

CLASSIFICATION OF REGISTRATION IN PHARMACY.*

BY LEONARD A. SELTZER.

In discussing the form of a model pharmacy law, it would seem desirable to consider the advisability of continuing the registration of two classes of pharmacists on the present basis of degree in technical competency which is of no practical value or changing to one based on quality of competency, which distinction might conceivably be of some service.

The question of whether there should be two classes or only one is one which, while it has been raised, will not be discussed in this paper on account of the almost universal consensus of opinion in favor of the former.

It will be conceded that under our system of government the aim and purpose of all legislation regulating the practice of pharmacy must be the good of the public health and its safety. Legislation based on any other principle or with any other motive will fail even if by chance it should be enacted. The fortunate corollary exists that the more nearly and the more efficiently legislation operates along lines of public benefit the more profitable will be the business for those engaged in it.

One of the provisions common to and typical of most pharmacy laws is that there shall be two classes of pharmacists based on degree in technical competency. Another is that to become registered in either class a certain amount of experience in a store is necessary. The first qualification, therefore, that confronts the prospective candidate for registration is that of store experience. But there is no standard for such experience nor do boards inquire into, investigate, or stand sponsor for it. No amount of education nor preparation can be substituted for this so-called experience. A candidate may have an academic degree and have specialized for years in pharmaceutical or chemical research, but should he desire to appear before a board he must suspend pharmaceutical practice in order to perfect himself in the arts of a porter or messenger boy for two years or more. During this period he is protected by law by being prohibited from assuming any duties or tasks the doing of which might be of any value to him so far as his future pharmaceutical activities are concerned. This "protection" is made the more efficient by regulations governing the conduct of pharmacies, among which the obligation of keeping each store in constant charge of registered help necessitates the employing of more than enough of such help to do all the pharmaceutical work presented. This means, that unless the employer is altruistic to an unusual degree and has more interest in the rising generation of pharmacists in general or his clerk in particular than for his own trade, his profits or his ease, and will, therefore, devote his time to training his apprentice; or unless the apprentice will use some of his time in surreptitiously doing things he is not paid to do instead of sweeping floors or dusting the soda fountain, for which he is paid, his experience will be of little value pharmaceutically.

Having completed his experience he is allowed to appear before the board for examination. The result of this examination may be one of three; he may receive full registration, he may receive a second grade certificate or he may fail entirely.

In the first event he has simply demonstrated to the board, so far as an examination can show it, his technical competency, nothing more. If he pass the first

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examination, by the very restrictions of our laws he jumps from a position of no responsibility to one of fullest responsibility, from store sweeper or bottle washer to manager, from porter to possible proprietor of an establishment and dictator of its policy, all this without any opportunity or time to study at close range the duties, opportunities and ethical responsibilities of such a position. The experience which he has had and to which he has been compelled by law to restrict himself has in no way prepared him for the responsibilities which, in violation of the safety of the public, and even of his own permanent advantage, he is now in legal position to assume.

If, on the other hand, he receive a second grade certificate even greater inconsistencies arise, for in that case while he is declared by the law to be technically incompetent and may not perform his duties except under supervision of a registered pharmacist (when he is around) he is nevertheless allowed by law to assume responsibilities and be in actual charge during the temporary absence of his superior. So far as the writer has been able to discover the term "temporary absence" has been left undefined because it has been impossible to come to any agreement as to what the definition should be. In the meantime the extent to which the public safety is jeopardized is limited not by law but by the varying degrees in which individual employers recognize their responsibilities to the public.

Among the results of this illogical system are the following:

1. The consumption and waste of years of every candidate's time compelling him to do that which is of no value to him or the public, so far as his preparation as a pharmacist is concerned, and thus incidently eliminating from the profession the best prospective material who can not see the advisability of so wasting their years.

2. The establishment of a class of pharmacists whose prerogatives are defined in such a negative, not to say contradictory, manner as to render it impossible for any one to hazard an opinion as to what their real status might be.

3. Empowering men with legal right to assume the responsibilities to the public which go with the operating or managing of a pharmacy, without any provision for experience of a nature fitting them for the assumption of such duties.

4. Multiplicity of stores poorly manned, inadequately financed, inefficiently managed or insufficiently supported, which not only by their limitations are unable to give service themselves but by their very presence cripple other establishments which might otherwise develop to the point of real efficiency.

5. The concomitant depletion of the supply of clerks.

Having thus enumerated some of the defects in our present system, what should be done? The writer fully appreciates the fact that it is easier to point out flaws in any plan than it is to offer another in its place free from defects. One mind can find defects in a plan or even destroy it, while it takes the combined efforts of many minds to construct one. With these limitations in mind the following suggestions are offered:

1. It would seem logical that if pharmacy boards have no standards for experience and especially as the nature of the experience required at present is by law prevented from being of such a nature that it could have any bearing on the preparation of the candidate along the lines in which the Board of Pharmacy or Pharmaceutical Legislation is interested, such experience should not be made a condition for examination or registration in case of second grade certificates.

2. That no ambiguous certificates of any kind should be issued to any candidate. No certificate at all should be issued unless the candidate be capable of

rendering a definite public service or unless his knowledge be sufficient to enable him to assume responsibility without endangering public safety.

3. That any one who knows enough about drugs to handle them with safety to the public and who can qualify before an authorized board should, whether he acquire the knowledge in a store, school of pharmacy, or by burning midnight oil, be given his certificate, should be allowed to work and receive his due wages—all he is worth; and should be thus granted the legal, open and above board, honest means of getting that experience which will later enable him to be valuable to the public, valuable to himself, and valuable, instead of a menace, to those associated with him in his own calling.

4. That moreover it should be lawful to employ such a man and give him such opportunity.

5. That the prerogative of pharmacists of this class should be in accordance with the qualification of being technically competent.

6. That the question of knowledge only concerns the law and the boards. Dexterity and efficiency—value as an assistant must continue as now to be a matter of adjustment between employer and employee.

7. Certificates for registration in the first class should be issued only to those who in addition to having passed the board showing technical competency shall have served a specified number of years as pharmacists of the second class. This experience, although not under the supervision of the board, is not open to the criticism on experience noted above because as pharmacist of second class he would presumably get pharmaceutical experience, at any rate would not be legally debarred from getting it.

While the above would seem to be the minimum requisites that could be considered and would virtually leave the qualifications of pharmacists of the first class where they now are, with the advantage of a better kind of experience, nevertheless many other qualifications could be required with advantage. It is questionable whether in this age with all the opportunities for education, and the greater need for it, a candidate should be allowed a certificate enabling him to assume the obligations and responsibility of operating and managing a pharmacy and dictating the policy of it without at least the general training of a high school course and later the special training in a school of pharmacy.

By similar action has the medical profession gradually placed the members of that profession in the position they occupy in the community. The ridiculous hypothesis that a surgeon needs no more education than a butcher to chop a man's leg off with a meat ax has not prevented the medical men from requiring of those aspiring to join the profession higher education, broader culture. The absurdity of the argument as applied to medical men is apparent only because the medical men have insisted upon considering it so. Essentially it is no more absurd than those so often made and unfortunately concurred in by pharmacists, that it requires no science to pour from one bottle into another or that because an ability to count twelve will enable one to put up a prescription of a dozen tablets, therefore, no more mathematics is necessary, or even that a knowledge of psychology and logic is superfluous in handling our trade, or that a familiarity with the principles of ethics will not assist us in realizing the duty which as pharmacists we owe the community we serve. Certainly these statements are absurd, but they are not considered so and will not be until we first make the discovery ourselves, and then, not by futile protests, but by our acts and by the standards which we voluntarily assume, we demonstrate them to be so.

DISCUSSION.

M. I. WILBERT: I think the suggestion made is sane and reasonable. The Assistant Pharmacist, as ordinarily expressed, is ridiculous. If a man cannot legally acquire knowledge or experience, and under the law he cannot do so until he is empowered to practise all of the art, is it reasonable that the officers of the law empower one who is evidently incompetent and who could not legally have acquired the competence, to be competent by affixing their signature to a piece of paper?

The proposition offered by Mr. Seltzer does not settle things. It would insure clerks and it would insure competent clerks and safe clerks, in so far as that the clerk would have technical knowledge and would have acquired experience of the kind that would fit him to do certain things. He has done these things experimentally and under supervision and if he has proved himself competent in the college to do certain things, he is certainly competent, in a retail store, to do the same things, and as a clerk he would be infinitely more valuable than a clerk who has not acquired that knowledge or dexterity.

H. M. WHELPLEY: There are two ways of approaching this subject. One from the standpoint of the registered assistant, and one from the standpoint of the employer.

I have had occasion to come in contact with this matter in Missouri—those seeking situations and those desiring assistance, and while I have not studied the subject particularly, my impression is that the person who takes the assistant examination does so because he feels that it is a stepping stone towards full registration, and not because he thinks it is going to help him particularly in getting a situation. I have had men say they were not registered when they were registered as assistants, and so far as the proprietors are concerned they do not care whether a man is an assistant or not. They either want a registered pharmacist (a fully registered man) or they can get along with a man who is not registered, and that he is registered assistant will not induce them to pay more salary or consider him as being over and above an apprentice not registered, but who has had considerable experience.

E. G. COX: In regard to assistants in Missouri, there are a great many towns of less than five hundred inhabitants, and we issue Assistant's Certificates, giving them the full power of registered pharmacists in these towns of less than five hundred inhabitants. I think the assistant pharmacist is only the stepping stone to something higher, as has been stated, and there are many who will take the examination under these circumstances.

H. C. CHRISTENSEN: From my observations with the boards and pharmacists in general, I believe it to be a calamity to dispense with the assistant pharmacist. I might say further that I believe with the right sort of handling, we have in that proposition a great thing, but it must be handled from a different angle than heretofore. I believe that with the advanced Pharmacopœia and the thoroughly scientific methods adopted under the present new revision, that our requirements for registered pharmacists as well as assistants was too low. I believe that we should, in order to bring the proposition up on a level, or somewhere near on a level with our authority—the Pharmacopœia—the schools and the boards should increase their requirements of the registered pharmacist so as to make him a thoroughly educated and scientific man. Then, I believe, to go along with that we should have a competent assistant, an assistant that would have very nearly the requirements of the full registered pharmacist at present. I believe that by dividing these two, or by having these two classes, that you would come to a condition that would be nearly perfect. The assistant, as you all know, if he is competent makes a better clerk than the full registered man, since as soon as a man becomes registered he begins to think about something for himself—going into business and having a store of his own, but your assistants should be competent, should be of a higher class than they now are.

When that condition prevails, you will have thoroughly educated, competent registered pharmacists and they will be on a level with the other professions, they can talk intelligently to the physician, talk on scientific matters and will be capable of using the Pharmacopœia, rightly and intelligently. You would also have a safe assistant, so far as the ordinary duties of the drug store are concerned.

In that way some men would become assistants and remain so all their lives. They

would get a salary probably equal to the salary of the registered pharmacist at the present. They would not be entitled under the law—the law should restrict them—so that they could not run a drug store on their own account. If they owned a drug store, they would require a high class registered man in charge, but they should, under the law, be given the privilege of being in charge of these stores run by a registered man, both during his absence for meals and during such other temporary absences as the board might see fit to provide for.

I think this is a matter we ought to discuss at some length and arrive at an understanding. I think the time is here to either eliminate the assistant entirely, or to bring about some such condition, and I believe to eliminate the assistant entirely would be a calamity.

C. B. LOWE: In Pennsylvania the qualified assistant occupies a place such as is occupied by him in no other State. His rights and privileges to take charge of a store for a brief space of time in the absence of the proprietor give him a better position there.

In Missouri it does not seem to make much difference whether a man is an assistant or not. It does make a difference in Pennsylvania, especially in Philadelphia. His salary would be several dollars more if he were an assistant.

The Pennsylvania Board of Pharmacy some years ago asked the same questions of one who came up for qualified assistant as a registered pharmacist, but they do not do so at the present time. They give a man coming up for a Qualified Assistant's Certificate an entirely different examination. They ask questions which he is supposed to answer, and which he ought to be able to answer. Before, they simply graded them on the same examination, passing a man for the grade of Qualified Assistant if he made, I think, fifty—although I am not quite certain of the figures. Mr. Emanuel, I believe, can correct me—and requiring an applicant for a Registered Pharmacist's certificate to make fifteen or twenty points more. Of course, a great many of the questions asked, they tried to answer without understanding them—are not supposed to understand—did not make a study of them. But, at the present time, they make a practical examination, consisting of questions the answers to which they ought to know, and if they do not know, then they cannot get the grade.

Unfortunately, at the present time, pharmacy is not taking its rightful place as a profession. It is not holding its own. There are so many side-lines coming into the drug store that they do not seem to have the same necessity for a registered pharmacist and in many cases an assistant could do all they want done. If you were to abolish this grade of assistant, I think you would work a harm to the country drug stores and to many of the city drug stores.

H. B. MASON: It seems to me that the auditors have misunderstood Mr. Seltzer's position somewhat. I do not understand that he advocates a continuance of the present system. He contemplates something different from that. He advocates two classes, but not as they exist to-day in so many states. If I understand correctly he goes back somewhat to the doctrine laid down by one of the greatest thinkers pharmacy has developed in this country, Dr. Oldberg, a man who always argued for two classes of pharmacists, and his theory was that you ought to have an assistant pharmacist who could be only a clerk as long as he is only an assistant and, subsequently, a registered pharmacist who would be eligible to proprietorship. His idea was that before a man could control a store as owner, he ought to be better equipped, perhaps, than mere knowledge could equip him. Perhaps he did not need to be any more technically expert than the clerk, but he ought to be a broader man, to be responsible for the character of the goods in his stock, and live up to what the public requires of him, so that he could assume all the responsibilities of his position as the proprietor of the store and a conservator of public health.

Dr. Oldberg argued that if you had but one class, a clerk who became registered, as soon as he did so, he was ambitious to become a proprietor with the consequent result that you would have too many stores and too few clerks. Ever since I can remember the proprietors have complained that they could not get enough clerks. On the other hand, there are too many stores and the competition is too great. Your new clerk starts a

competing store on the corner the year after you have employed him. Mr. Seltzer wants to make that distinction between the training of a clerk and the equipment of a proprietor. A clerk should be just as well equipped, technically, as the proprietor, but do not let the man who becomes an assistant pharmacist and who does all the duties you may impose upon him, do not let him become a proprietor until four or five or six years have elapsed and he has had experience and has become an older and broader man. We know that this thing of allowing the clerk to be in charge for a half hour when the proprietor is out at lunch is a joke anyhow; that is, that the clerk shall have full charge for thirty minutes while the proprietor is out at a restaurant, or elsewhere. I think that if the clerk is competent he ought to be allowed to have charge for even a day or so, if necessary.

But when it comes to the policy of the store, giving pure and high-class products, and so forth, there is a set of principles a proprietor should have, which it is, perhaps, unfair to expect of an immature person.

AN EXPERIENCE MEETING.*

BY PHILIP ASHER.

At the last annual meeting of the Alumni Association of the New Orleans College of Pharmacy, the President, Mr. J. B. Murphy, introduced an innovation that was instructive and very wide in its application. Mr. Murphy, a graduate of but three years ago, young, bristling with energies and new ideas, and being of the same age as a majority of the past year's class, knew exactly how best to get next to the "boys" and by a process peculiar to himself was able to extract from them many latent ideas and have them unbosom themselves.

Present at this meeting was the entire faculty of the college. To them it was a revelation almost beyond belief to hear these graduates, who but a short time before were their students and from some of whom it was almost impossible to get sufficient expression, in oral recitations, to show that they knew the lesson under discussion, tell their experiences in clear tones and well-chosen words. The title of this paper might lead one to believe that this experience meeting was some spiritualistic conference or religious assembly. It was, however, nothing of that order. It was just a simple, plain, pharmaceutical gathering, though there was sufficient material developed during the session to serve as a text for more than one good sermon.

After the regular order of business had been disposed of, the President, in welcoming the new members to the Association, requested each to tell his or her reason for taking up the study of pharmacy as a life work. At first, "the going was slow,"—to use the vernacular of the race course—but it was not long before the "going was good," and within a short time they all made "fast strides on a good track." After the "experience meeting" was well under way, they became "warmed up" to the subject, and it was not long before all embarrassment had left them, and they described their experiences with perfect calmness and spoke to the assembly with as much ease as they would have spoken had they been addressing their classmates alone.

To the teachers, the descriptions given and the pictures painted were replete with sentiment, determination and color, and in some of them there was sufficient material for a first-class book. We were amazed at the hardships several of these students had to undergo to gain that much-coveted prize, the diploma. At times

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