

Who will fight his battles for him if the associations do not? If the laws are insufficient or unjust, what forces will secure their correction if not the associations? If he is suffering from unfair discrimination by another and more powerful branch of the trade, who will procure fair treatment for him if not the associations? If his business is being unjustly invaded by unqualified persons, upon whom can he rely to bring about the enactment of legislation to confine the sale of drugs to those whom the law requires to be qualified, if not upon the associations?

If he thinks he can accomplish any one of these things without the aid of organization, let him go before the State Legislature, or Congress, or other branches of the trade, as an individual, and thus realize what an insignificant grain of human sand he is when he attempts to act singly. Let him make but one such effort and he will ever after be a loyal and enthusiastic association man.

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#### THE UNQUALIFIED MEDICINE VENDOR.

THE greatest hole in the average pharmacy act is that provision which permits the unqualified vendor to sell what are known as the "ordinary" or "household" drugs and medicines, a clause which is generally interpreted to mean that he may sell almost anything not recognized by the laity as dangerously poisonous—as well as some that are so recognized—and including the greater portion of the articles which are to be found in the druggist's stock.

Are we justified in hoping that public opinion will ever sufficiently change from its present state of indifference, founded mainly on misinformation, to permit the closing of this legal aperture?

If we appeal to the memories of those whose generation reaches beyond the earlier pharmacy acts we shall learn that the enactment of these first laws, feeble as they were, at one time seemed as improbable as the checking of the unqualified vendor seems now. May we not reasonably hope therefor that public opinion will continue to advance until it will favor legislation that will provide real and adequate safeguards for the public health.

Is there any real argument, except the selfish one, in favor of the legal restriction of the sale of medicines—those which are alleged to be harmless as well as those which are admittedly dangerous—to the registered pharmacist?

The vendor of ordinary varieties of merchandise must meet the competition of all comers, why should not the vendor of medical merchandise do likewise?

The two cases, however, are not at all parallel. If a citizen desires to establish a grocery or hardware store the only authority to be reckoned with is the credit man of the wholesaler from whom he expects to receive his supplies. If, however, he desires to practice pharmacy he must reckon not only with his jobber, but the law steps in and declares that, in the interest of public safety, he must serve a certain number of years of apprenticeship, and that finally he must satisfy a keenly critical examining board as to his fitness to safely compound and dispense drugs and medicines. If this heavy burden of educational preparation and experience is laid upon the man who calls himself a druggist, why should it not be equally imposed upon all who vend drugs and medicines?

“But,” says the objector, “why not restrict the handling of strychnine, arsenic and other dangerously poisonous substances to the educated and trained pharmacist, but let any one who chooses to do so handle patent medicines and ordinary and non-poisonous drugs?”

Why not indeed? Why not pay the policeman for his time only when he prevents a murder or a crossing accident and let him stand watch and ward during the remainder of the time at his own expense?

Why not pay the fireman for the time spent in extinguishing a fire, and let him be on hands at the station house between fires at his own cost and keep; or why not pay premiums to the insurance companies only when there is a fire, and let them carry the policy at other times for nothing?

The necessity for supporting the qualified vendor of poisons and dangerous chemicals is the same as the necessity of supporting the policeman, the fireman and the insurance company—that they may be on hand when wanted.

If the unqualified vendor may handle the greater portion of the medicinal articles of the druggist's stock on the plea that they are non-poisonous, what is there left for the druggist to sell? Certainly not enough in the form of highly dangerous drugs to justify the long and expensive preparation which the law exacts.

But are there any strictly harmless drugs and medicines, or any the unrestrained and incautious use of which may not be dangerous to the user? If there are any such their names are as yet unknown to the student of *materia medica*.

While the activity of drugs may vary through an infinite number of degrees, it may be accepted as a general rule that whenever the activity is sufficient to produce a decided therapeutic effect in disease, it is sufficient to produce a deleterious effect when improperly used, either as to time or quantity.

If space permitted, many other reasons might be given for restricting the prescribing and dispensing of *all* drugs and medicines to those who have been properly trained to exercise these respective functions, and when doctors and druggists are willing to lay aside their foolish antagonisms and work together the day will not be far distant when the law will contain such provisions.

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