

[From the College and Clinical Record, Philadelphia, May, 1881.]

THE

Relation of Pharmacy to Medicine.

NEW YORK, April 15th, 1881.

To The College and Clinical Record :

The relation of the drug trade to the medical profession is one of the questions of the day, and any new thing in reference to this subject is, therefore, of interest. Especially is this true during the present transition state; and, when a move in the direction of a higher stand upon the part of pharmacy is taken, it becomes of importance as well. I therefore take the liberty of sending you the following as a communication to your interesting journal, hoping that similar communications may be received by you from other pharmacists of like mind, and that the example thus set may be of influence in settling the much vexed question at issue.

I herewith enclose the business platform adopted by a firm of well known manufacturing pharmacists in defence of the position which they occupy in relation to the profession.

Very respectfully yours,

F. E. STEWART.

To The Medical Profession :

GENTLEMEN—We respectfully beg leave to call your attention to the following circular, which explains the relations which we occupy to the profession as manufacturers and dealers in pharmaceutical preparations :

Our business consists in the choice, preservation, preparation and combination of medicines. We are merchants, in that we buy and sell; manufacturers, in that we deal in our own productions. On a trade basis only do we present ourselves, and to the rules of trade do we conform.

Drugs are tools in the hands of the physician, as surgical instruments in the hands of the surgeon. The knowledge of knife making does not qualify for the use of the knife, neither can a knowledge of drugs, without a knowledge of disease, justify their use in the treatment of the sick. We do not, therefore, attempt to usurp the prerogatives of the physician by advertising to cure the sick, or by proclaiming ourselves original investigators in therapeutics.

We practice pharmacy, not on a professional but on a trade basis. For this reason we do not write works on pharmacy, or make known our trade secrets for the benefit of our competitors. We invent new processes and machinery, and exercise exclusive control over them, but we do not patent drugs, or combinations of drugs, for these we do not look upon as proper objects for protection by patent; neither do we patent forms of medicinal preparations, or seek to gain control of the same by secret formulæ. An exclusive right to the sale of a drug, or a combination of drugs, is injurious to trade, as it prevents legitimate competition, which is the life of trade. It is unfair to the consumer, as it enhances price without a just equivalent. It has a tendency to deteriorate quality, also, and it enables unscrupulous manufacturers to create an artificial demand by advertising fictitious values.

The only trade-mark which we possess is our name and reputation, and it is of value to us but to the extent that we make it so by business enterprise and integrity. The trade-mark system, as at present constituted, is no guarantee whatever as to the quality of manufacture, and therefore, not a protection to the profession and the public.

Our relations to the war waged at the present time upon "trade-mark pharmaceuticals," has been entirely under the leadership and direction of Dr. F. E. Stewart, of New York City, and, while Dr. Stewart has appeared as the champion of the medical profession and legitimate pharmacy, as well as in the interests of trade, our action has been taken from a trade basis purely.

New Drugs.—It has always been our desire to promote the advance of scientific progress, recognizing that trade, in every department, is directly dependent upon increase in knowledge. Though not original investigators in therapeutics ourselves, and being outside the province of trade, we do all in our power to favor therapeutical investigation. For this reason we take great pains to secure new drugs, and all information possible concerning them, for the purpose of presenting the same to the profession for scientific examination. From the great variety presented to our notice by trade, we select a few, which we are led to believe are of sufficient worth to justify our action from a therapeutical point of view, and after first submitting them to test, that we may determine more definitely their value before risking our capital, present them to the profession for trial; these trials we guarantee to publish, good, bad or indifferent, and if we have made an error in judgment in our selection of the drug, the loss is ours. If on the contrary, the drug prove to be a valuable one, we have added the scientific knowledge, and thus conferred a benefit upon humanity, the medical profession, and also upon the trade.

Literature.—Practical medicine is largely empirical, and is likely to remain so, at least until physiology and pathology throw greater light upon the action of drugs in health and disease. The literature of therapeutics is, therefore, in a great measure, but the history of inconclusive experimentation. In the study of the literature pertaining to the action of drugs, three things should be taken into account. First, the ability and reliability of the experimenter; second, the nature and number of experiments sufficient for verification; the results of the well observed and substantiated experiments. The unsupported testimony of the most careful and conscientious scientific investigator cannot be accepted as conclusive evidence; but the accumulated results of the extended experience of many competent observers is the only safe criterion to guide the physician in the treatment of the sick. If the profession had waited for an accumulation of this kind, however, before employing new drugs, the properties of rhubarb, cinchona and opium would never have been known. It should be the purpose, therefore, of trade, as well as science, to do all in her power to facilitate experimentation for the purpose of clearing up all representation regarding new drugs, and coining it, as far as possible, into a definite scientific literature! With this intent we have adopted the following plan, suggested by Dr. Stewart, and recognizing the benefit its adoption must be to trade by increasing the demand for new drugs, we offer our aid to the profession in carrying it out.

The plan suggested is to treat the patients in the numerous hospitals and dispensaries throughout the country with drugs which have proved themselves of value, and report the results to the medical press. The collection of these reports would furnish, in a short time, as much material as procured by older methods in a century, and from them could soon be compiled a valuable literature. Though these reports benefit us only indirectly, and to the extent that we are identified with the introduction of the drug or its sale, we offer to the hospitals gratuitously, drugs for this test, and we do not even request that our names shall be used in the journals in connection with the work.

And, finally, it is to be hoped that the medical profession will give us credit for the sincerity of our motives in the introduction of new remedies from the platform on which we stand, and because of the methods which we have adopted.

PARKE, DAVIS & CO., Manufacturing Chemists,
DETROIT, MICH.