

## SHOULD A LIBRARY READING COURSE BE MADE A PART OF THE CURRICULUM OF SCHOOLS OF PHARMACY? \*

BY ZADA M. COOPER, IOWA CITY, IA.

Though it is possible to dismiss this question with a single word, either an affirmative or a negative answer deserves some explanation, some reasons for the conclusion.

A negative answer in almost every case would be based on the belief that there is not time for such a course. The courses now being given are so important that they cannot be shortened, and it probably seems quite impossible to require more in the allotted time. If it cannot be a part of two-year courses, it is to be regretted, but its practicability in a three-year course is almost a foregone conclusion.

Leaving the time element out for the present, consideration of the value of a reading course might engage our attention. Reasons why such a course would be valuable seem almost too obvious to mention. Yet, in any argument, one should not omit valuable points even at the risk of being trite. A druggist is expected to be a man of education, he needs to realize the responsibility of his position, he ought to feel a sense of duty to his fellow-men. When he goes from college out into the world of business, he must be able to practise his profession. The very word implies a special fitness. The dictionary defines profession as "that of which one professes knowledge; the occupation to which one devotes one's self; the business which one professes to understand and to follow for subsistence."

Education is a progressive thing. It is wrong to call a man educated who has acquired a certain amount of knowledge, even though that be considerable, and who thinks he need not keep on learning. To express it another way, an individual may pass all college examinations creditably, but his education is not a completed thing. It should not stop there. It cannot stop there. If it is not a progression it must be a retrogression. Students in colleges of pharmacy after graduation and registration, like students set free from any school, are prone to quit studying, failing to realize that its continuation is the price of success. If, then, keeping up study and reading means so much, the thing that will bring that about is of almost inestimable worth. Perhaps nothing will do this better than a systematic course of collateral reading during the years in college. Some may have acquired this habit before coming to college; others, it is fair to assume, have not at all the habit of reading serious, substantial literature. The youth of high-school age is likely to indulge in frothy nothings, unless parental guidance is quite out of the ordinary. Even though in his home he has had access to the best of literature and has been guided in his choice of reading, when he enters a college of pharmacy he is still young enough to be in the formative period of his life.

Professor James has made very plain what this formative period means. He says: "The period between twenty and thirty is the critical one in the formation of intellectual and professional habits, as the period below twenty is more important for the fixing of personal habits. Already at the age of twenty-five you see the professional mannerism settling down on the young commercial traveller, on the young doctor, on the young minister, on the young counsellor-at-law. You see the little lines of cleavage running through the character, the tricks of thought, the prejudices, the ways of the 'shop,' in a word, from which the man can by-and-by no more escape than his coat-sleeve can suddenly fall into a new set of folds.

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On the whole, it is best he should not escape. It is well for the world that in most of us, by the age of thirty, the character has set like plaster, and will never soften again. The great thing, then, in all education is to make our nervous system our ally instead of our enemy. We must make automatic and habitual, as early as possible, as many useful actions as we can, and guard against the growing into ways that are likely to be disadvantageous to us, as we should guard against the plague." In the face of such facts our course is pretty definitely marked out for us. Two or three years in college may not be enough, in some cases is sure not to be enough, to fix this habit of reading so firmly that it will not be overturned afterward; but if the percentage be ever so small, it is none the less the duty of every teacher to foster that habit.

Possibly, even in the two-year courses, a course of reading, not to exceed one hour a week, could be added. One hour a week is not much—hardly enough to dignify by the title of a course—and yet it would be better than none. When so limited it possibly could not follow any definite line, but be confined to articles in current journals, these to be anything that has a bearing on pharmacy, and should include historical, biographical, and scientific articles as well as practical ones and editorials. The primary object should be the establishment of the reading habit, and we should never lose sight of it, but other results are bound to follow. Quite a store of facts would be acquired; a familiarity with various journals and a feeling of acquaintance with the men connected with them; the nature of reading matter in particular journals and where to find certain topics dealt with. It would stimulate the spirit of investigation, of searching for information instead of always asking an instructor. This sort of reading should, of course, be assigned, and would necessitate the instructor keeping up on current literature himself. It should be possible to keep some check upon a class to be sure that the readings were being conscientiously made. Just what means would bring best results it would be hard to say, and perhaps would be best left to the judgment of the instructor in charge.

Where the college course is of three years' duration such a reading course should not be so limited either in time or character. In general the same principles apply, but besides current journals there should be assigned readings arranged along definite lines and progressively if possible. These readings should include the history of pharmacy, biographies of men of the profession, scientific articles both theoretical and applied to prescription and laboratory practice, drug legislation.

There are men practising pharmacy who say they have no time to read. Not pharmacists alone but men of other professions are making this statement. Usually it is not true at all, and when it is true it ought not to be. No professional man, no business man, can afford to *not* read. In many cases where people make such statements it will be found that they are up to date on baseball news, they know the latest scandal, they are informed about the crimes of the country in all their harrowing details. If they can find time to do this sort of reading, only lack of inclination can explain their not reading pharmaceutical literature. If business really keeps them so busy that they cannot read, then there is mismanagement somewhere. Some part of the work should be turned over to assistants in order that proprietors may read; or the clerk should be delegated to scan the journals and mark the important items. Reading is a necessity, looked at from the standpoint of dollars and cents, if from no other. Twentieth-century competition is too keen to make it safe not to know what others are doing. Perhaps this seems beside the mark when considering courses of study for students, but students of to-day are the practising pharmacists of to-morrow. We should reduce to a minimum the number of men who, when they walk out of college with diplomas under their

arms, relegate their books to the attic and become fossilized pharmacists who never buy a new book or subscribe for a journal. It is not enough to tell them to read; always with some students that will prove wasted breath. A requirement carried out consistently for two or three years will teach the habit of reading to some who never had it and establish it more firmly in those who had learned it before coming to college. Of such it will come to be true that "Silently, between all the details of business, the power of judging will have built itself as a possession that will never pass away."

#### ABSTRACT OF DISCUSSION.

Prof. H. V. Army: Mr. Chairman, this is one of the most practical papers I have listened to in an educational section for a long time. I think if the colleges would follow out this idea it would mean that we would have an entirely different class of pharmacists in a comparatively few years. I have students come to me and say, "I am not going to drop my education, I am going on with it." And I would say, "What are you going to do?" and the answer would be, "I am going to get some good books." I just smiled, because generally I thought the man was trying to say something to the professor that he would like to hear. I have said to them, "You will not do it; you men are occupied with other things. You get the time to spare for other things, but that will not appeal to you. There is just one way you can keep it up, and that is by taking some good journals and reading them. It is education, advanced education, and it will keep you up to date, and that is the only way you will keep up your education."

I have never seen the time when I have changed that opinion. I believe that the average pharmacist would gain much if he would pick out a few journals such as appeal to him, to his own character, and read them, thereby really getting an additional education.

If the college can acquaint the student with the different classes of pharmaceutical literature, tell them what they are, what they give, then you will get into the profession quite a different class of pharmacists within a few years, and it would be a very great improvement.

Prof. J. U. Lloyd: It seems to me that the young mind should be taught that schooling does not end when the pharmacy college course is completed; that it is then only that the education begins, that real live work begins. I personally am in favor of more education and not so much schooling, having had that experience myself, but I believe that will enable the student to face life's opportunities much better prepared. For instance, there is the phase of searching through literature. A young man will start out of college with the fact confronting him that the teachers have devoted their lives to the study of problems that have been brought before them, and only fragments of what the teachers could bring before them have really been presented. I think that the opportunity of a lifetime to the young man lies in the fact that he looks into the inside for the real things; that he will remember that the outside envelops the inside always. To think that the outside is the great side of any calling is wrong, for when he leaves the college he must remember that this is a work that he has gone into for a lifetime; that it is his great opportunity, and that it should be continued from the day he steps out of the college. I do not mean to deprecate the benefit of the college and the teachers that he has had there, but I do know this: one of my greatest pleasures has come to me in the searching for something that I could not find, in the wading through publications to find something that I knew existed somewhere and must be in print; and that much of the education, empirical education, that came to me has been that which came to me in side opportunities, in the searching for something I never found. Turning the pages over, by the title, in the reading of that which you would not read if you had not been searching for something, and one page after another is turned and you look at the index, and something strikes your eyes and you say, "That isn't what I am after," but you read it. And again you turn the page and read and you become educated; you get something you had not thought about, and about which you had no one to inform you; you study the literature that the world has given us. I commend highly this paper. I feel that such opportunities as those I mentioned here are opportunities that come to the young man; and that baseball will take a second place.