

EDITORIAL

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PRICE MAINTENANCE.

A MEETING of pharmacists of various organizations was held in New York City during the last week of October. This comment on the subject of "Price Maintenance" was written prior to the convention referred to and of which a brief notice appeared in the October JOURNAL. It is to be hoped that the results of the conference will be gratifying, not only to the participants, but encourage pharmacists everywhere to exert their energies in correcting the "cut rate" evil and coöperate in coördinated efforts for establishing uniformity of prices which carry with them a living profit on the limited sales volume that obtains in the average retail drug store.

The question of price maintenance has been discussed from various viewpoints in these columns, and was largely the message of Dr. Jacob Diner in an address before the Section on Commercial Interests of the American Pharmaceutical Association at Des Moines, and published in this issue of the JOURNAL. We also quote the concluding paragraphs of an editorial of *Merck's Report* for October:

"Whatever the reason or combination of reasons for the practice, it is unsound business to sell an article for less, or much less, than the full price where the public demand has been justly established for specific preparations or brands, and where the consumer is perfectly willing to pay that price if it is uniformly maintained. All efforts to stop the practice should receive earnest consideration and well-nigh universal support. For who is benefited by aggressive price-cutting? The consumer naturally takes advantage of it, but he, too, suffers from it in the long run in inferior goods, service, etc. For this very reason it has been advocated that retailers may well enlist the support of their customers for price standardization measures.

"While ideals may be unattainable in their fullness, striving to better the conditions about which we have cause to complain is bound to bring the ideal nearer. There is much that can be done and is being done by individuals and by associations in all branches of the trade to eliminate unfair price-cutting and to standardize prices. Much good can come from working with your business associates, from letting your Congressman know your reasons for expecting his earnest support of measures intended to correct trade abuses and standardize prices, and you can find many opportunities, too, to enlist the support of broad-minded customers. All who are affected by trade abuses must do their share to eliminate them or hold their peace.

"As to proposed national legislation, there is room for honest differences of opinion on the various measures proposed, particularly as to details of their enforcement, but all can unite in support of the principle underlying them—legislation permitting the maintenance of resale or established fair prices, under proper restrictions, on identified merchandise."

E. G. E.

PHARMACY WEEK.

THE results of the first "Pharmacy Week" as an annual event have been reported in part in the minutes of Local Branches. Consideration should be given to the fact that the "Pharmacy Week" idea is a new one; there are many other "weeks" which pharmacists have been called upon to observe, but the important thing is that the public has been interested and physicians, in some localities, have aided in making the educational features a success. Invitations and communications were sent out by some pharmacists, which have added largely to the esteem in which they are held by their fellows—not that they are now of a higher type, but they profited by the opportunities which made their patrons better acquainted with their service as pharmacists.

The Section on Historical Pharmacy would like to have photographs of pharmaceutical displays, especially those of an educational kind, letters sent to patrons and physicians, and other literature that had as foremost thoughts the service and mission of pharmacy. In years to come search will be made as to the origin of the idea, and for information relative to those who promoted the plan and participated in one way or another in making the first "Pharmacy Week" a success. Such matter should be addressed to the AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION, 253 Bourse Building, Philadelphia.

It may, perhaps, be said that the displays were not general but, certainly, pharmacists in every section of the country contributed to the success. In some cities a large number interested themselves in the movement and some fine efforts were put forth in the smaller towns; the influences of individual interest, locality, and predominant activities of stores, were evident. It is safe to say that next year "Pharmacy Week" will have greater significance—those who contributed and participated in "Pharmacy Week" this year have reason for such hope and are to be congratulated. The introductory paragraphs of the report of the Commonwealth Fund Pharmacy Study are applicable.

"Pharmacy is an ancient and honorable profession. Its beginnings are lost in the mists of antiquity and its history is replete with substantial accomplishments. It is the mother of medicine and the original source of many forms of research. Numerous investigators who have made epochal contributions to science and art have been enrolled among the numbers of its followers. To-day pharmaceutical research is scholarly and productive. In the laboratories of two continents scientists are industriously and effectively studying the problems of the field.

"Yet at the present time, the profession is undergoing a heavy barrage of criticism. The assertion has been made that it has been commercialized and has sunk to the level of soda-fountain dispensing and the rule-of-thumb shop keeping. Claims are made that it has become a purveyor of illegal drugs and liquors that keeps just within the boundaries between legality and crime. It is usurping the functions of the doctor by counter prescribing. It is said that it is pseudo-scientific without intelligent grasp of the sciences which it pretends to utilize. Some critics say that in the effort to commercialize the occupation, the ancient professional morale has been lost, with the result that the occupation has ceased to be a profession and is now become a trade.

"It is, therefore, of interest to examine this vocation which in numbers is not

inconsiderable and in history is rich and worthy. To know with some definiteness just what the pharmacist does, what place he fills or may fill in society, how much he needs to know, and what sort of training should be given him in order that he may properly and intelligently fulfil his functions is a matter of major social importance. The criticisms just enumerated become immaterial if a picture can be drawn showing the full round of the responsibilities of the pharmacist and the amount, the depth, and the extent of the training which is needed adequately to fit him to fulfil his obligations."

E. G. E.

THE SERVICE OF THE DEPARTMENTS OF OUR GOVERNMENT.

THE aid given by the departments of our Government is accepted as a matter of course, but a word of appreciation is not out of place. Bulletins issued in recent months by the Department of Commerce on "World Trade in Prepared Medicines" give valuable statistics and information relative to the country reported on, and this should contribute to the development of these industries, which, in turn, will aid other branches of the drug business and pharmacy. The information given deals not only with the domestic manufacture, imports and exports, but also of the ailments which are most prevalent in the country under consideration, the remedial agents most used in their treatment, conditions that promote them, laws that regulate the sale of medicines, etc.

The bulletins are prepared for the daily press, hence, some of the details may seem very commonplace and others, probably, would be otherwise reported if intended solely for pharmaceutical publications; however, they evidence that thorough investigations are made by the officials for the benefit of U. S. industries. The best way to bring this work, in its different phases, to the attention of the readers, is by quoting from the reports. The following paragraph relates to the French Pharmaceutical Industry:

"Outside of a few very large firms the prepared medicine industry of France is made up of countless small manufacturers, each of whom specializes in one or two remedies. Fully 50 per cent of the licensed pharmacists in France are engaged in this business, most of them in a small way. The manufacturing plant may be only a workshop fitted up in the back of a retail salesroom. The number of firms and individuals engaged in the preparation of pharmaceutical specialties is said to be not far from 2500."

Reference is made to the French standards, the sale of pharmaceutical specialties and household remedies, in the following:

"The official French pharmacopœia is entitled 'Codex Medicamentarius Gallicus.' This was put out in 1908, and has been since supplemented by issues of April 5, 1922, and September 24, 1923. There is also a local publication which corresponds to the United States Dispensatory. This was published by the Pharmacie Centrale and goes by the name of its author, Dorvault.

"The term 'pharmaceutical specialties' is one used to denote preparations sold in drug stores, the manufacturer of which claims proprietary rights and also certain particular advantages. If preparations of this sort are sold only by the maker in his own retail store they are classed not as pharmaceutical specialties

but as owner's preparations—'preparation de la maison.' These can be sold by the proprietor, who is not required to affix Government stamps thereto."

Cuba is a good patron of the United States, and much of interest might be taken from this report, but only a paragraph on laws governing the sale of medicinal products will be quoted:

"As in many other countries, Cuba has enacted in its law regulations governing the sale of medicinal products. The preparation and production of prepared medicines and their sale is under the jurisdiction of the *Secretaria de Sanidad y Beneficencia*. Any advertising of these products which may be contrary to the truth, propriety or good usage is prohibited; also the attributing to medicinal preparations curative properties which they do not possess. No establishment dedicated to the sale of orthopedic apparatus, surgical instruments, laboratory apparatus or utensils, or dental equipment may sell prepared medicines in any form. The Pharmacopœia of the United States, translated into Spanish, is official, and governs whenever the medical faculty does not specify some other pharmacopœia. The eighth and ninth editions of the Pharmacopœia of the United States have been translated into Spanish." (Translation of U. S. P. X is being completed.)

Much is said in the bulletin on Chile relating to methods of distribution of medical preparations made complex by the topographical structure of the country; however, the following may be of more immediate interest:

"Goods go into consumption in a very irregular way due to the overlapping of the functions performed by the bodies constituting the trade. National manufacturers sell to wholesalers, retailers and, when they have their own stores, also deal direct with the public. Practically all of the wholesalers, who are the importers, operate retail establishments in conjunction with their jobbing business, while the retailers, when they are of sufficient importance, encounter no difficulty in purchasing direct from the foreign manufacturer and the domestic producer."

The final quotation for this comment is taken from the report on Argentina and the paragraph chosen relates to the density of population and accounts to an extent for the heavy importation of prepared medicines from Europe:

"The density of population is approximately 8.5 inhabitants per square mile, but probably over one-fifth of the entire populace (1,900,000) live in Buenos Aires, the capital city. Other cities of considerable size are Rosario (270,000), La Plata (160,000), Cordoba (140,000), and Bahia Blanca (80,000). The greater part of the inhabitants are of Spanish and Italian descent and immigrants arriving to-day are largely of the same stock. The population has increased from 8,000,000 in 1914 to 9,500,000 in 1924, with approximately half of the increase due to immigration."

A statement is made that the people of Argentina prefer a palatable medicine to a sour or bitter remedy, and in the list of imports an increase is shown in that of extracts for preparing syrups from 2471 kilos in 1918 to 18,360 in 1923, and of glycerin from 5903 in 1918, to 33,128 in 1923.

The records are interesting but, as stated at the beginning, the comment is, primarily, to note an appreciation of the thoroughness in securing data by our representatives in foreign countries.

E. G. E.
