

Editorial

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THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF PHARMACY.

THE address of the late Chairman of the Commercial Section, which appears in this issue, should be read with interest by all the members interested in the proper growth of the retail drug trade of this country, and this will include, it may be said, every member of the Association, for, upon the correct and fitting development of the profession depends the welfare, not only of our Association, but that of nearly every one of its members.

What Mr. Mason says of the gradual development of the profession into a general business is interesting, coming from the source it does, from one who has been closely identified with the study of the business for years, but it seems to us that he magnifies the importance of the commercial side of the profession.

The corner-stone and the whole foundation of the profession of Pharmacy is scientific education. It is that education which gives the pharmacist his position in the world. It is that which, while not making him superior to his fellowmen, such as "the butcher, the baker and the candle-stick maker," yet causes him to be more respected in the community, as a man of superior education is always esteemed above those men whose only knowledge is of common things.

Far from any thought that any one class is better than another, yet it must be allowed that the respect of the community is rendered more to the man of technical training than it is to those the practice of whose business involves no special education or training.

No one will deny that contention of Mr. Mason that to sell postcards is as "ethical" as to prepare prescriptions, providing that the former is done in an honorable way, but will any one deny that the latter requires more skill, more training, more education than the former? It may be just as ethical to shine shoes, providing that the shoe-shining is done well and faithfully, as it is to make a perfect pill or a good tincture, but will Mr. Mason suggest, because of that, that the druggist should put in a shoe-shining department? The man at the barber's chair can be just as "ethical" as the man trained to that which will save life, alleviate pain, and relieve suffering mankind, but Mr. Mason would probably not contend for that reason,—because it is as moral,—that druggists should open ton-sorial departments.

"Let every cobbler stick to his last," is an old saying and a true one. Let druggists and apothecaries stick to the business of drugs, and not enter upon other fields with which they are unfamiliar and in which they are untrained. They can sell coffee and tea to be sure, but if they give their time to the study of the coffee and tea business they are neglecting the study of the goods which properly belong

to their profession, and no man can become expert in the trades of druggist and of grocer at one and the same time.

Granted that there is not prescription-business for all the 47,000 druggists of the country, are there not other things properly belonging to his profession for the druggist to do? Do not such things lie within the proper development of the opportunities knocking at his door? There are many unsolved problems of chemistry which he can take up and work out, without investigating questions belonging to a business foreign to him. The time he would devote to ascertaining the best coffee to purchase, the best source of supply for postal cards, can be well devoted to the study of questions relating to his own legitimate business, to becoming a master of the profession of Pharmacy. The tendency of the present day is to make the drugstore a department store, and for it to sell anything which can be sold profitably, and Mr. Mason thinks that that is the best way for the profession to develop. But with all those who have higher aspirations for the business or the profession of Pharmacy, we believe that the time is coming, and that it is close at hand, when these things which many think degrading and inimical to the true advancement of the profession of Pharmacy, will pass away and like the Phoenix, rising with enriched and renewed plumage from its ashes, Pharmacy will have a *renaissance* in which Pharmacy and Pharmacists will be again held in esteem, and in which Pharmacists will bear an ethical and honorable part.

The pendulum has swung too far to the side of the degradation of Pharmacy, and the backward swing must be just as far. Let us all labor to lift Pharmacy. Let its followers leave the lunch-counter to restaurants; the other parasitic growths to the businesses to which they properly belong, and let us strive to be Pharmacists in fact as well as in name.

It is not a question of ethics, of morals, but it is a question of expediency. Is it advisable to lower the *morale* of a profession because there is "a dollar in it?" If you answer that question in the affirmative you take all the nobility out of life, and make it simply a question of, How much lucre can I win? *Facilis est descensus Averni*, and from one step to another we may descend, justifying each lowering of the standards, because we justify our way as we proceed along the downward path.

Pharmacy has been led astray. Like the Jews of old, some of its people have set up a Golden Calf to worship and a Moses is needed to lead them back again to better, higher, if not more ethical practices.

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