Journal of Oil and Fat Industries

Devoted to Oils, Fats and Allied Industries

VOL. III **MARCH, 1926** **No. 3**

EDITORIAL

THE LABORATORY AS A STEPPING STONE IN THE FAT AND OIL INDUSTRY

A series of articles in a well-known scientific journal give the reasons of several prominent chemists for their choice of this profession. Perhaps it would be equally instructive, if not as inspiring, to have another series telling why chemists become something else.

In the old days of the sailing vessel, there used to be an expression that described promotion as "crawling in at the hawser hole and climbing to the captain's cabin." Similarly, in the early days of the fat and oil industry, men rose from the lower ranks to the higher positions by sheer force of character, ability and industry.

With the advent of the chemist came men with added qualifications. While their training enabled them to quickly grasp the details of factory operations, it gave them also the opportunity to apply their science to improving the manufacturing process. These chemists were quick to see the greater profits in the commercial as distinguished from the purely scientific end of the industry, and they worked from the laboratory to the factory and from the factory to the office. We can identify many present and former members of the American Oil Chemists' Society who have become presidents, vice-presidents, and general managers of their organization, and the list will ever grow longer.

In some companies it was common practice for many years to promote young chemists to be refiners, then superintendents, and finally office executives. This doubtless was a good plan when the chemists so selected have a well developed business sense and executive ability.

In many cases chemists came from schools where their scientific instincts rather than their executive powers were developed; where they were taught to think in terms of atoms and molecules rather than in dollars and cents, and in chemical reactions rather than in human relations. Except in rare instances men with such training have stuck to their profession and

have not reaped the greater material rewards of the commercial side of the business. In a few cases, by applying science to the practical problems of the industry, they have reaped greater rewards than those working in the commercial field.

It seems reasonable to think that a man's advancement depends primarily or character and ability, and afterward on training. A combination of the purely scientific attitude, which searches only for the truth, and a thorough drilling in business methods would give good ground work in any industry upon which to build for advancement.

A new method of training office executives is being tried out by a very large concern; it has a great deal of promise. Young college graduates who have a good standing in mathematics, economics, business methods, etc., are selected. Then, instead of starting them in the office, the company sends them to the factory where they are put to work on one operation after another until they are fully familiar with all the manufacturing processes. Then and then only are they considered ready to attack the office work intelligently, and they grow to positions which their all-around training will enable them to fill efficiently.

Other things being equal, the best men for executive positions are those who have had the best all-around training. The best chemist is the one who has had the best scientific instruction, combined with the industry and ability to apply his scientific knowledge to bringing forth useful results. —D. W.