

# EDITORIAL

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## RECLASSIFICATION OF PHARMACISTS IN THE VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION.

THE AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION sometime ago requested the Veterans' Administration to change the classification of pharmacists from the Subprofessional to the Professional and Scientific Service and to change the title of Assistant Pharmacist to Pharmacist's Assistant. It is very gratifying to record the recent issuance of Supplement No. 8, Revised Regulations for Positions in the Field Service, Veterans' Administration, which, among other changes, directs the following:

"Pharmacist.—Change grade and salary range to: P. & S.—I Salary Range \$2000, \$2100, \$2200, \$2300, \$2400, \$2500, \$2600.

"Assistant Pharmacist.—Change designation of this position to Pharmacist's Assistant."

The duties of these positions are given as:

"Pharmacist.—To prepare medicines; to compound prescriptions, and to issue drugs for the activity; to maintain stock and supplies and records incident thereto; to prepare reports and supervise such assistants as may be assigned.

"Pharmacist's Assistant.—To assist in the compounding and dispensing of prescriptions, preparation of tinctures, extracts and stock preparations; to prepare necessary reports and to perform such other duties as may be required incident to the general care and operation of the pharmacy."

These changes place pharmacy on a professional basis in the Veterans' Administration and are in accord with the recommendations of the Personnel Classification Board in its report to Congress during the last session, with respect to the classification of Civil Service Employees in the Field Service of the Government. Pharmacists and Pharmacists' Assistants now enter the Administration through the Civil Service.

The legislation to create a commissioned medical service in the Veterans' Administration has not been reported to the House of Representatives by its Committee on Veterans' Legislation. It will be recalled that the ASSOCIATION, in a special hearing on the measure before a sub-committee, submitted an amendment to the bill providing for a Pharmacy Corps on the same basis as the Medical and Dental Corps so that pharmacy will be in the proper position if it should be changed from a civil service to a commissioned status.

The Veterans' Administration employs a larger number of pharmacists than any other governmental service; its recognition of pharmacy as a professional service is very encouraging and opens the way for pharmacists to further demonstrate their value, in the important work which the Administration has in charge.

E. F. K.

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## THE U. S. P. X ERGOT TEXT.

WHEN the U. S. P. X texts for Ergot and Fluidextract of Ergot were developed almost ten years ago they represented the judgment of those best qualified

in this country to establish Ergot standards and conformed to the then known scientific knowledge of that drug.

Since the last revision, however, extensive studies have been made, both here and abroad, involving the alkaloids of the drug and their isolation, the determination of the potency of the drug and its preparations, by various new assay methods, or modifications of the official method, and also the avoidance of deterioration, especially in the Fluidextract.

As these studies seem to have progressed to a point which promises definite improvement in the assay and preservation of the products recognized by the United States Pharmacopœia and in consideration of the therapeutic importance of this drug, the Committee of Revision is taking the necessary steps to determine the proper course to follow at this time. If it is found that convincing evidence is now at hand to materially improve the existing standard and the method of assay, the Committee has the authority, granted by the Convention, to issue supplements between revisions, and under this authority, could, by vote, establish a modified assay method and standard, and announce these as the official texts to go into force within a reasonable adjustment period.

That the Revision Committee may be in a position to determine a proper course of action, a conference of the Sub-Committee on Bio-assays was held last June with the officials of the Food and Drug Administration and other Bio-assay experts, many of whom are associated with pharmaceutical manufacturers. Since then the Revision Committee has arranged with Dr. E. E. Nelson, an associate of Dr. Edmunds at the University of Michigan—the Chairman of the U. S. P. Bio-assay Sub-Committee—to make for the Committee a specific study of every side of this question. Among other phases of this study Dr. Nelson has personally visited the laboratories of a number who are now assaying Ergot, governmental, private and manufacturers', and observed their exact technique and end-reactions, and in this way brings to the Committee a comprehensive knowledge of the situation. The Chairman of the Committee of Revision of the U. S. P., with Dr. Edmunds and Dr. Nelson, also accepted an invitation to meet with the officials of the Food and Drug Administration and the Ergot Division of the "Contact Committee" of manufacturers in Washington on September 14th, to further consider the question in the light of recent studies and with the hope of a satisfactory solution.

There has never been any doubt as to the position of the Committee of Revision in this and every other question affecting the official standards. The first duty of the Committee is the establishment of standards and assays, if these can be provided, whereby the patient and the doctor are supplied with uniformly potent therapeutic agents. Questions so complex as Ergot, involving the methods of assay and the maintenance of activity in its preparations, make difficult the attainment of this ideal, but the splendid researches in this field during the past five years give promise of success even with so difficult a drug.—E. F. C.

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#### RELATIONSHIP OF EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES.

**J**AMES Truslow Adams, in *Harper's Magazine* for August contrasts "Perspective" with "close-up" views, and points out that at the moment the most

notable instance of "close-up" view of looking at things is the attitude toward the business depression. He makes a number of historical references which serve the purpose of his message.—Just as a few years ago "people thought it was their last chance to buy 'equities,'" so the people, in 1835, "thought it was their last chance to buy land in the country." Banks loaned money on lands at a valuation far above their production values. This situation was followed by a like condition that came about recently. The records show that the high prices of land were followed by almost "no price;" in some states the decline was so great that the lands brought, in many instances, considerably less than 5 per cent of the purchase prices.

The article discusses the panics of 1857, 1873, 1878, 1893; and without minimizing the present situation the author prefers to consider it intellectually and not emotionally, profiting by an educational system whereby relationships are studied with an understanding of the past as a background of the study. The author cites for illustration of the centering of thought on the present without a study of the past—that "when the market started for the sky one of the large metropolitan clubs pressed for room in its library, removed the entire section of American history, to a storeroom;" he comments, that, perhaps, "a little history would have saved some margins."

Education that directs study of the past in its relation with the present will develop minds better prepared for coping with the dangers of speculative periods.

It is reasonable to assume that experiences like the present will bring out thinkers who can reach the ears of more individuals than is possible for those who study cause and effect and profit thereby, but cannot or do not impress a majority. Dr. Adams concludes that "one of our chief problems is to learn how to keep our mental balance by being able to react against the emotionalistic mush of every close-up by clear thought in terms of relations and backgrounds."

*More than ten years ago* the late Henry M. Whelpley contributed a paper to the Missouri Pharmaceutical Association which seems to fit in with the foregoing and, therefore, parts of the article are repeated in the following:

"We are living in a day of industrial, economic and social relations, new to even the older ones in the present generation. The World War set in motion waves of human thought which are difficult to measure and impossible to escape. The wage earners have raced with the profiteers in an effort to outdo each other in extravagance. The demand for non-essentials has taxed the capacity of production. The man of salary has been caught between two millstones and is now a pitiable-looking individual of tattered and torn clothing and body. . . ."

"Cool, deliberate judgment is now at a premium. The situation is aggravated by magnification and made more dangerous if belittled. The real truth of the situation may not be apparent any more than is the outcome of a great battle on the eve of a conflict. But what goes up must come down, and prices must, somehow, recede. Now what of the future of pharmacy? That depends on the good judgment and wise action of those who are in business to-day.

"Pharmacists are by education and training taught to be cool, but alert in time of accident and emergency. Their daily work has to do with human lives which are in the balance. Of all in the commercial world, none is so well fitted as the druggist to help the pendulum swing back, slowly and safely. . . ."

A further deduction may be made—the drug business has developed varied phases of merchandising which have prompted the recent surveys of drug store stocks and business conduct, and also surveys of the practice of pharmacy. The good work embodied in the latter will not only stress the importance of pharmacy as a profession, but improve its status and service. There is a relationship of events and various activities and it is our privilege and duty to study them.

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### PHARMACY A VANISHING PROFESSION?

THE *Atlantic Monthly*, in a recent issue, contained an article by Dr. J. A. Flexner under above caption. The *Journal of Kentucky Pharmaceutical Association* and the *Virginia Pharmacist* have made editorial comments and these are quoted, in part, in the following:

From the *Journal Kentucky Pharmaceutical Association*.—"We have read with some degree of amusement an article written by Dr. J. A. Flexner, recently published in the *Atlantic Monthly* and republished in the *Louisville Courier-Journal* entitled 'Pharmacy—a Vanishing Profession.' Before beginning the practice of medicine, the writer of the article successfully conducted a retail drug store in Louisville.

"We are sure there are a number of 'Old Timers,' excuse us, we mean there are still actively engaged in the retail drug business, many pharmacists who secured their professional training, just as did the writer of the article, and who do not feel that Pharmacy is a 'Lost Art' or even a 'Vanishing Profession.'

"Certainly, none of us want to go back to the days when the apprentice was forced to wash windows and sweep the floors as a part of his tutelage; surely, we do not want to turn back the handle of 'Time' to the days when the apprentice slept in a little hovel of a back room and answered hundreds of unnecessary mid-night calls. . . ."

"The *J. K. P. A.* firmly believes that Pharmacy is progressing, is making greater strides today than at any time in its history; that the Art of Pharmacy is live and virile, is keeping abreast of the best, scientific thought of the day, and that the time will come when there will be two types of drug stores—one, the modern, merchandizing emporium, where drug sundries and patent medicines and luncheonettes and soda fountains will predominate and the other, where prescriptions will be compounded and drugs and pharmaceuticals sold.

"Pharmacy is not a vanishing profession! Pharmacy is not a lost art!! The profession of pharmacy is destined to last as long as medicines are prescribed!!!"

From *The Virginia Pharmacist*.—"Dr. Flexner was a pharmacist, trained under the preceptor system, serving an apprenticeship of window washing and bottle cleaning, and sleeping nights in the back room of the store or in the cellar below. That system turned out some fine pharmacists—useful in their day and time. It had a glamour of romance about it. It makes excellent material for retrospective conversation. Since those days Dr. Flexner has turned to medicine, and his drug store days are behind him. He sees today's pharmacy from the outside and not from the inside. His story makes good reading, but it falls far short of stating the case.

"In Dr. Flexner's days of intimate contact with pharmacy no particular educational training was necessary for the ambitious boy to enter the pharmaceutical field. A State Board of Examiners was not required in any of the states until along in the late seventies and early eighties. Then grammar school smattering was sufficient. Since that day standards have been gradually raised. Complete grammar school work answered for a while, then one, two, three and four years of high school were added here and there, and later college of pharmacy work, mostly of the two-year standard, was adopted by states here and there. Then college graduation, from the two-year course, became the standard requirement in the greater number of the states. Later, 1925, the three-year course in pharmacy became the recognized standard. In 1932 the four-year course in pharmacy will be adopted by all recognized schools of pharmacy, with a well-rounded course, including cultural subjects as well as commercial and technical pharmaceu-

tical training. The products of such courses are of a different type of pharmacists than the boys who gathered in fragmentary manner a limited familiarity with the science of pharmacy. It took an unusual type of student to come through with a thorough knowledge of pharmacy under such a system and with a variety of preceptors. That some outstanding men did develop under that system nobody will deny. That the large majority of pharmacists developed under that system were woefully lacking in the fundamentals of the science they attempted to practice is probably a fact. That most of them would be lost in a present-day prescription room goes without the saying: . . .”

The very title of the article creates a resentfulness in those who are seeking consistently to promote pharmaceutical service. In the opinion of some of them, if not a larger number, nothing was gained by the article in question; some of the older apothecaries might recall the days referred to, but these will readily admit that the educational opportunities and requirements of pharmacists are far different to-day than they were during the period that some designate as the “good old days.”



Left.—Monument to Pelletier and Caventou, French pharmacists, discoverers of quinine. Monument stands in the Boulevard St. Michel, Paris. Right.—Louis Hébert monument, pioneer pharmacist and colonist of Canada. (In city of Quebec.)

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