

## THE ASSISTANT PHARMACIST.\*

BY J. G. BEARD.<sup>1</sup>

At the 1926 convention OF THE AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION I served as Chairman of the Section on Education and Legislation. My address was lengthy and highly statistical. It dealt entirely with the subject of assistant pharmacists, historically and numerically. It was published on page 1119 of the December 1926, issue of the JOURNAL OF THE A. PH. A. In all due modesty I can recommend to those who are concerned with the question a thoughtful study of the facts there set forth in order to ascertain the ideas of that time and the conditions that then obtained.

In the data presented it was shown that thirty-six states permitted the licensing of assistants and that approximately 20,000 assistants were registered. It was further stated that the grade began in 1870 when Maine and Rhode Island established two types of licentiates.

Although exact figures cannot be determined by me at this time, I was advised a few weeks ago that only "fifteen or sixteen states now permit the licensing of assistant pharmacists and that in four or five of these some educational requirements are compulsory." It follows, therefore, that in the thirteen years since 1926 twenty-two states have abolished the original licensing of assistants.

In my address referred to above I recommended that the A. PH. A. go on record as favoring the abolishment of assistant pharmacist examinations. This recommendation was favored by the Section on Education and Legislation in the following language:

"Resolved, that the recommendation contained in the address of the Chairman, with reference to principles of sub-standard registration is hereby approved and adopted, which recommendation is as follows:

"In the light of the foregoing facts and arguments, and particularly in view of the action of the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy last year, it is here recommended that the Section on Education and Legislation of the AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION go on record as opposing the principle of sub-standard registration and that it use its influence along with the Boards in bringing about the ultimate discontinuance of the grade of 'Assistant Pharmacist.'"

The above resolution was referred to the House of Delegates and was adopted. Please refer to page 1022, December 1926, JOUR. A. PH. A.

Thus we see that the first organized stand against assistants was taken by the N. A. B. P. in 1925 and by the A. PH. A. in 1926.

It is pertinent in this year of 1939 to ask this question: Where Do We Go from Here in Respect to Assistant Pharmacists?

The next ten years will determine whether we are to maintain a four-year course of study as a prerequisite for a single type of licentiate, or whether, under the intense pressure of a demand that the stores now in existence or to be estab-

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lished later be kept manned by some sort of licentiate, we are forced to retreat to conditions that will hold back the educational progress of American Pharmacy for an unpredictable number of years.

The fate of all prerequisite legislation will rest, in the final analysis, in the hands of state associations, but bodies such as the one here assembled and the national associations concerned with the matter must bear the burden of leadership and of education. The program of mass endeavor must be coördinated properly or else the fight is lost.

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### EARLY RELATION OF PHARMACY AND MEDICINE IN THE UNITED STATES.\*

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In the British colonies, which later became the United States, little distinction obtained between the professions of Pharmacy and Medicine until the time of the Revolution. Diagnosing disease and treating the sick as well as compounding and vending drugs were carried out by the same individual, usually called "doctor," although in nine cases out of ten he did not possess a medical degree.

There were several reasons for this state of affairs. The hard life in the colonies did not attract many qualified practitioners of either art to settle here. Many of those who emigrated in the seventeenth century soon returned to the easier life of the mother country. Because of the dearth of qualified men "anyone who knew calomel from tartar emetic, jalap from ipecac, and had the assurance to use them, who could make and apply ointments and plasters, dress wounds or splint a broken limb, was a welcome settler and received the title of doctor without asking." Many men of prominence, including governors, preachers, school teachers, commodity dealers and editors, dabbled as physician-apothecaries. As late as 1776 only about 400 of an estimated total of 3500 practitioners of medicine in the American Colonies held degrees.

Most of the early settlers came from England where the prerogatives of physician and apothecary were not as well defined as on the Continent. Rolleston (1) has noted that the Paris Society of Apothecaries was granted a separate coat of arms in 1629 and their quarrel with the physicians died down, at least temporarily. In 1688 in Belgium the dispute between the pharmacists and medical practitioners culminated in a law forbidding physicians to dispense their own prescriptions. In England, however, the long controversy between the College of Physicians and the Society of Apothecaries<sup>2</sup> continued well into the eighteenth century and the activities of the apothecaries as practitioners increased during this period. Their standing with the public had been enhanced by their steadfast services during the plague year of 1665 when many physicians deserted London and followed wealthy patients to the country.

Records of the earliest years reveal that few physicians came to the colonies to establish practices on their own initiative. Surgeons and physicians did contract

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<sup>2</sup> The Apothecaries were separately incorporated by James I in 1617.