

THE WAR AND DRUG IMPORTATIONS.*

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When war broke out between the European nations, commerce for a time was paralyzed. There were hundreds of German ships on the high seas as well as a number of Austrian ships. These vessels were all liable to capture as soon as they left neutral waters. Up to that time they had been doing a very large portion of the carrying trade, especially from China and Japan and from Germany to North and South America. Moreover the ships of the *Triple Entente* were not safe so long as there were a number of German cruisers scattered over the different parts of the world. That these cruisers have given a good account of themselves is shown by the fact that there have been nearly two hundred vessels of the *Triple Entente*,—that is vessels belonging to France, Russia and England,—that have been captured.

The immediate result of the breaking out of the war was the seizure of many of these vessels in transit, the holding up in the ports of one of the belligerents of merchant vessels belonging to an enemy, and the detention in neutral ports of many other vessels. This for a considerable time prevented the forwarding and the delivery of the merchandise, and produced for the time being a great scarcity of goods.

After a few weeks it was found that merchandise could be imported, though roundabout routes had to be taken, but there were great delays in shipments, and the goods were still liable to seizure by an enemy. German chemicals in considerable quantities were shipped through Switzerland and from the Port of Genoa, and through Christiana, Sweden, Copenhagen, Denmark, but mostly through Rotterdam. Crude drugs came more largely through the southern ports of Europe.

At the present time most of the heavy chemicals can be bought at prices almost as low as prevailed before the war, but the goods must be paid for by sight draft. Crude drugs in many cases can be bought at lower prices than before the war, but there is great difficulty in obtaining shipments, owing to the difficulty in making payments. In many cases the money has to be sent abroad and trusted to the honesty of the shippers. For instance, in having goods shipped from Trieste, we found it necessary to have our bankers here cable the money to a correspondent in Milan, Italy. The correspondent sent the money to the merchant in Trieste. This method is not entirely acceptable because it places the buyer entirely within the hands of the seller, besides being expensive in other ways.

The position has been complicated in recent weeks by the entrance of Turkey into the war. This directly affects such articles as Opium, Tragacanth, Aleppo Nutgalls and Colocynth from Syria, and it also affects Gum Arabic from Egypt. The effect on Gum Opium has been lessened by the large stocks held in this country in bond, and by the fact that Persian gum can be substituted for manufacturing purposes. If, however, there should be a Mohammedan uprising, all these

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articles would be even more seriously affected, as well as many others. As it is, Persia is now in a very disturbed state.

If the war continues it is thought there will be a material advance in the price of Gum Opium and there should be also a corresponding advance in the price of its derivatives, especially Morphine and Codeine. Shortly after the Turkish war broke out and when it was fully expected that Morphine and Codeine would advance, the prices were reduced. This was a very unfortunate step, for the reason that it lessened the value of the stock on hand of all dealers in Morphine and Codeine, all tablets and pills and other preparations made from these salts. The reduction was not based on conditions or on supply and demand, but simply and solely from an antagonistic feeling that had grown up between certain powerful manufacturers. From the consideration of this unjustifiable action, dealers must reach the conclusion that they cannot base their operations on the ordinary laws of trade, such as supply and demand, as such laws may be affected by the war conditions, but they must also take into consideration the jealousies of different manufacturers, who evidently will not hesitate to cause much loss to their customers and will not hesitate to make it impossible for such customers to use their business experience and sagacity. We have no hesitation in condemning this reduction in the price of Morphine and Codeine as unjustifiable, either on the grounds of policy, of conditions, or of morals.

At the present time, it is somewhat easier to obtain goods and they are coming here in larger quantities, but there are such uncertainties and delays in shipments that at one moment the market is flooded with arrivals and later is bare of stock. In many quarters it is thought that the chemicals and the crude drugs that are being shipped to this country are from accumulated stocks, and that later when these stocks become greatly depleted, much higher prices will prevail. This is undoubtedly true of some goods, but it is hard to tell whether it will apply generally. For instance, a remark was made some time ago that Germany had a population of sixty-five millions of people and that about five millions of these had been taken from their ordinary occupations. This, however, left sixty millions of people to carry on the work of the sixty-five millions. Of the five millions taken from their occupations, many of them were trained for special work and their places cannot be filled. You must remember, however, in Europe the women are accustomed to work and it is problematical how much of this work left undone by the five millions taken away, can be done by the sixty million people. The writer's opinion is that if the channels of trade are free from hindrances such as now prevail, that merchandise, whether in the form of manufactured products or of crude drugs will be obtainable to a greater or less extent. Every month, however, that the war is prolonged must increase the economic loss, resulting from the increased destruction of men, of countries ravished by the contending armies, and also from the cessation of productive work. It is probable that the next two or three years this country will see great prosperity, as the demands of the combatants upon the resources of this country will be greater than formerly, and they must be paid for, however great may be their deprivation in other respects. It is certain, however, that no such tremendous

loss of life and material can take place, as has now taken place in Europe, without disastrous results being felt by every country in the world for many years to come, though it may be two or three years before the reaction begins to be felt in this country.

At the breaking out of the hostilities, the question of method of conducting our business had to receive immediate consideration. There were two methods to be pursued. One method was to hold down prices but to refuse to fill orders, or to fill only a very small percentage of orders. The other was to fill all orders that came into the house and advance prices so far as might be necessary because of the increased cost of replenishing stock. This last course was the course followed by the house I represent. Our thought was that we were in business for filling orders of our customers at the market prices. For instance, the manufacturers did not advance their price beyond 70 cents per pound for Citric Acid, but could only fill a very small portion of the demand. The larger portion of Citric Acid sold by houses like ourselves was bought from second hands and imported from Europe. At one time the price advanced in Philadelphia as high as \$1.35 per pound and in New York to \$1.85 per pound. Large buyers paid as high as \$1.20 or more in order to fill such orders. Some unjustifiable criticism was raised by this course of procedure by those houses that quoted prices but refused to deliver goods. There were certain manufacturing houses that sent their price lists all over the country quoting low prices for their chemicals and absolutely refusing to sell a dollar's worth of many of the articles that they quoted. This produced a great deal of confusion and unjustifiable recrimination. Some wholesale druggists quoted low prices throughout the country on articles like Citric Acid, but when they received an order for five or ten pounds would send one pound only. Their prices, therefore, did not represent the market, as the market price is the price that will obtain the goods.

The rulings affecting shipments abroad are very interesting. For instance, our Government has taken the position, as I understand it, that any nation can give its own definition of contraband and act upon that definition. That if the Government of the United States should ship contraband goods to a belligerent, it would commit a hostile act against the enemies of that particular power. That if an individual should make such a shipment, he would also commit a hostile act against the enemies of the power to whom he made the shipment. The Government, however, is not compelled to restrain such shipments, but if such shipments are seized, the shipper cannot claim the protection of the Government. I think possibly that many citizens have wondered why it is that this Government permitted England to stop ships, flying an American flag or a neutral flag, on the high seas, condemn certain portions of their cargo and take them into their own ports. It will be interesting to remember that a British ship, sailing from England to the Island of Nassau, one of the British possessions, was seized when about 150 miles from Nassau, during the War of the Rebellion, by an American man-of-war and was condemned by a prize court in New York City. Later the vessel was released, but the cargo was condemned as being ultimately destined to the Confederacy. Our Government acted on the principle that the ultimate destination of the cargo was the point at issue, and that this was not affected by the fact

that the cargo might be shipped first to a neutral port and transferred by several different vessels. Apparently England and France have the right to declare anything contraband that they may wish, but they are probably restrained because of the danger of inciting hostile feeling in this country.

The following prices have been taken from "The Oil, Paint and Drug Reporter" of New York. We give the prices of the articles mentioned before the war, on September 1st and on December 1st. This table shows some of the variations of prices:—

	Before War.	September 1st.	December 1st.
Atropine Sulphate	\$ 8.00 oz.	\$35.00 oz.	\$18.00 oz.
Salicylic Acid .....	.25 lb.	1.15 lb.	.70 lb.
Adeps Lanæ, Hydrous.....	.17 lb.	.80 lb.	.22 lb.
Tartaric Acid.....	.30 lb.	.75 lb.	.42 lb.
Citric Acid.....	.55 lb.	1.25 lb.	.60 lb.
Salts of Tartar.....	.08½ lb.	.25 lb.	
Potash Permanganate.....	.10 lb.	.75 lb.	.14 lb.
Quinine .....	.26 oz.	.31 oz.	.26 oz.
Cod Liver Oil.....	19.00 bbl.	29.00 bbl.	20.00 bbl.
Benzoic Acid.....	.26 lb.	2.00 lb.	.40 lb.
Quicksilver .....	.54 lb.	1.10 lb.	.75 lb.
Juniper Berries.....	.03½ lb.	.22 lb.	.04½ lb.
Camphor, Japanese.....	.42 lb.	.95 lb.	.44 lb.
Hyoscine Hydrobromide.....	21.00 oz.	120.00 oz.	43.00 oz.
Canary Seed.....	.06 lb.	.14 lb.	.07 lb.
Celery Seed.....	.20 lb.	.40 lb.	.16 lb.
Japan Wax.....	.10½ lb.	.22 lb.	.10½ lb.
Belladonna Leaves.....	.60 lb.	2.25 lb.	1.10 lb.
Dandelion Root.....	.15 lb.	.70 lb.	.25 lb.
Cumarin	3.10 lb.	12.00 lb.	3.25 lb.
Hydrochinone .....	.51 lb.	8.00 lb.	1.50 lb.
Potash Bromide, Gran.....	.37 lb.	.74 lb.	.74 lb.
Carbolic Acid.....	.08½ lb.	.70 lb.	.55 lb.
Caustic Potash.....	.05 lb.	.32 lb.	.08 lb.
Potash Prussiate, yellow.....	.13 lb.	.30 lb.	
Homatropine Hydrobromide.....	42.00 oz.	135.00 oz.	85.00 oz.
Phenolphthalein	1.05 lb.	2.00 lb.	1.25 lb.
Sodium Cacodylate.....	3.50 lb.	18.00 lb.	6.00 lb.
Thymol	1.80 lb.	12.00 lb.	5.50 lb.

REVIEW OF CURRENT PHARMACEUTICAL LITERATURE.*

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The abstracts herewith given are from the November numbers of several publications and are few in number, for, much to the writer's surprise, he found very few original articles of much real interest to the average pharmacist, that might be considered as being at all scientific. There were many articles on commercial topics and of academic interest, and many of the journals had reprints

* Read at the December meeting of the Philadelphia Branch.