

Section on Commercial Interests

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ADVERTISING A RETAIL DRUG BUSINESS.

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We are apt to think of advertising as a recent development of commercialism. But it goes back far beyond either modern or medieval buying and selling. The word itself means "to warn," and it is difficult to conceive of a time when signs and warnings did not play a part.

Advertising is as old as man, yes, as old as animate nature. The brightest plumed bird is first mated; the lion, whose roar strikes terror into the heart of his enemies is least molested and best fed. Philip of Macedon made the name of his phalanx a warning to other peoples and reaped conquest. Darius in publishing his might on the rocks at Behistun, used advertising to his everlasting fame. Ptolemy carved the Rosetta stone that will make his name known forever. Luther, knowing the value of courageous publicity, nailed his theses to the cathedral door. The word of mouth advertising given Napoleon made victory easy, saving much treasure and many men. Washington knew the value of reputation and fostered it. Lincoln at Gettysburg published to the world the greatness of his heart and made the conflict less harsh for the South.

Advertising is the heart and soul of business. The clean store, attractive window, orderly arrangement, complete stock, good quality, willingness to make exchanges or correct errors, prompt delivery, carefulness in accounts, all ask for more business. The doctor's genial greeting, his comfortable office, large case of instruments, evident patronage and prosperity ask why you are not his patient. The lawyer's large library and busy stenographer shout his success. Professional ethics forbid the use of printer's ink to increase business, but professional men welcome word of mouth advertising.

These forms of advertising are fundamental to business. No lasting traffic can be built without them. You are unconsciously advertising. If you believe in your business and know it to be honest, it pays to tell the people what you believe. The business man cannot be self-effacing. He must dominate. The political reformer who believes in himself and his remedy for social ills, gets nowhere until he tells the public and makes them believe.

It is easiest to follow the line of least resistance. The newspaper offers the least resistance to publicity. Have you ever tried it? Not tried at it but tried it out? Stuck to it until you began to feel the cumulative effects? How many buildings would Kodak occupy without the building power of printer's ink? Would phonographs sing at the world's dinner if newspaper space had not

pitched the key? Could Battle Creek serve the world's breakfast without white paper and black type?

Advertising is long range selling. Newspaper space talks to more people with less expense and the least effort. It multiplies your personality, enlarges your influence, lengthens your arm and augments your effect. An advertisement creates the desire to possess in the minds of hundreds at once. The personal sales depends on the right words and the evident sincerity of the seller. Just so the ad. Newspaper space is in general the best and cheapest of all advertising. By newspaper space I mean all periodicals.

I once heard the head of a great advertising agency liken the various kinds of advertising to the executive force of a railroad. Traffic Manager Trade Paper, Superintendent Specialty Advertising, Private Secretary Personal Letters, Highwayman Hand Bill, Section Boss Bill Board, Foreman Fence Signs, Walking Delegate Word of Mouth, all good, but the President, Chairman of the Board of Directors and General Manager is Newspaper Space.

To be satisfactory, space should be occupied regularly. Steady work brings results. Starting and stopping makes it harder to pull the load. You lose all the momentum gained by keeping under way. As well try to roof the house by putting on a few shingles occasionally.

How much space shall be occupied? Let us get at it this way. Suppose that you are doing \$10,000 a year. Two percent of that is \$200. There are two weekly papers published in the city. That allows \$100 for each paper. Then the rate may be ten cents an inch. That permits in round numbers twenty inches single column each week, or ten inches double column; that is quite a good space for most merchants to occupy, if it is used every issue. And for the man who is doing only \$10,000 a year it may seem large. But the cost of a year's advertising is small at two percent. It is easy and natural to spend more than that in unprofitable ways. Even one percent of the total business spent intelligently brings surprising results. Fixing a rate of ten cents an inch, I am supposing a circulation of about two thousand. Circulation is a delicate matter with most publishers. But the advertiser has as much right to know what he is buying at the newspaper office as the printer has when he goes to buy a suit of clothes or a ton of coal. I think that publishers who have foresight enough to make a reasonable rate to induce regular advertising show good merchandising sense.

Whatever amount of space you occupy, keep it all the time. For special occasions, increase it if necessary but never go below a minimum. Making a big effect and then falling back for breath does not look as if you had much force in reserve. People like a stayer. Feather by feather the goose is plucked. Who faints not, achieves.

Position is of great importance. If the regular publication of your ad is valuable, the same position is equally so. When you go to town you expect to find the butcher shop on the way, in the same place. You stop at your regular news stand for the morning paper and a cigar. If these were shifted around you would make no effort to find them. You would follow the line of least resistance. A good place for business suggests a good place for your business announcements. Get the best position in your paper if you can. Get a position that jumps out at the reader as soon as he sees the paper. Pay a little more if

you have to, just as you would pay more for a good corner store. Country publishers can learn much about the makeup of their papers from some of our great national weeklies or city dailies. Readers have some rights as well as advertisers and printers. And a regular plan of makeup with judicious mingling of reading matter and advertisement is fair to both classes. By that I mean, several center columns of reading matter with outside columns of advertisements. Or advertisements across the bottom and solid reading matter on the upper half of the page. By tactful and sensible separation of reading and advertisements, the printer can make every page of his weekly valuable to the advertiser. The confusion, disarray and jumble poured down the columns of many weeklies is not creditable to the country press. Social notes, settings of eggs, goings away, birth records, prize potatoes, spring millinery, church sociables and market topping hogs flow down the columns without thought of fitness or connection. Floating with the mass are advertisements of 2 percent money, \$1.98 coal, Tumber sells lumber. While printers are urging more advertising, they might better turn their gaze inward and make the appearance of their sheet ask for it by the look on its face.

A good position regularly occupied becomes as much a part of the reading matter in a paper as the news columns. If the copy is changed every week the readers of the paper look to see what you will say next. It is like a continued story. Your ad becomes interesting reading if you will permit it to. The publisher securing an advertiser who will furnish good copy each week, has in effect added a reporter to his staff at no cost to himself. For this reason the publisher can well afford to make a better price and should cheerfully set the ad each week. I recall a series of ads that were printed several years ago in the Kansas City Star. They were changed every day; they were jocular in vein, fitted each day to current topics. Worded in friendly, conversational style, they were full of personality and you felt that here was a man who was in full touch with his neighbors. That a man who kept so close to his city and friends must be a good man to sell you groceries. They always got down to business. Sometimes right at the start off. They simply must have sold lots of groceries. I read them as regularly as the front page, and they were printed on the inside last page.

The retailer in the small town knows most of his customers in person. For that reason he can talk in more friendly strain. He should be the personal friend of his trade and should make them feel his friendliness in his advertisements. Do not boast about "the tremendous power of cash," "mammoth purchase of train load of wrecked goods," "your great keenness in getting a bargain." Your banker sees the check, the freight agent collects the freight, the drayman hauls the goods. If you try to fool them, you will soon be known as an unreliable advertiser. Things promised are things due. Meet fully your advertising obligations.

Use good, plain English. The kind that is short, stout and sturdy. The kind that can stand on its feet and hold up a weight. Some men are unfortunately blessed with a large vocabulary. I sometimes read in our great state dailies, letters from a man thus unhappily blessed. He can use more words to say less than any writer I have ever read. His language is correct. It is rightly applied.

His words are chosen with delicate sense for nice shades of meaning. But in studying his language you forget what he is trying to say. "Examples may be heaped until they hide the precepts they were made to render plain." To illustrate my meaning more clearly, take the old proverb I have just quoted. Boil it down to "Don't bury him under explanations." That is five words that tell it all. The old saying contained fifteen.

Many years ago, Louis Kossuth, the great Hungarian liberator, was imprisoned. During his confinement he was furnished access to a splendid English library. After his liberation, he came to America. Wherever he went he was asked to give public addresses. His good, quaint, forceful language attracted attention. Knowing he was a native Hungarian, he was asked where he learned to speak English so well. He seemed surprised. "Why," he replied, "is that not the way you speak it? I never read but two English books in my life, Shakespeare and the Bible." The splendid English library he had read consisted of those two marvelous books. He had drunk of the purest and best. He had nothing to unlearn. Read them, study them, for language and precept. From Shakespeare, "Strong reasons make strong actions," "For neither a borrower nor lender he; for loan oft loses both itself and friend," "The tartness of his face sours ripe grapes." Do you recognize this from the sermon on the mount? "But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth," "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Listen to that mighty, little man, St. Paul, "A little leaven, leaveneth the whole lump," "If any man thinketh he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more," "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good." A careful study of the Bible will not only improve your language, but modify your statements to a believable point. Rudyard Kipling, Emerson, Elbert Hubbard, all use strong English. Any book of old proverbs is full of short, simple sayings that are models of advertising brevity. "Grasp all—lose all," "Cheap is dear in the long run," "He is rich that is satisfied." Can you word these quotations that I have given and make them express as much with fewer words?

When asked how it was that he could get so close to the people, Roosevelt replied, "I am thinking just like him." If you can think just like the man who reads the ad, you will try to make it appeal to him. Space is valuable. If one dollar spent for space will sell ten dollars' worth, why spend two for the same end? If regular occupancy of small space will sell as much more, why spread yourself over more ground than you can well cover?

Put one idea before the customer. Let one idea stand out so distinctly that it makes a strong impression. The pages of most periodicals with national circulation are good text-books for the advertiser. Say something each week that will keep the reader looking for the next chapter. Many of you will remember a series some years ago of advertisements that began with a good story. Sometimes it ran for nearly a column. They were good stories, but they invariably wound up with the saving of life with a kidney cure. That was an extreme kind of advertising. But the principle was good. And the sale of this cure was tremendous as long as the stories were printed.

It is not necessary to have a large variety of stock to find a new subject each week. It would be easily possible to advertise one kind of writing paper or

burial casket until a man would not feel safe to die until he had written his will on that paper and would feel uncomfortable in any other casket. It is a mistake to shoot too many kinds of goods at the customer at one time. Even large department stores in the cities sometimes fill their space with such a lot of matter that it becomes a task to read it. With the smaller man in the country town, the simple ad that brings people to the store is the best tone to assume.

There is one quite important thing to keep in mind; the appearance of your ad. It should be set up with reference to its surroundings. On a street of white houses, the one painted a harmonizing shade of green or yellow would attract by its color. On a page of ads set up with all the type in the shop, the one in simple paragraph style would stand out distinctly. It is a good plan for each merchant to select his own style of type and use that exclusively for his ads. If the shop cannot furnish enough variety, buy your own type and border. Make your ad as characteristic as your face or your voice.

Keep an advertising book. Paste in it your own ads, dating them. As the seasons pass by, note the effect, record facts as to quality, use, source, special features, satisfaction, etc. In a year or two, you will have a valuable work of reference. Cut out such ads as appeal to you in other papers. They will be suggestive for your own use. It will not be long until you are writing good, strong copy that will bring business and assured income.

Do not overlook the psychology of advertising. The preacher who stands before his congregation cannot preach to the hearts of his hearers unless he feels what his lips utter. The teacher before his class reveals his character, though he may never give it a thought. The man who reads your ad reads your sincerity or insincerity between the lines. Time your utterances to the seasons; \$2.00 skates offered at \$1.98 in July would be a drug in the market. Panama hats in January would move slowly. Shamrock badges in a German settlement would be in small demand. But, when spring mellows the climate, it is opportune to sing about garden seeds, and garden tools. Early frost suggests woolen blankets, warm underwear and hard coal. Follow the line of least resistance.

Proper consideration of an advertising campaign brings some surprising conclusions. If I wish to increase my business by advertising, shall I be able to finish the sale after I have gotten the customer into my store? Will my assortment and prices appeal to him? Is the quality of my goods beyond criticism? Does my store have an attractive look? Will the tail wag the dog or the dog the tail? The finding of the proper answer to these questions has set many a merchant on the road to success. The chain of reasoning has hitched him to a dynamo and he has become a live wire, full of energy. Being absolutely honest in his publicity has compelled him to make his business fit his ads. An honest business, honestly advertised, is a worthy and serviceable part of society, whether the proprietor reaps only small annual profits or quickly acquires a competence.

DISCUSSION.

Mr. Bruce Philip, of California, led off in the discussion, and related a number of his experiences. He had tried advertising in a weekly newspaper, both by the coupon system and the advertisement of special things, but it was never satisfactory. Then he took the cue from the "story" form of advertising, and found that three or four lines of reading

matter brought results at once. He would use as a catch-word some striking event or matter prominent in the public mind at the time, such as a cloud-burst or candidacy for office, and the results had been very gratifying. Such advertising frequently made good.

Mr. Charles R. Sherman, of Omaha, thought that the question of what a catch-line should be for an advertisement was a mooted one, and he was not at all sure that a soothing-syrup advertisement should have a catch-line about a prospective Congressman or the last tornado. He had inclined of late years to the severely plain in advertising. The man who started his ads with a catch-phrase, "I cure fits" knew what he was about; his appeal was directly to the man who had fits, or to the parents or guardians of children thus affected. All they wanted to know was a remedy for fits—that was the all-absorbing question with them. Likewise, young couples who were the proud possessors of a baby two months old needed only the picture of a baby-carriage, or the headline "Baby-Carriages," to interest them, whereas such an ad would hardly appeal to an old maid, unless she was going to make a present of a baby-carriage. And so in the fall people were interested in the question of new hats; and this principle prevailed all along the line. The thing a man wanted to buy was the thing that he was interested in, the live topic with him, and all that was needed was the suggestion of having that thing for sale.

As to the question of whether a single-line drugstore could successfully compete with a department store, Mr. Sherman told of an unsuccessful effort made by a merchants' association in his city some years ago to make war on the department stores. Following Mr. Pease's advice, he had quoted Shakespeare to them, what Cassius said to his fellow conspirators:

"The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings."

He had told one of the grocers that he had been to five stores to find Roquefort cheese, and finally thought of an ad he had seen of one of the big department stores, and went there and found it. He said he had had the "nerve" to tell these people that he did not believe a department store could run a better drugstore than he had, although they might have more money, for they were going to run it for profit; and if the man who ran the single-line store would wake up and observe the methods of the other fellow, he could make a profit, too. He was firmly convinced that the one-line store, properly managed, could do equally as well or better than the department store, with its forty lines of business to run. He admitted, of course, that one man could not afford to take up as much advertising space in the papers as a combination of forty or fifty men, and his advertising would have to be selected. The man on the outskirts of a city, for instance, could not afford to use space "where only three-fourths of the shots he fired came within range of any game."

Mr. Pease said he considered it a fundamental principle of all advertising that the purchaser should know he would get what he expected when he went to a store, and goods of the right quality—which he was sure was the case with Mr. Sherman's five large stores in Omaha. There were hundreds of phases to the advertising business, and an infinity of suggestions could be made. His paper was directed solely to newspaper publicity. But he also firmly believed in the personal-letter system, and that of enclosing slips with every package that went out, sampling, and many other methods. These varying phases might be discussed for a week, and the subject not be exhausted. He had found catch-phrases to introduce an advertisement an excellent thing, as the promise of a "story" was always attractive, and the man who could coin phrases of that sort would get quick results.

Mr. Anderson said he had been very much impressed with the value of the paper just read, and noted particularly that Mr. Pease was a man who practiced what he preached, in that he had advertised his friend "Teddy" all the way through, along with his other wares and merchandise. One point in Mr. Pease's paper which appealed to him was the suggestion that it was not necessary for the retail druggist to lay out large sums of money in acquiring a knowledge of the fundamental principles of advertising. But while newspaper advertising, circularizing and such things as that were good and often brought excellent results, it should not be forgotten that there were druggists who were not in a position to take up this work, as their business was not large enough to justify it, and the results

would not warrant the expenditure—at least they felt that way about it. “They don’t take the first chance, in other words,” said Mr. Anderson.

Prof. W. C. Anderson, of Brooklyn, went on to say that he heartily commended Mr. Pease’s suggestions that one of the most effective ways to advertise was in the appearance of the store, the cleanliness and the service that was given. It was only natural for people to drift into a store that was well lighted and attractive inside. He thought there was no place in the world where things should be kept so thoroughly in order and present so inviting an appearance as the drugstore.

Commenting on Mr. Thompson’s paper,¹ Mr. Anderson heartily commended what he had said about the personality of the druggist, his conduct in his store and how he handled it, his ability to compound prescriptions, and the like. He related an instance in New York City to show that the personality of a druggist had been so impressed upon the people in his neighborhood that a “chain-store” in that locality had been forced to close out and quit business. He knew of like instances, where druggists who had been in business in their localities for twenty-five or thirty years, and had impressed their personality upon the people of their community, and who made it a point to call attention to the long time they had been in business there, the way they had served them, the reputation that they had with the physicians who sent their prescriptions to them in preference to other places, had forced these “chain-stores” to move out. His advice to the druggist who felt that he could not branch out into newspaper advertising was to keep in mind the cleanliness of his store, accuracy of service, and to impress his personality upon his customers.

Mr. G. C. Kendall, of Meridian, Miss., in this connection related some of his experiences. He lived in a town of some 25,000 population, where there were some fourteen or fifteen drugstores doing all kinds of advertising. As was generally known, there was a number of so-called “first-class” patent medicine concerns that would offer inducements to the live druggist to sell their goods. He was advertising now as the special agent of over twenty different houses. This enabled him to cut out newspaper advertising altogether. He had been spending some \$30 a month with the two daily papers in his city, and this scheme enabled him to save that. He had the agency for such patent-medicine concerns as Vinol, Rexall and Sage and Sulphur, which he regarded as the best propositions of this kind. In addition, he did run a one-inch ad in each paper, simply saying that “Every medicine advertised in this paper is for sale by Gus C. Kendall.” In this way, it mattered not to him what other druggists who had special preparations might advertise over their own names. He had calls for these articles almost as much as if he were directly advertising them, all by reason of this one-inch ad. The prescription department he left largely to other lines of advertising, such as the telephone directory, city directory, hotel cabinets, bill-boards and street cars. Mr. Kendall said that he spent pretty liberally of his profits in advertising, but in his opinion the best advertising a druggist could have in the prescription department was through the physician. He had a dozen physicians who used his prescription blanks exclusively, and it was well known that some people imagined they must go to the druggist whose name appeared on the prescription blank. Mr. Kendall went on to say how his business had grown in the last ten or twelve years, and admitted that he was more “peculiar” in his line of business than any man in his town. A marked peculiarity of his was, that he would not permit a soda fountain to come into his store. He said that he would not rent space to a soda fountain at any price, and would not run it himself under any circumstances. Also, not a pound of paint or a package of garden seed was sent out of his store. He said he believed in “shooting straight from the shoulder” in the matter of advertising, and when he advertised that his was the only *drug store* in the city of Meridian, he stated only a fact. He did not consider the soda dispenser a druggist, and neither was the man in the back room that put up paint a pharmacist—any woman or child could do that. He closed by saying that his idea of running a retail drug business was to specialize and be a druggist.

¹See Sept., 1912, Journal, page 970.