

SECTION ON COMMERCIAL INTERESTS, AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION

VARIOUS PHASES OF DRUG STORE PUBLICITY.*

BY H. S. NOEL.

Whenever I hear of a man who does not believe in advertising I am reminded of the story of the jury that deliberated for a long time in reaching a decision. When dinner time came around the officer of the court stuck his head in the door of the jury room and asked if he should order twelve dinners. The foreman turned in his chair and remarked: "No, make it eleven dinners and a bale of hay, we have an ass in here."

Our great government has set an example for us in preparedness, even if it is of an eleventh-hour variety. Business is undergoing a tremendous transformation, and, in the parlance of the newspaper cartoonist, "The worst is yet to come."

To bring the issue home to our own doors we need only consider the effect of the war upon the drug business up to the present time and reflect upon how it has affected us individually as retail merchants. No matter how small a business may be, the man at the head of it should be made to feel the responsibility of maintaining his share of the burdens that collectively bear heavily on the commercial affairs of our country. The drug business is one of complex character. It has many phases peculiar to itself. Its problems are in many respects unlike those of any other commercial or professional calling, and the conditions that are bound to confront us when the war is over, call for business "preparedness," a "house in order," coöperation of individuals and loyalty of associations. Only by the closest of affiliations can the drug business hope to emerge with the fewest scars of the conflict.

Of the many contributing factors to business success and "preparedness" which have to do with retail merchandising, I know of no more important element than the right kind of publicity. I do not mean by that, necessarily, the use of a single line of newspaper space or printers' ink. Too many of us are prone to connect the word advertising with copy and art. Proper publicity for the drug store in the minds of many business men, at once suggests the spending of money and the printed word. These things are all right in their places, but it is far more important that we should know what to do in advance of bursting into print, and it is much more essential to be familiar with the ways of building business that do not call for the expenditure of money.

I believe in all advertising that accomplishes results, but I do not believe in advising a merchant to spend money for advertising until he has first made use of the countless opportunities that are at hand to secure fine publicity with very little expenditure.

To advertise properly and most successfully, a definite plan or system should

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be followed. Like every other well-organized effort there should be a beginning. A great many would-be advertisers are like the farmer who wanted a ride on a train. He stepped up to the ticket window and thrust a five dollar bill at the agent.

"Where to?" asked the ticket man.

"I don't give a gosh darn," said the rube, "I want a ride." Of course the agent took the money and gave the ruralist a round-trip ticket that cost five dollars. A great many druggists who are willing and anxious to increase the volume of business are like the rube who wanted a ride on the train. They go at advertising with a hazy idea of the proper method of procedure and without coordinated effort. The results are disappointing, and advertising receives the blame.

The handicap that retards the advancement of so many retail stores is not so much the lack of trade or money as it is the lack of men of proper executive and managerial ability. It is useless to expect results from advertising in a store where the proprietor is careless in his accounting methods, seldom takes an inventory, sells goods for two prices, and is overstocked in some lines and always out of others. Advertising is bound to fall flat when there is insufficient and inefficient help to take care of the customers who desire to trade there. I recently visited a store in New England that boasts of careful attention to details and prompt service. A woman entered the store with a prescription from a highly ethical and particular physician. Two soda-fountain boys were scuffling in the front part of the store; the prescription clerk approached the woman, with whom I was acquainted, in his shirt sleeves, and with a cigar in his mouth. Nor did he remove the cigar. While the woman was waiting for her prescription to be filled I inquired for her health. She told me that she had been under the doctor's care for some time. She believed fully in her physician but told me that she always hated to bring a prescription to this store. The reason was evident enough.

The proprietor of the store is a capable man and his intentions are good. While I was in the store he was selling a kodak to a young man. He was using good selling arguments and was agreeable and polite. I noticed his attire. He wore a white coat carefully buttoned and I have no doubt that his training in the drug business had been of the right sort; but he was a poor executive. One could tell that at a glance. The discipline in that store is very lax. The town in which this store is located is comparatively small. The sales reach \$4000 each month. The proprietor of that store is pleased with himself and thinks he is doing well, but I maintain that he is not getting the most out of business and no druggist should be satisfied until he is doing that.

Not infrequently you will find a type of proprietor who employs good clerks but lets them run the business. While, as owner of the store, he is always present, he will be found doing the work of an eight-dollar-a-week bookkeeper or fussing around with an experiment in the cellar, while the customer wonders if the clerk is the man who runs the store. People like to see the proprietor when they come in to trade.

My attention was recently called to an incident that occurred in a store in Galveston, Texas, owned by a Mr. Schott. This store sold for \$100,000 and is one of the largest retail drug shops in the United States. An old lady came into the store one day—an humble creature. She wanted to make a purchase. The clerk

approached her politely. She asked for Mr. Schott. It happened that he was very busy but the old woman said she would wait for him. She waited a long time. Finally Mr. Schott approached and apologized for having kept her waiting. He asked what he could do for her. It seemed that the woman wanted five cents worth of castor oil. She said she knew others could have gotten it for her but she felt certain that if Mr. Schott put it up himself, it would be sure to be good. What a small incident that is and yet what a number of lessons are to be drawn from it.

The very nature of the drug business, with its long hours and petty details, tends to bring about a thing that is greatly to be feared and studiously to be avoided—that is—crystallization. Just as soon as a druggist reaches that point in business where he is content to let the existing order of things continue, dangerous competition is sure to be just that much nearer to him.

I recently suggested to a druggist a method of advertising that would cost twenty-five cents a day. By means of it he would be able to greatly increase his volume of business with no increase in overhead expense. Here is the way he met my suggestion. "Twenty-five cents a day—three hundred and sixty-five days in the year. Let's see that's over ninety dollars a year—nearly eight dollars a month. No—I wouldn't do it. I've been here twenty-five years and I've always made a good living. I guess I'll let well enough alone."

By way of contrast a neighborhood druggist, who was anxious to increase business, considered sending a letter to his trade. I advised a series of three letters. He asked the cost. I figured roughly that it would amount to \$125.00. This druggist reached into his pocket and paid over the money. Three letters were sent out to a thousand names. In a year's time he credits the returns from the letters at \$2200.00.

General Sherman was offered corner lots in San Francisco in 1848 for \$16.00 apiece. He was afraid to invest. In business life there is a countless unfolding of opportunities for the men who have the ambition and the courage to tackle them. There is no substitute for perseverance. The world's history abounds in splendid examples of its possibilities. Perseverance led Columbus to America; it was push on the part of the Wesleys that led to regenerated religious life in England. Napoleon's career is an example of indefatigable energy.

There is no great credit due to a man who keeps up. It is only by making use of our early training as a stepping stone that we can hope to advance. It's the man who is just ahead of the business procession who draws the trade—and the money.

Every detail of store management that makes your place of business a more desirable one in which to trade, is advertising that pays; and no advertising will yield the maximum results unless the basic principles back of the business are sound.

Just consider for a moment the importance of the personality of a drug-store proprietor as an advertising asset. A writer recently made the statement that personality is that intensive variety of advertising that deals with small acreages but more carefully and scientifically fills the acres that it reaches. Haven't you seen the type of man that makes you seem welcome on entering his store? He greets you with a smile. On entering his place of business you are made to feel that he is your friend. He possesses the charm of simple kindness. To him busi-

ness is a pleasure and he radiates a good cheer that is contagious. The chances are that the clerks in that store are imbued with the spirit of their employer and that ninety percent of the customers like the cheer of the store and carry it away with them. That is good advertising of the intensive and costless variety.

Having what people want is a good form of publicity. Showing a painstaking desire to get an article for a customer, if it is not in stock, and making every effort to render the service with as much promptitude and as little trouble to the customer as possible, is advertising that brings fine returns.

The importance of tact can not be overestimated. Tact is a good salesman's most valuable asset. Superior knowledge of the goods one is selling may convince the customer, but it is tact that closes the sale. The appeal of tact is to the sensibilities, that of argument to the intellect. Watch the street faker with his line of tactful talk and the truth of this statement will force itself upon you. Tact has turned many a disgruntled customer into a satisfied one; the lack of it has cost many stores the loss of good accounts; therefore, tact is an advertising medium not to be despised.

The appearance of a store is good advertising and that of the proprietor and clerks is also. It is useless to expect returns from advertising of any kind if the store service and surroundings do not substantiate the claims made for it.

Service is advertising even though it is sometimes called by another name. Half-hearted service, however, is a poorer form of publicity than none at all. Service without wholeheartedness, without simple kindness, is useless. It profits a merchant little to pay ten dollars for newspaper space advertising prompt, courteous service; a place where one likes to trade, etc., etc., and then to kick like the devil at changing a five dollar bill, but yet change it just the same. That's the strange part of it. Or, as I heard a druggist say one time to a man who had asked for change twice within an hour: "What do you think we are here—bankers?" Yet the man went out with his change.

Service is just as much a matter of attitude as it is of action. When the impossible is asked why not be pleasant about it? No one appreciates favors given grudgingly, nor bad manners in doing acts of kindness. In order to make service valuable as a publicity medium it must be sufficiently well sugar coated with kindness to remove all bitterness.

As an advertisement, windows pay good returns and they cost a lot of money whether they are used or not; therefore the merchant who is alive to his opportunities, will carefully plan his window displays in order to get the best returns from his investment. He will study the needs of the people who pass his store. The idea of using windows in an endeavor to unload the result of poor buying judgment on the passing public, hurts the store proprietor more than anyone else.

Two weeks ago I visited a drug store in a small town in Vermont. In the window, as I remember it, were various kinds of soaps, two kinds of fly paper, shampooing liquid, straw hats, a wooden box filled with shoes, tooth paste, cold cream, hair brushes, combs, and at least a half dozen other kinds of merchandise. A sign in chalk over the display, which was made on the flat base of the window, read: *SUMMER NEEDS*. I wished very much that I could have added to the sign the words: "*SOME ARE NOT.*"

The value of a man's name over a drug store is an advertising asset. As much has been said about this in the drug journals, I will not venture into details, but why it is that a druggist will give any other name more prominence than his own in connection with a business that belongs to him, is beyond understanding. Many druggists subordinate their own names in favor of coöperative organizations. They do these things despite the fact that it is well known that certain stores have sold for enormous sums on account of the prestige carried by the proprietor's name. Your name can not be taken from you. It is a firm foundation upon which to build.

A good slogan used in connection with the proprietor's name is good advertising and it becomes more valuable as time goes on if it is the right kind of a slogan. But such a slogan is not to be picked up in a minute. Its selection should be given careful thought and study. Commonplace expressions such as "Prescriptions a Specialty"—"The Home of Pure Drugs"—"Cut Price Druggist" and "Quality Store" are examples of slogans that are to be avoided. The best kind of a selling slogan is one that is peculiarly adapted to one particular store. It should be original, forceful, brief, true and to the point.

Mail-order competition is one of the worst evils that many retailers have to combat. The growth of mail-order houses has been remarkable and the small-town merchant has been the one to suffer most. In other lines of business merchants have found advertising the best weapon of defense against mail-order houses, and in many cases have successfully combated the mail-order evil.

Professor Paul Nystrom in his book, "The Economics of Retailing," says that it is an open question whether the mail-order system of distribution is more economical than the wholesaler, retailer, consumer method. He further states that the mail-order house has three distinct disadvantages for the consumer: (1) interest lost on money paid in advance, (2) delay in receiving and exchanging goods; and (3) impossibility of examining goods previous to purchasing.

It is up to every retailer who suffers from mail-order competition to analyze his service, his business methods and his stock and make every endeavor to stem the tide of this sort of competition.

An advertising campaign to educate the local customers on the advantages of buying at home has proven quite effective. An Indiana small-town grocer who lost considerable business to mail-order houses, suddenly began to realize that his customers were dealing away from home. His first step was to secure catalogs of the mail-order houses. He studied them carefully. In order to meet competition on one item, which I will cite merely as an example, he was obliged to buy starch by the barrel and have cartons specially made. Even then he was able to sell the starch at a nice profit and meet the mail-order house quotation.

A mail-order house catalog will furnish the finest kind of "boiled-to-the-bone" selling arguments. If I were a small-town druggist to-day I would make it a point to find out who in my town was buying from a mail-order house and I would plan a campaign of letters, advertising matter and sales argument calculated to educate these customers to the advantage of trading at home. I believe I would do these things even if I had to bribe the freight agent to keep me posted as to who the mail-order buyers were.

Advertising to encourage buying at home is always easier in a town where

the community spirit is good, and in some localities a campaign on the advantages of keeping money at home will be found of big assistance.

The basic idea back of all publicity is to encourage sales, create demand and keep your place of business before the trade as much as possible—always in a favorable light.

Outside of some of the very large stores, salesmanship is one of the weakest points, to my mind, in the average retail store. There is room for great improvement in selling efficiency, and druggists who are ambitious to get the most out of business will do well to coach their clerks on effective talking points for both new and old goods. Manufacturers are nearly always willing to supply talking points for their products, and it is to their interest to do so.

Within the past few years national advertisers have assisted in creating a demand for their products. In some respects this has lessened the need of salesmanship and on the other hand it has greatly assisted in shortening the time necessary to complete a sale and has resulted in larger sales. Dealer helps should be used whenever they are available. It is a regrettable fact that great sums of money are spent on folders, booklets, blotters, and the like, and the effectiveness of the material is lost by being wasted after it reaches the retailer. In every way possible the retailer who is desirous of getting the most out of his business will make use of dealer helps and connect his store with national advertising.

I recently asked a down-town drug clerk for a mild cigar, Havana filler, Sumatra wrapper. The clerk looked at me as though I were a curiosity and handed out a Porto-Rican smoke. It wasn't what I wanted. Had I stepped into a United Cigar Store I would have had no difficulty in securing what I desired, because the clerks in these stores know their goods and how to sell them. Druggists as a class can't seem to realize the importance of such an effective thing as salesmanship and knowledge of the goods so essential to it. How many clerks or druggists either can tell you the difference between various grades of olive oil or between a California oil and an Italian oil?

One of the best sources of information is the trade journals and yet the great majority of druggists seldom do more than glance through them and will give as a reason for not reading them, that long hours and press of business make it impossible. Then there is the type of merchant who believes that he knows all the selling stunts and advertising methods published in the drug magazines. He is usually a narrow man and, more often than not, is among the small merchants of his town. The progressive type of retailer is never too busy to welcome a new idea, and he is quick to adopt it if it fits his business. He is the type who surrounds himself with capable employees and is always a step ahead in the business procession; he is the type whom his fellow merchants and townsmen call "lucky."

I would rather spend five years in establishing myself as a dealer who sold merchandise of quality and rendered prompt courteous service, than to slash prices and fill my store with bargain hunters every day. The druggists who compete with one another in cutting prices are like the two children in the story who vied with one another in leaning out of a second story window. The "kid" that won broke his neck. The druggist who wins out by cutting prices is playing with a fickle public that will desert him just as soon as his nearest competitor cuts his prices a half cent lower. The druggist who firmly establishes himself as a reliable

merchant and lives up to an ideal of service and quality will have customers who will stick to him through thick and thin.

It is a mistake to believe that advertising of any kind will always bring results immediately. We have only to look around us to prove the cumulative value of advertising. When a druggist decides to erect a new building he waits patiently while the building is being erected brick by brick. Ask him to make a change in his business methods or to build a reputation and a business by use of advertising and he expects results of the kind that followed the rubbing of Aladdin's lamp.

I do not believe that any man, however good his advertising, can hope to build a permanent success without business integrity, good old-fashioned honesty, patience and truth. It took years of advertising to educate the public to the purity of Ivory Soap. "The watch that made the dollar famous" did not spring into popularity over night. The public read of it, heard of it and talked of it, long before it believed that it was a good watch for the money. It is only by constant iteration that your message will finally come to be believed.

In conclusion let me urge upon you to consider the thought contained in the words of Benjamin Franklin: "Drive your business or it will drive you." Success is not for the faint hearted. Let your start in advertising be as humble as it may, see that your foundation is firm. Begin with the little things nearest you, plan carefully and keep at it everlastingly.

PHARMACEUTICAL SERVICE IN THE FRENCH ARMY.*

BY GEORGE M. BERINGER.

The establishment of a properly organized and well-equipped pharmaceutical corps as a branch of the Medical Department of the United States Army is urged as a national necessity by those who are acquainted with the unscientific methods under which potent drugs are controlled and the dispensing of medicines is carried on in our army. In this respect, we can profit by learning the experiences and studying the methods of the foreign armies, those of our allies and the enemy alike, for supplying the medical needs and providing for the hygienic care of their soldiers.

In anticipation of the necessities of war, both Germany and France in recent years again reorganized their respective army pharmaceutical services and greatly extended the duties assigned to the pharmaceutical corps. Not only are these corps charged with the duty of providing the medical and surgical supplies by purchase or manufacture and with the care, distribution and dispensing thereof, but they likewise make the sanitary, clinical and chemical examination for the armies and, in reality, these pharmacists are the chemists of the military service as well as of the sanitary service. Very properly courses of special scientific study and training have been established for the education of the personnel of these corps and, under the regulations, the military pharmacy student must apply himself to the studies and in the required examinations demonstrate his fitness for the service.

* Read at the Joint Meeting of the Philadelphia Branch of the American Pharmaceutical Association and the National Pharmaceutical Service Association, October 8, 1917.