

Practical Suggestions from Experience.*

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In a letter received from H. M. Whitney, president of the association, the request was made that I prepare a paper on the practical side of the profession, and this is presented in compliance.

As a business problem, pure and simple, the advisability of our druggists making a complete line of distinctive preparations is almost universally admitted, but I do not accept as the sole reason the purpose of replacing patent medicines; for, in the present state of trade conditions, we cannot afford to oppose their sale. Indeed, I contend that when the law has conferred special patent rights and a manufacturer has spent time, labor, thought and money in fabricating and advertising a preparation, placing it successfully on the market, and a customer applies at your counter calling for this preparation, he is more the customer of the advertiser than yours, and you should not attempt to foist anything else upon him. The instance here stated differs widely from the situation presented by a customer who comes for advice, and demands your personal and professional aid in helping him out of a state of doubt and uncertainty. In the one case it is the paid advertisement of the proprietary owner that brought in your visitor, in the other, it was your own personal character and reputation. In the first-stated case, you should supply him with his stated want, in the other, it is your clear right, and often your duty, to recommend some preparation of your own. Thus, by fair dealing, you increase your reputation for straightforward action, and your advice is stripped of the suspicion of selfishness.

My experience is that the buyer of patent medicines is generally strongly bent upon procuring them, comes to your door in a well-settled mind, and that a strong argument is usually necessary to change the current of this thought toward your own preparation. "Even though vanquished" he will buy, but "argue still" in his own thoughts, and will be restless until he has gone to some other store and worked out his original theory.

But the desideratum is, how best can a profitable trade in articles of your own make be effected? This, of course, opens a wide field of discussion, but I note only one item. The many econ-

omies of judicious advertising may be conserved. For instance, there are cases where drug men have been argued into spending money advertising "Nerve Debility Remedies" in their locality, paying perhaps as much direct to the maker and to the local printer as \$8 per dozen for a preparation they could put up at about \$10 per gross, and then allowing an article of unknown composition to go into their community under the prestige of their names. Instances have even been known where abortants thus duped our druggists. It is strange that these same men do not take the over-plus saved by making some really legitimate and meritorious compound, and spend the advertising money spreading abroad the knowledge of the virtues of their own remedies. It is not necessary nor advisable in many cases to make large contracts for advertising with the newspapers. From experience I have learned that an appearance in your local paper daily of a small ad. of from three to four inches, changing the matter every day and keeping your own preparations before the public, is best. You will find that it will not be long before that public has become familiar with your preparations, and customers will not only call for them, but, when your advice is asked, you have an easy task to induce them to buy. Advertising like this has a cumulative effect, and, like some medicines, the more concentrated and oftener they are repeated the more cumulative.

The next point I wish to stress is individuality of preparations. Do not simulate in name or appearance any well-known or largely advertised article. Exercise your brains and ingenuity in preparing for the market something unique and original. It is far better to have one original preparation than dozens more or less imitating the patents on the market. It is the height of business inconsistency to allow some manufacturing pharmacist or non-secret house to prepare for you a line of preparations bearing your name, their composition and method of manufacture being as little known to the druggist as the average patent medicine. This practice works a fraud on your community, besides losing your money. It is a fraud on your customers, because you place your name on a remedy and its claims as an inducement to buy, when you do not and cannot know that the formula has been fully and correctly followed. It is carrying the agency principle too far for fair and upright business

practice. When the coin comes from your own mint you can know that it is of the standard weight and fineness.

Let me quote one of the stereotyped arguments used by the manufacturers of non secret remedies with their offices full of name blank labels. "Recognizing the fact that many pharmacists cannot, owing to lack of time, help, printing facilities, etc., manufacture all the specialties they sell, we have, at a large expense, equipped a plant for the manufacture of these goods. Although we are opposed to cheap goods always, we cannot impose upon the intelligence of the pharmacist by giving him the formula of our non-secret remedies (the cost of the ingredients of which he well knows) and at the same time expect his business, unless we can furnish prices which would make it unprofitable for him to make the same goods himself." Such literature and appeals have misled many druggists throughout the land into having their preparations made instead of manufacturing them under their own eye, and the number and extent of these non-secret manufacturing concerns seems to be growing every year. I was about to speak of making goods in the pharmacist's own laboratory, but, remembering how few of our drug stores have a department that can be dignified by that name, I must not use the term in any general way.

Let me show the fallacy of these stereotyped arguments. No mammoth "plant" is necessary, for success in home manufacture. Equipment on a reasonable scale, and help in comparatively small numbers of employees are sufficient for a reasonably large number and quantity of specialties. The time can be had by rising a little earlier and moving a little quicker, both conducive to longevity and athletic improvement; the "help" will come for reasonable pay and kind treatment, and "printing facilities" are about as abundant as "proprietary plants," and no "corner" on their products, and a like answer is possible for all the "so forths." A salesman for one of these houses in describing how many labels, cartons and bottles, varying in places of manufacture, prices and styles, is necessary to be on hand before attempting to manufacture, will talk you into a maze of kaleidoscopic bugbears that will fade and disappear in the light of a little common sense reflection.

After all, we have the examples of many stores to-day having preparations of more or less extensive sale, put up by

* Read before the American Pharmaceutical Association.