

BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS.*

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From the beginning, the conduct of professional men has been governed by ethics. Always it has been more of a negative program than a positive force. There have been times when ethics produced progress; but in the main, through rules of prohibition, it has merely sought to maintain the present high calling of the professions and took no thought of the future. In a changing world, ethics, like Reuben's home-spun pants, has followed the growth of the professions by a new patch being applied every time they burst. While ethics might have led the way, it has not done so. Here is fertile ground for cultivation—the field of professional ethics. How can we extend professional ethics to the benefit of the professions?

We have always considered that there was ethics of business. It does not seem to have occurred to us that there is a business side of ethics. Professional men are supposed to make money and to keep money, so that in old age they can retire with a comfortable living laid by. In the very nature of things, the temptation to unprofessional conduct comes out of the economics of the professional life. Surely, in training the young lawyer, dentist, physician or pharmacist it would not be out of place to devote some time to the business side of ethics. By that we mean the proper conduct of a professional man in money matters. Sad to say, we have neglected this most important business.

It is a notorious fact that professional men are easy marks for the get-rich-quick artists. When they can't sell mining stock and oil stock to doctors, dentists and lawyers, they will have to quit.

A doctor who has a growing community practice loses his savings in a mining deal. He suddenly finds himself hard pressed for funds. Although nearly every one in the community owes him, he can only think of one thing—make money faster. So he begins to use gouging methods on his patients, or unethical means and methods. He makes a pile of money, yes, but a stock promoter comes along who is a college graduate also. He had taken a six weeks' course in salesmanship in Bunkum Business College. He sells the doctor a large interest in a cactus farm in Arizona. Thus we see very often that after six years in college our highly trained professional man is as ignorant of economics as a country yokel and is meat for the sharper. He has no business-like system of fees. He keeps no books that you could recognize as such. He has no system about collections. He would know a good "surgical instrument" in the dark but he would not know a "negotiable instrument" if he saw one. Away back there they left a big hole in his education and he fell into the hole. Living as we do in a world of economics and intense commerce, we turn our professional men loose as babes-in-the-woods. The professional man must pick up his knowledge of business, if any, from those who have degenerated in the profession, and his ethics is sure to sink to a low, degenerate level. Perhaps you will say that I am exaggerating this factor. I answer that we need to magnify it now, for we have ignored it long enough. Lack of training in business is the underlying cause that produces many ambulance-chasing lawyers, "painless" advertising dentists and quack doctors. If this is true in even a small measure, then we know

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where to look for the trouble when we see professional pharmacy going down hill. Call it "Commercial Pharmacy," or what you will, the method of practice of his profession so as to maintain himself has never been taught the pharmacist.

In colleges of pharmacy and in drug stores I have met many men who see professional pharmacy going down hill, and they have set themselves, holding on to the rope with all their strength. A druggist says: "When I have put in a fountain and sell wall-paper, I quit." A professor says: "When a College of Pharmacy has to teach "Sales Methods" and "Merchandizing" it is about time for me to retire." Holding back does not save the situation. What we need is up-hill power.

Less than half a century ago a boy began to wash bottles in the "Apothecary Shop" and ten years later he would emerge with a shop of his own, a full-fledged pharmacist. In those days the pharmacists were artists; they loved to teach all they knew to the apprentice. Alas, most of these teachers are dead! In the past decade the University and the drug store have united in producing pharmacists. Briefly, the scheme has been for the University to furnish the training in science and technology, and for the drug store to give the training in business. In the main, the University courses have kept pace with the changes in pharmacy and the *materia medica* of the day; but what about the drug store end of the training? We find many and various kinds of teachers; we find some who do no teaching. We have fooled ourselves into believing that from three to five years at drawing soda, wrapping packages, and making change will produce a successful store proprietor out of a clerk who has gone to college and learned all about drugs and medicines. How many stores are there where the clerks pass through all the experiences of a modern pharmacist, from sweeping the floor to filling the prescriptions, keeping the books and buying the goods?

There is one way to be sure that the next generation of pharmacists may have a training that is the best possible under the circumstances. That is, to take the efficient store-proprietor and teacher out of the business and place him in a college of pharmacy where all the future pharmacists will receive his instruction in business, and where he will have time and opportunity to put his subject over. Granted that he will be teaching business where there is no business, it would be consistent with all our college work. General Goethals built many a theoretical canal on paper in the class room or he never could have dug the Panama Canal. Every dentist fills many teeth in a vice before he is allowed to attempt one in a patient's mouth. With a competent teacher who has been proven in the school of experience, and a model drug store as a practical laboratory, the college of pharmacy could standardize the business training of the pharmacist. Where else can it be done?

We have looked upon our mission in the College of Pharmacy as limited to the conservation of public health and the conservation of human life, but when we find the field of commerce is about to wreck pharmacy, then we ought to reserve the right to educate pharmacists in commerce.

Where is there a better place for the profession to teach commercial pharmacy than in the College of Pharmacy, where the profession is highly regarded and the ideals of professional service are placed first. Certainly it is foolish for us to turn over such important matters that are vital to the future of the profession to men who are going out of pharmacy and into the racket-store business. It is my conviction that the colleges of pharmacy should take hold of the business training of pharmacists in the principles of economics and sound business practice.

There is just as much need for the corner drug store to-day as there ever has been. Every day the life of someone in every community is on the drug scales. People want to know that the hands that measure out the medicine are skilled

hands. They want to know that the heart of the man who does these things and supplies this knowledge of dangerous and mysterious chemicals is a heart that cares. No price is too great to pay for that. They never yet have refused to pay when the matter was understood. They are always ready to pay more for consecrated service than they are for goods. The real profit in the drug business is in the man selling himself to the community. If the college trains the future pharmacist in business as well as in ethics, he will have a clear understanding of the economic value of his professional service. He will be too busy selling himself to engage in cut-rate wars with a concern that has no personality. Sell goods, of course, he must, but he does not have to match prices with anybody.

Not long ago I talked with an 80-year old pharmacist, who had been on the same corner ever since 1878. He was the only druggist in the town. He had a long flowing beard that gave character to his face. There was an odor of oil of cloves about him. The store was clean and the stock inviting. There was the mingled aroma of spices and drugs about the place instead of "hot dogs." He owned the building, the large stock of goods, the controlling interest in the local bank and what not. He knew by their first names every man, woman and child in the town and the nearby country. All had come under his ministering hand. Indeed the joys and sorrows of the whole community were written across his kindly face. "Have you never had competition?" I asked. "Oh, yes, several have come and gone!" He said it with a twinkle in his eye.

I stood in a large city in a modern drug store on the corner. It was a busy place. Customers were standing in line and half a dozen clerks were rushing about. Upstairs, in the back, the prescriptions were being turned out on an average of one every three minutes. Across the street was a chain store—a beautiful place. Just a few stragglers were going in to the soda fountain. The manager was even sweeping the floor, trying to look busy. The prescription department was idle. I said to the quiet man of the professional store, who seemed to carry with him the atmosphere of the old reliable corner drug store, "How has it been since the Chain moved in across the way?" "You may not believe it," he replied, "but our daily sales have increased. It seemed to bring more people to the corner." "Do you still get your price?" I asked. "Absolutely," he replied; "you see, the people here know us." If a city of 100,000 people had 80 store proprietors who were business experts as well as ethical pharmacists, chain stores would never go in.

I am fully convinced that the greatest need of the hour is pharmacists. We cannot help the men who now own the stores, but we can save the corner drug store by turning out pharmacists who get their training in business and economics from the same fountain from which they get their ethics. If we do not put the dollar on top in training them, very few of them will do so in actual practice. When they have run their race and finished the course, their riches will consist just as much in unseen values that will not fade away as dollars do. With real pharmacists capable of maintaining themselves in the business and rendering a continued service in spite of the chain stores and side-line competition, the corner drug store will live.

Give me a due and decent esteem of my profession and of myself, that I may regard no man's occupation higher than mine, envying none so long as I serve honorably and well the sick and the injured.—*Paraphrased.*