

EDITORIAL

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PHARMACY AND THE DRUG STORE.

IT can probably be said that failure, thus far, to secure the establishment of a pharmaceutical corps in the U. S. Army, after persistent and systematic efforts on the part of pharmacists, and an evident indifference on the part of Army medical men to coöperate strongly for such creation, impressed several papers of the American Pharmaceutical Association on "the separation of pharmacy from the drug business," and the same subject formed the keynote of the presidential address before the recent meeting of the American Conference of Pharmaceutical Faculties; it also influenced the report of the Committee on "Short Course Schools," of the latter organization. It is true that the incompatibility of pharmacy with many drug stocks has long been recognized, that a distinction of classes has been and is effective in some European countries, but the subject has never before been the important theme of a convention of American pharmacists.

Efforts to establish standards of respectability, or relationship between pharmacy and the side-lines of the modern drug store constitute a mistake; such comparisons are, as a rule, either unjust or unnecessary. The point simply is that pharmacy is a profession, but this does not characterize every transaction of the store. Success in a business or profession is of utmost importance; integrity and honesty are essential in both. The pharmacist, as well as the druggist, should know the fundamentals of business; experience and good common sense teach proper application of them. Pharmacy may be practiced rightly in a store wherein the sales in side-lines represent the larger volume of the business; it may be mal-practiced where only prescriptions are filled and drugs are sold. Pharmacy and the drug business reflect the man within.

Colleges of pharmacy can readily arrange their curricula and entrance requirements for the teaching of druggists and pharmacists, but they must adapt them so that they will prepare the students for their life-work. Thoroughness is an essential qualification of a druggist and pharmacist; right dealing is as mandatory in a drug store as in a pharmacy; an inefficiently trained pharmacist is not a druggist, the difference is not of degree. The opportunities for service and success are just as great in the drug business as in pharmacy; both engagements are honorable, if rightly conducted.

The present is a most opportune time for studying the practicability of establishing drug stores without pharmacy departments, because of the shortage of pharmacists; we are inclined to think that this can be brought about much more

rapidly than the separation of pharmacies from drug stores. Relatively more drug stores will be able to exist than exclusive pharmacies, which implies that in many drug stores the pharmacy departments are not productive of large direct profit. "Let us face the facts." The medical profession must become sincerely interested in the movement of developing pharmacy if the proposed plan of separating pharmacy from the drug store is to gain momentum; medical men should exhibit a far more intense interest than has so far been shown to further the efforts of pharmacists for professional recognition. They will find that the progress of pharmacy is essential to the continued advancement of medicine, or the trend may be a return to the apothecary-physician.

A reflection on the development of the modern drug store reveals that manufacturing pharmacy gave pharmacists the opportunity to increase the volume of their sales by adding sundry lines, until in many stores pharmacy became a subsidiary adjunct. The patrons failed to realize fully the value of the service rendered by the drug stores; no matter how small the sale, it was for profit in their estimation, even if it was of a postage stamp. More seriously, the public regarded the sales by pharmacists on a par with those of department store competitors; thus these became largely merchants and medicines became merchandise. Legal enactments did not greatly extend the pharmacists' privileges; medicines were sold by them under restrictions, while others sold them without legal subjection; physicians continued to dispense.

If pharmacy is to receive full recognition as a profession it must be proven that prescribing and dispensing of *materia medica* are different and not interchangeable functions, and that medicines should be prescribed to fit the case. A pharmacy should be provided with laboratories, and bacteriological products should be intelligently handled, and finally, as with other professions, pharmacists should exact a fee for professional services. These are some of the things that must be considered in framing pharmacy legislation, applicable to the change of status which has been proposed. The subject is important and deserving of serious consideration, so that the foundation for both types of drug stores may be properly laid and the two classes defined. The number of drug stores will probably soon exceed that of exclusive pharmacies, but the increase of both will likely be by elimination within established stores; on the one hand, by doing away with the prescription department and related stock, and on the other, by the installation of a laboratory, eliminating certain of the side-lines and the inclusion of others. We do not venture to predict how rapid this progress will be.

"Progress begins with the minority. It is completed by persuading the majority, by showing the reason and the advantage of the step forward, and that is accomplished by appealing to the intelligence of the majority."—*George William Curtis*.

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