

## Section on Commercial Interests

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### SOME EVERY-DAY PROBLEMS.

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Commercial and practical pharmacy covers such a large scope as to give the writer a great variety of subjects to discuss. In my remarks I will endeavor to dwell largely on matters which seem to me most important to the retail druggist.

A constant evolution takes place in pharmacy as well as in other lines of business and professions. There seems, however, to be a greater feeling of unrest and dissatisfaction among men engaged in the drug business than in other walks of life, and why is it? And why do men engaged in pharmacy not go into other lines of business? Perhaps there are many reasons for the existence of such conditions, and many reasons why men continue in the same line of business. In the first place, many pharmacists began their vocation while mere boys, and not all have the same motive for commencing such a career. I believe a great many have begun their drug store life because of a chance to make a little spending money by working evenings, Saturdays and during vacations, while others have been deluded into the belief that it is an easy, dignified way of making a fortune without much work. The latter class of course are the most disappointed. The young man does not realize this until his mind has become so thoroughly saturated with theoretical pharmacy and his time so completely taken up that he cannot think about any other way of making a living, and eventually concludes that he is unfit for anything else and perhaps spends his entire life in a pharmacy.

Pharmacy *should* be an attractive, dignified profession, but as conditions are today it is a great disappointment to most of our retail brothers and we, ourselves, are largely to blame; not directly, but we are to blame for not standing up for our rights and defending ourselves against unjust attacks by different interests and unscrupulous methods used by other business houses as advertising schemes.

In the first place, we should be active in association work, local, state and national, and demand recognition in political affairs. But we are too afraid of expressing our opinions for fear some one won't believe just as we do, and that we shall thereby lose a customer. Again, we think it is a sin to give an hour to an association meeting. Consequently we have submitted to dictation by outsiders until a great many people have been led to believe that druggists are all bad. No doubt some are—so are some preachers, some doctors, some

deacons, and even some "school ma'ams"— but we should not be asked to bear the same reputation that applies to the occasional black sheep in our midst.

With an army of druggists, such as we have in the United States, we could secure almost anything reasonable in the way of legislation and protection if we were willing to fight for it. I believe it is unjust and unfair for drygoods stores to sell for advertising purposes at cost or below, articles that belong to the druggist, at the same time making people think that the druggist is a hold-up. The regular price of most such articles gives the druggist only a fair profit. Not long ago a grocery man said to me, "he did not see why he could not sell patent medicines as well as a druggist." I told him that I did not agree with him, that a druggist certainly knew something about even a proprietary remedy, but I thought that a druggist could sell tea and coffee just as scientifically as a man behind the grocery counter, and it might be quite a drawing card to sell these staple articles at cost. He had nothing more to say on the subject. About all they want to leave to the druggist is the violent poisons and the high priced and rare drugs.

Another great drawback with us today is the misunderstanding and cold relationship existing between physicians and pharmacists. Physicians naturally object to the manufacture and sale of proprietary remedies, and of course, are also opposed to counter prescribing. But what are we going to do about it? In our present condition, the prescription business is worth mighty little to the average druggist, and is perhaps a losing department, considering the amount invested, the valuable space taken up, and the keen attention required to conduct this department. Many physicians prescribe high priced specialties and proprietaries for which the druggist has to pay exorbitant prices and many times he has to buy a pound to use an ounce and very often the balance is left on his hands as a souvenir. This, I believe, leads to counter prescribing.

Then we have the dispensing doctor to contend with. I don't believe physicians are any more capable of compounding and dispensing than druggists are of diagnosing and prescribing. The busy physician cannot give the study and attention necessary in the manufacture of medicines nor can he be a "good mixer" in this sense of the word. Compounding a prescription might be compared with baking a cake—proper manipulation is as essential as the right ingredients and proportions. What would a castor oil emulsion look like if the proper amounts were put in the bottle with a "shake label"? Where would be the beautiful color and corresponding composition that belongs to Basham's Mixture if the ingredients were not added in their right order?

The care in the handling of drugs is also very important. Many preparations have to be kept in amber-colored bottles, others in glass-stoppered containers, and still others in completely filled bottles—while temperature must also be considered. All these things the pharmacist should be thoroughly familiar with, while the doctor has something else to think about. I am in no way blaming the doctors for these conditions—we have not convinced them that the pharmacy is the proper place for all medicines to be prepared. Neither have we made any defense to the attacks made on us by yellow journals.

In conclusion, I wish to make an appeal to all druggists to aid in a fight for a law confining the sale of all remedial agents and poisons to registered pharma-

cists; and let us also make a greater effort to convince the physician that medicines should be prepared and dispensed in a pharmacy, and that it is far better for him to prescribe U. S. P. and N. F. preparations than nostrums of unknown composition sold at exorbitant prices.

We are continually clamoring for increased educational requirements and higher standards among ourselves. I am thoroughly in accord with this idea. It has been my wish for many years to be able some day to run an ethical pharmacy, but at the same time I have no notion of making a failure in business while trying to accomplish my desire. The druggist who has been financially successful, is the one who is keen in merchandising, regardless of his pharmaceutical knowledge.

#### DISCUSSION.

Mr. Charles Holzhauer, of New Jersey, began by saying that he had come to the Section session this afternoon in the hope of learning something, but found that each one had a different idea about things. One thing that he was sure of was, that the drug trade of the country must pay more attention to the commercial end of the business, or "we won't be druggists very much longer." He thought one great trouble was that the average druggist was trying to follow somebody else, instead of working out his own salvation. In his opinion, it would be worse than folly for the majority of druggists to throw aside the commercial end of their business and endeavor to run a strictly ethical pharmacy. He did not wish to be understood as being opposed to ethical pharmacy, for he believed in it most thoroughly; but he had tried the experiment himself, and had learned that there was not enough in a strictly ethical pharmacy to provide a living.

Continuing, Mr. Holzhauer said he thought the average druggist—not excepting himself—was too narrow in his views. Everything he did was on a small scale, and the majority of his sales were for five or ten cents, and even when he put up a prescription everything he handled was small. Then if he became disconsolate and went into his back room to brood over the condition of his business, he would not be in condition to wait on the next customer.

Recurring to the remarks of Mr. Kendall, of Mississippi, in the discussion of the two papers on advertising presented earlier in the session, Mr. Holzhauer said that he had listened with interest when the gentleman had said that he advertised he was the only genuine druggist in his town. This is all right where a man could take that position, but not every man could do it. Many a druggist was so situated that he could not make such a statement and be truthful and honest. Another man would say that he would not have a soda-water fountain. Neither would he, if he made nothing out of it. He believed it was a mistake to have a soda-fountain and not do a soda business. As for himself, he would not be willing to dispense with his soda-fountain. Personally, he would prefer to do so, but it was a profitable branch of his business, and he could not afford to do without it. It was the same way with the man who said he would not sell garden-seeds. Neither did he, but if he could see a profit in it he would sell them. It was the same with paints; while he did not sell them, if he thought the business would be profitable, he would sell all the paint he could. His judgment was that no druggist should follow absolutely any other man's course of business, but should take that which he could make use of, and nothing more.

As touching the subject of cooperation, Mr. Holzhauer said that while he believed in it, it could be made a curse to the retail druggist if not properly used. For example, he thought it foolish for a man to say, "I won't do this or that until we can get all the druggists of the town to cooperate." Druggists should have the backbone to stand up for what they believed was right and proper, and when they learned to do that they would find conditions better for themselves, and their business would be immensely more profitable. His advice was for the druggist not to wait to see what his neighbor was going to do, but if he felt that he was keeping his store open three or four hours longer at night than he should do, the thing to do was to stand by his conviction and close it, and everything would come out all right. It was the same way about Sunday-closing. If he wanted to close his store on Sun-

day, let him do it. The thing for the druggist to do was to broaden out, and get away from his narrow views. As to the prescription business, Mr. Holzhauer thought that many times where the pharmacist got his own price for a prescription, all it would stand, that, considering the time required for its preparation and delivery to the customer, it was not as profitable as if the same time and attention had been bestowed upon the commercial end of his business.

Continuing, Mr. Holzhauer said that he stood for the proposition that the druggist should be the leading man in his town, instead of the "under dog" he frequently was, because he was not willing to put up a fight and take the position to which he was entitled. The average druggist was a respected man in his community, and he was entitled to take position with the best citizens. He could not do this, however, if he never left his little store, and raised his family in this atmosphere. He must get out of these narrow bounds if he expected to be a man of force in his town. In many years of personal observation, he had never known of a single druggist who had gotten rich in the drug business. Some of them were rich, it was true, but it was because they had taken advantage of their situation and had broadened out in their activities. Their retail business was simply a starting point, and they had gone on from there. He thought that this was what every druggist should strive for. The average retail druggist never thought of making an investment outside of his business—and this was all right, if all the money he had could be profitably used in his business. By all means, he said, if by carrying an increased stock he could do an increased business, that was the thing to do. He often wondered how many retail druggists owned a little stock in the bank in which they did business. This was a good asset, and it was a desirable position to be in, to be able to borrow money because of the reputation he had as a man of business affairs. The druggist often had opportunities of investment which did not come to everybody. He knew what was going on in the town, and he was in position to invest in certain legitimate enterprises, and benefit from them as other commercial men did. He thought all these things had been too much neglected in the past. This Association, he said in conclusion, had done nobly along the lines of scientific work, and he would not for a moment belittle its accomplishments; but if the commercial end of pharmacy could not be brought up to the standard of the times, the time would surely come when there would be but little use for the scientific end of pharmacy. The druggist must get in the way of doing things out of which money could be made, and be correspondingly respected in the community in which he lived.

Mr. G. C. Kendall, of Mississippi, said he thought the difference of opinion developed here as to having a soda-fountain in the drugstore was a matter of local conditions: but there could be no difference of opinion as to what department of the drug business it was where a man made his reputation, for this was behind the prescription counter. As touching the subject of cooperation, and the acknowledged desirability of being on friendly terms with physicians, he thought the man who had a reputation as a dispenser of soda-water could not expect to have the same standing with the physicians in his community as the man who had earned the reputation of being a real druggist.

Mr. Holzhauer responded that if a man was going into the soda-water business, he ought to make up his mind to be the best in the town at it—not that he should draw it himself, but that he should build up a large and profitable business in that line, and expressed the opinion that the place for the druggist was to supervise every department of his business—to see that the soda-fountain was run properly, to see that the prescription department was run correctly. Whatever avenue promised the greatest success, there he should be found.

Mr. Kendall's reply to this was, that the place of the pharmacist was not behind the soda-fountain, or even behind the prescription-case, but he should have competent help in both departments, and be at the front himself, where he could greet his customers and make friends in his business, and where he would be worth more than any employe he might have.

Mr. Kendall said that if they had more energy down South, "and one-fourth of the lack of regard for the truth that these Westerners have," they would have the greatest country on earth. Everywhere about Denver, he said, people were confronted with the sign, "Keep smiling!" He thought this would be a good idea to apply to the drug business, as an

antidote to the grouchy condition that overtook the druggist when he fell down on a sale of patent medicines.

Mr. Kendall said that in his town they had fourteen drugstores, and there were two or three leading druggists there who advertised in this way: "Come in and wait for the car." "Come in and enjoy our fans." "Come in and drink from our fountain." He saw a mighty poor chance to sell a fountain syringe, or some article of toilet water or toilet goods, to the lady customer who came in with the idea of making such a purchase, with a dozen ladies from her neighborhood sitting around the proprietor's tables, "enjoying their refreshing drinks and the cool breezes from his fans," watching to see what she was going to buy. "No," said he, "she will go around to Kendall's store, where there is no one sitting at the tables and watching for material for tea-party gossip." He said he believed he sold twice as many fountain syringes as all the rest of the drugstores in his town put together, and largely for this reason. "I advocate the policy of soda-fountains," said Mr. Kendall, "for my competitors. It pays me for them to have them." As to the doctors, Mr. Kendall thought that the failure of cooperation was generally the fault of the druggist. He made them pay for every hypodermic tablet they got in his house. It was a matter of business to do so. With regard to counter-prescribing, he said if a man came in and said he was a little bilious and wanted a purgative, he gave him three capsules, and charged him a dime for them. If he came in for the stomach-ache, he gave him something for that. He did not class this as counter-prescribing. But if he came in and said, "I am feeling a little bad," he looked wise and said, "My friend, you don't know just exactly what this is going to result in. My advice to you is to see a physician." Nine times out of ten he will ask where he can find a good physician, and he would reply, "Just go upstairs, and any man you find in his office is all right." The result was that, instead of getting a dime out of that fellow, the doctor would get a dollar or two, and he himself would always get two prescriptions, one for a dose of calomel, 25 cents, and a tonic at 50 cents. It was good business to make 75 cents, instead of a dime, and at the same time make a friend of the doctor.

Mr. Holzhauser humorously responded to this that he had a friend once who did that same thing, and the man came back to him and said: "I want ten cents' worth of absorbent cotton." The druggist asked him if he had been to see the doctor, and he replied in the affirmative. He then asked him if the doctor had given him a prescription, and his reply was, "No, he gave me some tablets and some iodoform."

Mr. C. J. Clayton said he had been wondering how Mr. Kendall managed to "smooth it over" with the doctors when he allowed his name to appear under the advertisement of patent-medicines. In Colorado, he said, the doctors would all be down on him.

Mr. W. B. Philip remarked that the "almighty dollar" was a mighty serious proposition, and everything that could be done here to help the druggist get more of the dollars was going to help this organization. He told of a little scheme that he had hit upon, like this: He had figured out his percentage cost of doing business, approximately, and every case of goods that came into his house he had marked with a cost and selling mark. If he did not make his percentage cost of doing business on an article, where it was cut down very low, he took a blue pencil and marked heavily under the cost price, and every time one of his clerks would sell that article he knew he was losing money. He purposed to carry this a step further and use the blue-pencil scheme to show the clerk where money was being made.

Continuing, he said that the doctor proposition was a very hard one to solve. He had one doctor who, for every prescription he wrote, took a ten-cent cigar, until he was forced to cut that out. Another, whenever he got into trouble and wanted a formula, would come to him to work it out for him, and then take it over to a neighboring druggist, so that he could make it just as well. Still another never wrote a prescription on the druggist's blanks, as he seemed to feel that he was lowering himself in the druggist's eyes. This was a hard proposition, the handling of the physicians, but he hammered at it all the time, and was gradually getting more and more of that class of business. Mr. Philip said he thought that one of the best investments that a druggist could make was in the lot and building he occupied. Had he made such an investment at one time, when he started a store on a corner lot, he would have cleared \$15,000 inside of five years. Since then, he had made a

number of real estate transactions, which had yielded a good profit. He told of one instance where, at one time, \$5,000 was offered for a building and store, but the owner wanted \$6,000, and there was no sale. Later, the party occupying the store offered \$11,000 for the property, and the owner asked \$15,000, and still there was no sale. Within the last two years this property was sold for \$42,000. He was decidedly of the opinion that very often the best thing the druggist could do was to purchase the property in which he did business.

Mr. W. H. McCutcheon, of Oklahoma, stated some of his experiences. Shortly after starting in business he married, and he and his wife lived in the store building. She helped him in the drugstore, and he noticed that he had a phenomenal sale on rubber goods. When after a while they felt that they should have a home away from the store, he noticed that it was but a short time until he was not selling any rubber goods. At first he did not realize what the trouble was, but finally engaged the services of a young lady in the store, and the extra profit that she earned on such goods more than doubly paid her wages.

One of the features of his store was a rest-room behind the prescription case, and he advertised this to the country people adjacent to his little town, and they would come there and bring their luncheons and avail themselves of this privilege. He was satisfied that this rest-room had paid for each year's rent since it was established.

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### EFFICIENCY.

Ask me what's the biggest idea in business today and I'll tell you—Efficiency.

Old-time methods, antiquated business forms, have got to give way before the rapid advance of modern drug methods.

Plans and schemes that made good a year ago fail utterly today. Business is constantly changing—so also have merchandising methods got to change.

Efficiency simply means the application of right methods at right times. There is efficiency of advertising, salesmanship and business organization. The efficient business is the successful business. Efficiency is not red tape—nor is it a forty-second cousin to red tape.

Efficiency means procuring the maximum production with the minimum labor. Efficiency is the lubricant that oils the wheels of commerce—making the machine of big business run smooth and frictionless.

Efficiency means organization—a place for every one and every one in his place. Efficiency in the drug store means the development of selling, advertising and business departments, so that with the least labor and at lowest cost the most productive results are forthcoming.

“Efficiency is the higher percentage of net results.”

“Efficiency is the elimination of waste.”—*The New Idea*.