

Pharmaceutical Education—Past, Present, and to Come.

Extracts from an address by BARNARD S. PROCTOR.

METHODS—OLD AND NEW.

Past.—The old method was, every man for himself; learn whatever you can that is useful to you; keep your own secrets, keep others ignorant, make them think that your knowledge is very deep, that your philosopher's stone is capable of great things which are not to be seen and understood by ordinary mortals. This is the education suited to the pope, to the parson, or the fossil, men who think light irreligious and flashy unless it be dim. In "pre-charter" days those studied who wished to do so. Many did not wish for any systematic study after leaving school; now the terminus is pushed a little further on, and many cease systematic study when examination is passed, but will still pursue one or more congenial subjects, while they drop those which do not afford them pleasure or palpable profit.

Present.—It is now the turn for the public and the professors to be educated, the former to learn what is good for them, the latter to learn how to bring into existence the pharmaceutical forces requisite for the safety of the nation. It is only by the development of sound practical ideas on the part of the public, the legislature, and the teachers that satisfactory progress within the craft can come about.

Future.—In the future there may be an army of pharmacists—10,000 men, 1,000 corporals, 100 captains; it may be 10,000 factotums, or it may be nothing that we can imagine from our present experience and powers of prevision. Our present concern is with the doings of to-day, and our care must be that any step we take must lead to a solid foundation, from which future steps in advance may be taken.

TOO MANY PHARMACISTS.

The number of men who can make a living by dispensing and the sale of poisons is limited, not by Act of Parliament, but by natural law; and if the inculcation of professional etiquette leads the pharmacists to neglect reasonable trade customs, they will insure the permanence of the substratum of unqualified men who flourish by the contrast between a bastard professionalism and an open cultivation of free trade in all the largely-consumed articles of materia medica. It would be one of the most difficult tasks the Pharmaceutical Council could contemplate to teach the public to see the advantage of paying increased prices for ordinary drugs or preparations because of their being supplied by learned men. Merchants and manufacturers must and do learn their art, and will continue to supply most things wanted in quantity better than a small operator can produce them. This is a fact which it is scarcely necessary to teach to either the public or the pharmacist. It is only the articles of which the consump-

tion is small or irregular that are better prepared by the seller at the time they are required. The skilled operator, who has not only passed an examination, but has practised his calling on such lines as to develop the germs of knowledge which passed him through the examination room, till they have evolved a habit and a power to meet and overcome all little troublesome difficulties, is in a position to flourish more abundantly than anyone who is satisfied with having got his certificate, then ceases to study. But how is the habit to be formed? Where there is little dispensing done, and little opportunity for chemical and pharmaceutical operations, the wits and wisdom of the scholar grow rusty, and if he has the good luck to develop, as we often see in small agricultural towns, into postmaster, banker, or manure merchant, it is because he has known better than his teachers what he should learn, and what he should cultivate.

PHARMACY AS AN ADJUNCT ONLY.

One thing that we all must learn is that pharmacy must be unremunerative to three-fourths of the country pharmacists, except as an adjunct to trade of a miscellaneous character, and the pharmacist will not get the miscellaneous trade unless he learn the arts and habits of trade and practise them in as satisfactory a manner as his competitors. At times when I have gone into small neighboring towns and found the chemist acting as banker I have felt respect for him, without asking after his curriculum or examination. His position was proof that he had learned to be a useful and trusted member of society, and thus doubled the value of his pharmaceutical certificate. In many such towns the dispensing done by the two or three chemists in a year will not amount to as much as one pharmacist in a large town will do in a week. The work is not enough to keep alive the habit, which was formed in embryo as a preparation for examination. More real good would be done towards insuring competency in those engaged in dispensing by reducing their number till there was not more engaged in pharmacy than could find pretty constant employment for their hands in working with drugs, buying, selling, compounding, etc. A creditable passage through the examination room at the age of twenty-one or twenty-three will do less to insure a man's competency at thirty than the habitual work of a dispensing establishment where the better part of each day is occupied with drugs. It would be more to the credit of the Pharmaceutical Society that 1,000 chemists and druggists should be competent to render satisfactory services to the public than that ten or a hundred illustrious men have been brought up in the society's school, and have ceased to be pharmacists.

HEALTHY PHARMACEUTICAL EDUCATION.

For pharmaceutical education to be healthy, it should be in response to the demand of pharmacists who feel it neces-

sary for their success. There will be no fear of superficial reading and cram when all are "anxious to obtain the knowledge for the purpose of carrying on an honorable calling." The anxiety to obtain knowledge is good security that it will be well learned, and the fact that it is for the purpose of carrying on the calling will insure its practical and habitual application. The school ceases to be creditable when its aim is to enable candidates to pass an examination, but is eminently creditable so long as it succeeds in fitting the scholar or helping him to fit himself to carry on the honorable calling of pharmacy with satisfaction to his customers and to himself. If it were possible for examinations to prove whether or not a candidate had "competent skill, knowledge, and qualification," it might be a legitimate procedure to have the teaching directed to the preparing of the student for the examination. But no examination can be a proof of qualification unless it includes the testing of a man's habitual work—work which he performs without an idea that it will be submitted to criticism. It is not knowledge which fits a man for the work of life, but the habit of doing that which knowledge shows to be desirable. Habit is of slow growth, and cannot be formed without considerable time. Much is said about the nervous candidate under examination, and justly so, but the opposite must also be kept in view, that many know what to do and how to do it when impelled by the desire to satisfy an examiner, yet they will not do so well behind the tradesman's dispensing screen. It is well to know how a duty should be done; it is better to be able to do it; the best thing is to do it habitually. In caligraphy a man may know what form letters may have; he may be able by taking care to form them as they should be formed; but he only is a good writer who habitually forms his letters well—well, that is, so as to be easily read, though written with facility and suited to the place they have to occupy. So is it with pharmacy; it is not the knowledge, not the ability, but the habit which makes the good man. There are few things which give so much insight into a man's habitual work and care as an inspection of his handwriting, provided you have a specimen which has been written without any view to its being criticized.

WHAT EXAMINATION DOES.

Examination does something towards providing that the graduate is competent for his business—examination plus a curriculum does something more, but the two together are not equal to the customer's experience, as an indication of whether a tradesman supplies the wants of the public. The public will have regard to the social or civil qualities, and the commercial side of the tradesman's character, and his habitual correctness in his transactions; and no amount of scientific drill will compensate for deficiencies on these points, about which his patrons would feel themselves competent to judge. A