

Ontario Provincial Pharmaceutical Association.

A general meeting of this Association was held in the College of Pharmacy Building, Toronto, Feb. 8th. The following is the address of the President, W. Murchison, Esq. The balance of the report is held over on account of the crowded state of our columns.

Fellow Members of the Provincial Pharmaceutical Association :

Before commencing the work of this session, I wish to refer to a few matters which should be of general interest to all of us.

FIRST.—The outlook for the successful continuance of the organization we are here to promote.

Even the most sanguine of us cannot help admitting that our last meeting was in many respects a failure. Why such was the case I am as much at a loss to determine as were those present associated with me. Those who were present were good representative druggists, but there were altogether too few of them. We anticipated representative attendance from all parts of the Province. We expected to complete and establish a constitutional basis for future action; and we naturally hoped for resultant benefit from the deliberations which should have taken place. Our preparation to carry out our programme was as thorough as our means would admit of, and no pains were spared to make the gathering an interesting and successful one. Personally, I regret very much the non-attendance at the last meeting, as I am convinced that no more effective method of killing the Association could be adopted than this; and I sincerely trust, that neither at this, nor at any subsequent meeting, will such an evidence of lack of appreciation be shown. As druggists whose aims and interests are common, it is our privilege, as well as our duty, to lend our united efforts to further the advancement of the calling we are engaged in. We, as individuals, labor daily, not so much for ourselves, as for the benefit of those dependent upon us; so, we as a body, should labor for the benefit of the commercial class to which we belong. Even when we know better we are too much inclined to make light of the duty we owe one another in this respect. Our duty to one another is as high as it is to the public, and only in the sense in which we consistently fulfil that duty, and are willing to spend time and effort for the common good, can we be said to be conscientiously elevating the standing of our profession to a better ideal. There are very many ways in which such a society as this can better the condition of its members. The conditions which affect us are changing so frequently, and the evolutions of trade demand such close attention, that we are obliged to keep abreast of events in order to be safe. To do this effectively we need thoughtful deliberative meetings; we need the suggestions which men of lengthened experience in

the drug business can give; we need harmonious unity of purpose, and energy to apply it, and we need generous financial aid to perform executive work.

The financial aspect of our calling, the literary development necessary to put us on a plane with sister associations, the scientific investigation which we are expected to share in, the conversion of crude material into fine pharmacopoeial products of definite strength, the establishment of a code of ethics, the promotion as far as possible of a uniform standing of pharmaceutical education throughout the Dominion, the encouragement of home manufacturers in purely Canadian laboratories, the consideration of necessary legislation, the fostering of strictly ethical relationship between doctor and druggist, and many other subjects which are of daily interest, are all matters which could be dwelt upon with profit to all of us. There is no limit to the use we could make of such an organization as this, nor to the benefits we should derive from it. The tendency of all bodies of men interested in a common cause is to hold at stated periods just such gatherings as this is intended to be. If they were not satisfied that they would derive sufficient profit from it to repay them for the time and money spent, such gatherings would never be held. They are held, however, and the inference is plain. Even though our meetings may not be all they should from an educational or literary point of view, I am confident the meeting of a large number together, where we are free to discuss the many perplexing matters which may affect us in our various localities, will do us all good. We will find that we are not alone in fighting the trials of life, and will go home strengthened by the interchange of ideas, and feeling that the monotony of business has been agreeably diverted by that short holiday we have taken.

SECOND.—Does limited price cutting lessen our commercial advantages?

The question of price cutting is one of very serious importance to the drug trade for the simple reason that the restrictive character of the business does not allow scope for offsetting the limited amount which necessity may compel the introduction of. In answer to the question, I think we may safely assume that even limited price cutting does lessen our commercial advantages, because the condition which induces and makes it a necessity is certain to benefit the financially strong at the expense of the weak, and such a condition must necessarily militate against a body which trades on knowledge rather than capital and which is influenced by ethical consideration to avoid the varied questionable tactics of commercial life. Under no circumstances which I can conceive of will price cutting be a benefit to such a body as ours. Individual members of the trade may at times find it serve a temporary purpose, but when an entire body, dependent upon a limited trade, adopts such a policy, the result cannot ul-

timately be other than disastrous. In the drug business it is a somewhat difficult matter to deduce much from observation, as, even when price-cutting is carried on, it is usually done without the display which characterizes other lines of business. For the past three or four years I have taken especial care to note the results attained by retail grocery houses which attempted to do large businesses on close margins, and, while they apparently did a much larger business than their more conservative neighbors, they have in the majority of cases been obliged to close their doors upon diminished assets and increased liabilities, while the other, with care, economy and legitimate profit, survived.

The lesson conveyed from such cases is that it pays better to do a small business on a sure profit than to do a large business on an uncertain profit; that sure business success can only be obtained from safe business methods, and that the business man who fails to conduct his business upon a calculated basis of receipts and expenses is almost certain to fail.

Under the conditions which prevail in Toronto and some other Canadian cities at the present time, it is practically necessary that some cutting be done, but where to draw a safe line has yet to be solved. If it were only possible to keep cutting confined to certain articles the harm would not be so great, but I am convinced that if a general comparison of prices could be made we would find it had permeated every department of our trade to a greater or less degree. When steady, conservative business principles are obliged to give way to an indefinite and unstable method of trade, there is no telling where our wandering will lead us to. It is quite certain that if we create in the public a habit of seeking bargains they will gradually make fresh demands upon us which will imperceptibly draw us into an unsafe position.

The druggist who can go systematically into cutting must buy at jobbers' prices, carry an excessive stock, and sell only for cash. If he can't do this he can't succeed, and if he can and does do this he renders irreparable injury to his weaker confederates. Considering the question solely from a profitable point of view, it offers no alluring features. The cutter who sells a dollar article for 70 cents is obliged to sell seven times as many as the non-cutter who gets full price in order to make the same margin of profit, and in consequence has to buy a proportionately larger quantity. If he finds it impracticable to make such sales on a purely cash basis his percentage of credit sales is going to increase in similar proportions, or nearly so; and, as a liberal allowance in such cases must be made for bad debts, it is difficult to see how any profit whatever will remain. How to remedy such an evil as this is indeed a problem which I assure we would all like to see solved. The trouble is as yet in its infancy, and if its existence can be terminated in its infancy the future course of pharmacy in this Province will be brightened. While this Association has no power to control the business affairs of its members I should still like to see it pass such a pronouncement on this question as would be apt to influence those who may hereafter have this matter to decide for themselves, and I now recommend that a committee be appointed to bring in a report with this object in view.

THIRD.—Our duty to our apprentices.

The duty of the druggist to his apprentice covers much more ground than is usually expressed in the contract of apprenticeship. When a young man applies for indenture we satisfy ourselves as to his educational abilities, his reputation and habits of life, and every other qualification which we are desirous of having him possess. When he proves satisfactory we make a contract for a lengthy period, binding him to learn from us the business of a chemist and druggist. For the first year his duties are of a varied character and but little light is given him of the course he purposes to pursue. During the remaining years his practical usefulness is turned to the best account in the interest of his employer, and, when his contract expires, he too frequently learns that his talents have been put