

SUGGESTIONS TO BEGINNERS IN PHARMACY.*

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REPLY TO QUERY No. 30.—What shall I read, and where shall I begin? An essay in reply to this constantly recurring query of beginners, who are confused by the mass of books presented to them as sources of the knowledge they need.

If the reply to this query does any good it must be by appealing directly to those for whom it is intended, viz., beginners in pharmacy, or those in the first year of their apprenticeship, and indirectly to proprietors and qualified assistants, who have it in their power greatly to aid the former class by an occasional word of advice or friendly suggestion. When a boy enters an apothecary shop with the view to becoming a pharmacist, he is first employed in a great variety of services, as in opening and closing the shop, sweeping and dusting, cleansing mortars and other utensils, washing bottles, grinding, bruising, and garbling drugs, cutting herbs, stirring evaporating liquids, cutting, pasting, and attaching labels, bottling liquids, &c.; engagements requiring but moderate skill: after a time, however, the boy becomes aware that he is only on the surface of the knowledge he came to acquire, and that it is necessary for him to read and study. If he is thoughtful and earnest, and is fortunate in finding himself associated with a kindly disposed clerk, who will give a proper direction to his inquiries, and encourage his desire for knowledge, he soon gets sufficiently within the subject to find the great extent of its range and the variety of its detail.

The first effects of this impression are sometimes strongly discouraging and depressing, but if he perseveres, and has mastered the idea that all knowledge is of gradual growth, that like the stalactite it grows by accretion from without, as well as, plant-like, by development from within by thought-action, he will soon become reconciled to the process, and employ his spare time in its pursuit. But what shall the boys do who have no guide in a well-disposed associate, or who may be so unfortunate as to be the victim of a churlish or tyrannical clerk, or of an oppressive illiberal employer, or, what is nearly as bad, to be placed at service with an ignorant, ill-qualified preceptor?

In considering the query, it has appeared feasible to undertake a short and suggestive essay, which, without entering deeply or systematically into the subject of pharmaceutical tuition, may succeed in aiding this extensive class of learners, and at the same time afford help to well-disposed apothecaries, who really desire to aid their boys, but who are at a loss how to advise them.

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