New stores are not infrequently started, given a false boom through cut prices and fictitious sales, and are then unloaded upon some innocent victim.

Rapid Success is sometimes perilous, unless one has a well ballasted character. The writer knows of a young man of exceptional ability and address, who bought out a store in a wealthy city suburb. He quickly attracted a most profitable custom, but unfortunately became too intimate with some of the idle rich young men who frequented his store and was eventually sold out by the sheriff.

To sum up, the following conditions lead to success, viz.:

Good health, education, pharmaceutical training, pharmaceutical education, wise choice of a college of pharmacy, care upon going into business, a wise adaptation of the business to the locality where located and last but not least, a good character.

The following conditions tend to failure, viz.:

Poor health, deficient education, poor pharmaceutical training, unwise selection of a college of pharmacy, insufficient capital, a poor location, undue competition, too rapid success.

If the presentation of these pharmaceutical pros and cons shall influence favorably some young man's life, the purpose of the author in writing this paper will have been accomplished.