

The Practical Value of a Drug Journal.

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In determining the practical value of a drug journal, it will be most convenient to first ascertain what features make a drug journal practically valuable, and then to draw our conclusions from such abstract consideration of the subject.

The task of treating this matter from an impartial standpoint is no light one. Editors of many prominent drug journals seem to differ materially on certain salient points concerning the running of a druggist's paper, and this personal rivalry creeps out in the columns over which they preside, making it almost impossible to estimate the merits of these journals from a common point of view. It will be convenient, therefore, to determine the practical value of drug journals from the expectations druggists can reasonably entertain of them, as well as from the actual merits common to the higher class of these journals.

Druggists follow a peculiarly international profession. In the conducting of their affairs they are not hemmed in by local prejudices or customs, are not dependent on local resources, and are not affected by State or national lines except in times of social disturbance. By the resources at their command they profit by the labors of men in all parts of the globe. An original success achieved by pharmacists or chemists in Paris or Berlin to-day, becomes an experiment in New York to-morrow; being successful there, the result is flashed over a thousand wires and in a few hours a continent is informed of the achievement, and in an incredibly short time the world is profiting by the results.

Drug journals exhibit a pre-eminently practical value when they confirm and minutely report and explain such developments resulting from scientific research. Druggists cannot afford to be behind the times, and by placing dependence in these mediums, they are enabled to benefit their patrons by recent progress made in their profession.

Next to the attention given general progress, the practical value of a drug journal is largely embodied in its editorial department. Editorial writing has indeed become a fine art. A man must have a vast amount of skill, experience and general knowledge before he can begin to meet the demands made upon an editorial writer of a drug journal. From this department are promulgated from time to time, as occasion dictates, those unwritten fundamental laws that make pharmacy a profession. An editorial writer is generally conversant with the various phases of pharmaceutical affairs, and from his ripe judgment and the resources at his command, professional questions of vital importance are best decided. He is largely responsible for the plans and ideas put into execution at

the various association meetings, for by the influence of his pen necessary innovations are popularized, legitimate schemes are developed, and professional pharmacy is encouraged. In this department fakes have found their death, cranks have been permanently discouraged, and petty schemes put to shame. Here the druggist finds well-weighed thoughts on the proceedings of pharmaceutical bodies, and comments on general topics most profitable to his interests. He finds views that are at once broad and conservative, progressive and cautious, reasonable and always professional.

The practicability or real merit of new plans and plausible suggestions can be accurately determined only when they have been put into actual operation and their direct results are at hand. It is for this reason that original communications to drug journals are always of especial interest. They set forth the success or failure of boasted schemes and experiments, and bear the marks of authority because they are unprejudiced reports of results arrived at by actual experience. By paying attention to these communications, practical druggists often profit by the trials of others.

There is among pharmacists a deep-rooted feeling of mutual sympathy which manifests itself towards all the members of their profession. Our sympathies are affected by the successes or misfortunes that come to the druggists in various parts of the country, much as if we experienced the same conditions, and for this reason personal news given in drug journals is read with interest. In this connection, however, it may be said that commonplace personals involving small details, are especially tiresome and disgusting when they appear in pharmaceutical literature.

We have yet to consider the prices current and advertisements given in every well-regulated drug journal. These features are most convenient and valuable to the thrifty druggist; from the one he ascertains the fluctuations in prices of drugs, and, incidentally, any advantages his wholesaler may be taking of him, and from the other he determines by what new features he will profit, or add to the attractiveness of his place of business. There are those who argue that to have advertisements in a drug journal detracts from its practical value and places it upon a mercenary basis; this, however, is hardly true, for in our successful journals great care is taken not to give prominence to trade features at the expense of professional interests. And, moreover, among the details necessary to support a drug journal, sinews of war figure quite extensively. It is well to bear in mind that these valuable journals are placed at so small a price, within the easy reach of all druggists, largely because advertisers are willing to part with goodly sums of the necessary evil in return for the privilege of communicating with the drug trade.

To conclude, then, the practical value

of a drug journal is embodied in its ability to keep the modern druggist informed as to chemical and pharmaceutical progress, the transactions of pharmaceutical bodies, interesting drug news, fluctuations in prices of drugs, the general movements in drug centers, and trade features by which he can profit. Many journals do this remarkably well and we can easily be proud of them. That a few are still behind the times and are continually croaking verbose negations and pessimistic cant is a fact exceedingly to be regretted.

The live original drug journal is of the utmost practical value to druggists of to-day, and it is a constant instructor and guardian of the modern pharmaceutical profession.

What is a Poison?

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One of the remnants of the dark ages to which many people of the present day still cling with great tenacity, is the use of the word *poison* in designating such substances as arsenic, strychnine, corrosive sublimate, and the many others that cause serious effects when absorbed by the human system in comparatively small quantities.

The English language affords scarcely a word that has caused so much diversity of opinion respecting its real meaning as has this word "poison." As might be expected the views on this subject maintained by professional men differ greatly from those held by the laity. Quite as marked, however, are the differences in opinion prevailing among the professional men themselves. In courts of law, for instance, the defendant in cases of murder by poisoning has been known to escape on technical grounds arising from wrangles among medical witnesses as to what really constitutes a poison. In law an adequate definition of this word is scarcely ever prescribed for the guidance of authorities, and many have been the inconveniences, not to say difficulties, arising on this account.

All persons have well fixed individual opinions as to whether this or that substance is poisonous, but the fact that the same substance can be turned to value and use in its proper relation to man does not seem to bear much weight with them. Thus, certain people are very fond of mushrooms and know full well that the genuine article cannot possibly be injurious, while others insist that this fungous growth is poisonous under all circumstances, and would not think of touching it, even though it is a nourishing food in constant use. In some localities people eat pokeberry pie and think no more of it than of drinking water, while in other places these berries are supposed to be fraught with all manner of poisonous principles, and their