

of questionable responsibility, and liable by their failure to bring the entire co-operative movement into disrepute.

It is a problem well worth pondering over.

It is possibly an old fashioned and out-of-date theory, but until I learn of stronger reasons against it than any I have yet heard, I shall hold to the faith that the best cooperation, and that which will best serve the drug trade as a whole is that wherein the manufacturer, the jobber and the retailer, while co-operating within their respective classes for their own profit shall also cooperate honestly and heartily with each other for the welfare of all.

J. H. BEAL.



A CRITICISM OF AMERICAN MEDICAL EDUCATION.

SEVERAL years ago Abraham Flexner, working under the auspices of the Carnegie Institution, made a report upon the conditions prevailing in the medical schools of this country that proved to be a disagreeable surprise to those of us who had flattered ourselves that American medical educational methods were on a par with the best of European models.

In a recent number of the *Atlantic Monthly*, (Nov., 1913) he returns to the charge, and under the caption, "The German Side of Medical Education," makes a comparison of German and American medical schools that is far from flattering to the institutions of the Western Continent.

Of the German institutions he has little to say that is not complimentary, while of the American schools his remarks are almost wholly condemnatory, though here and there he admits that a few American institutions are not as bad as most of the others, and that in recent years there are some slight signs of improvement.

Speaking of the possibility of sampling the American system as a whole, he says:

"It is even a question whether such a hodgepodge as American medical education is really capable of being sampled or represented at all."

Referring to the fact that our students go to Germany and that German students do not come to us, and the reason for this one-sided movement we read that:

"Until, however, eager foreigners begin to flock to American schools for the purpose of continuing their studies, it is extremely likely that the one-sided movement of American students to Germany will be construed by laymen to mean that they find something there which is not found with equal ease and in equal abundance in the medical schools of their own land.

"To what is this superiority, if such it be, due? It is to be attributed in the first place to the fact that a wise and powerful government has drawn a sharp line below which no medical school can live."

Admitting that there are differences in quality among German institutions he comes perilously near to saying that even the worst of them are equal to our best, as for example:

"But for us the important point is that the differences never cut below a cer-

tain well-marked and lofty level. In respect to the educational qualifications of its students, in respect to the intelligence and capacity of its teachers, in respect to general laboratory and clinical facilities, every medical school in Germany surpasses and far surpasses, what any state in America lays down as the minimum requirement. There is, I repeat, no uniformity; but not in all Germany is there a feebly equipped or a feebly manned medical school, or a heterogeneous body of medical students. How high the minimum standard is in all these respects I will try to make clear by stating that on the minimum standard on which a medical school can live in Germany, over three-fourths of the medical schools of the United States and Canada would be at once stamped out of existence."

In speaking of American state supervision of medical education we are told that:

"The only American state which possesses a department of education somewhat resembling that of a German state is New York. The home of the Department of Education in Albany is rather more imposing than that of the Prussian Department of Education in Berlin; and the New York department also has large powers. The difference is that the Prussian department uses its powers and the New York Department, despite improvements in recent years, does not; in the city and state of New York, medical schools still exist which are utterly incapable of fulfilling respectably the purpose for which they purport to have been established; and schools in other states are recognized, despite equal or greater defects. That is to say, in the one American state in which an agency has been created for the maintenance of a decent minimum, the decent minimum is not yet maintained; still less so in other states."

Discussing the German student's liberty of choice of studies, or what we term the elective system, it is said that:

"A nation of educational 'spoon-feeders,' such as, alas, we in this country are, may well stand aghast at this free-and-easy treatment. I am myself inclined to think that the German arrangement is needlessly chaotic and wasteful; but I have no quarrel with the full responsibility which it throws upon the already well-disciplined medical student. The German instructor is not a probation officer dealing with children in their early twenties. He provides a rich and abundant fare. He could not provide this rich and abundant fare if his strength had to be exhausted in police duty, in quizzing, drilling, and marking. The two things of course hang together. Where there are well-trained students, there may in the years of maturity come full responsibility. If the student body were incompetent, the university professor would have to degenerate into a 'school marm,' as is frequently the case in our country."

How the American schools check the student's liberty of action at the wrong time, and also overload him with a burden of required subjects that he is unable to bear is set forth as follows:

"I am not concerned now to criticise these arrangements. I wish simply to draw attention to them by way of contrasting them with the martinet spirit which prevails the moment his liberal education is completed and the student begins to attack a subject in which he is really interested. That is the moment that we Americans select for tying him hand and foot: once he enters the medical school,

he is, for the most part, committed to a four years uniform grind, precisely as if it were known just what he ought to learn and as if the curriculum-makers knew it. The necessary subjects and parts of subjects are specified, as is the number of hours that he must devote to each. Routine is so exacting that the average medical student is not quite equal to it, and the better student is quite used up by it. Instead of furnishing opportunity and stimulus for development, the American medical school closes down upon the enterprising student, long inured to academic freedom, with an exhausting and depressing uniformity.

"This phenomenon is closely connected with another previously pointed out. Our laws—or their lax enforcement—permit the continued existence of weak medical schools. The public interest demands that their graduates be as well trained as possible. The states have endeavored, by precise specifications as to what the student must be taught, how and how long, to force inherently poor schools to be better than it is in their nature to be. Some poor schools have been thereby made so uncomfortable that they have desisted; a few have improved slightly; but the good schools have been harmed, and medicine and medical science have been deprived of initiative and originality. The Germans, surveying our situation, taunt us good-humoredly; they recall our pride in being a 'practical people.' 'Would not a truly practical people reach the end by forbidding the incompetent rather than by crippling the competent?' I have been frequently asked."

In discussing the hampering arrangements between hospitals and our medical colleges, and the alleged improvement in this respect in recent years we are told that:

"To no small extent, the improvement is as yet mainly on paper. More serious still, our clinical heads—mainly unproductive men—are far from hospitable to young workers. Where the chief is not himself a productive scientist, obvious considerations make it inexpedient for him to open the doors wide to ambitious and original advanced students.

"The truth is that the clinical teacher in the German sense hardly exists as yet in America at all. As contrasted with Germany, American teaching of medicine, surgery, and obstetrics, and so on, cannot properly be called professional teaching. Our professors of the clinical subjects, with exceptions so few as to be numerically negligible, are practitioners who make no effort to create the scientific or academic atmosphere and environment characteristic of the German clinic. The university spirit is missing in the clinical half of the American medical school. Let us not deceive ourselves on this score. We are paying the price of long-continued and still-continuing exploitation of clinical teaching."

In connection with the same subject, and illustrating the eagerness of medical practitioners for professorial dignities it is related that:

"An amusing example of total incapacity to appreciate the ridiculous has recently been furnished by a New York institution. In order to avoid being lowered in classification by the Council of Education of the American Medical Association, certain influential members of this medical faculty undertook to introduce certain improvements,—itself a situation which could not arise in Germany. The university authorities refused to carry out the bargain, whereupon the members in question resigned. Did this affect the school? Not a bit. The vacant

places were at once filled with practicing doctors. I venture to say that the incident could be repeated indefinitely, and the faculty kept full none the less.

Mr. Flexner accounts for the superiority of German methods of medical education as follows:

"The essential features which have contributed to the greatness of German medicine may then be concisely formulated as follows: First, the high minimum level of organization and equipment, below which the government will permit no medical school to live; second, the prolonged and serious secondary-school training which is absolutely, without exception, exacted of every student in the medical faculty; third, the freedom of the German university, which gives the professor the strength and leisure to work and encourages the capable student to do more than the minimum requirements of the curriculum for graduation; finally, the high respect in which the practising profession holds the teaching profession, and the custom of calling teachers freely from university to university."

If American medical education is ever to reach the level of the German standards we are told that:

"Those schools which cannot now meet them, or soon hope to meet them, ought not to be allowed to go on contributing their quota of immature and ill-trained practitioners to a medical profession whose general average is already probably below the lowest to be found in any other great modern nation."

It will be remembered that several years ago some rash individual proposed to the American Conference of Pharmaceutical Faculties that it should invite the Carnegie Institution to make an examination of the American schools and colleges of pharmacy. The invitation was not extended; but should such an examination ever be made—and should Mr. Flexner draw up the report—we may look for what the late Mr. Horace Greeley would have termed "some mighty interesting reading."

J. H. BEAL.



PREPARING FOR THE SIXTY-SECOND MEETING.

PLANS have been pretty well decided upon now for the Detroit meeting of the American Pharmaceutical Association. The meeting will be held on the week beginning Monday, August 24. The Hotel Pontchartrain will be the headquarters. This hotel is admirably suited to the purpose.

It has a convention floor up at the top of the building, with eight or ten rooms of various sizes, thus being well adapted to an organization like the A. Ph. A., which is split up into so many sections and auxiliaries of one kind and another. Furthermore, the convention floor of the Pontchartrain is so high up that it is away from the dirt and noise of the street on the one hand, and on the other is subjected to the cooling breezes from the river.

The Detroit meeting, indeed, is going to be delightfully cool and pleasant. Detroit is not at all like the usual American city—hot and stuffy in the summer. It is located on the Great Lakes, gets the benefit of the water breezes, and is furthermore a city of great beauty and charm. Thousands of people go to Detroit annually to spend their summer vacations instead of frequenting the