

## "Drumming Up Trade"

By

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*[Dr. W. Crisp has consistently been one of the most merciless critics Optometry has ever known. Following the custom of the majority of his Ophthalmological confreres he has judged and criticised Optometrists by the standard of the most commercial and ill-educated of American Optometrists. His present fair-minded criticism following that of Dr. Lancaster will be welcomed by Optometrists throughout the English speaking world. Dr. Crisp's article is in reply to an Optometrical correspondent who protested against a stereotyped medical criticism of Optometry.] —Editor.]*

Our optometric correspondent urges that, while there are a great many optometrists who try to "drum up trade", this fact is not a proof that the whole optometric profession is unethical.

The word "optometry" has acquired in this country a more limited application than on the Continent of Europe. Among the French it is commonly employed to signify measurement of ocular refraction, whether by a physician or by any other person. In the United States, by those among the opticians who were particularly aggressive in their claim for professional status as refractionists, the term was selected some years ago as a new title around which they could rally in their attempts to impress the public and the legislators with their quasimedical qualifications and standing.

The designation "optometrist" has been objected to by ophthalmic physicians because it was applied to people who for the most part were ignorant alike of ophthalmology and of optometry in the proper sense of the word. Nevertheless, many ophthalmic physicians have been frank to admit that there existed here and there optometrists who were exceptionally capable and well trained in the measurement of refraction, and whose professional spirit was remarkably free from the grosser commercial instinct.

It is true, as our correspondent remarks, that the standards of optometrists and boards of optometric examiners are being raised; and this should be a matter for congratulation among those ophthalmic physicians who recognise that the optometric "profession" has not only come to stay but is likely to develop to a much more distinguished position than it now occupies in the healing art.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of refracting opticians or optometrists are still combining two purposes, namely the professional purpose of correcting a bodily defect, and the commercial purpose of selling as many new spectacle frames and lenses as possible. In the long run it will be found that the best professional results can not be attained by mixing these two purposes, and the definitely

professional optometrist will devote himself more and more exclusively to the measurement of refractive errors. He will then rent an office instead of a store, he will gradually reduce his activity as an advertiser, he will divide his time for making definite appointments with patients, as does the more systematic ophthalmic physician, and last but by no means least, from an economic standpoint, he will arrange his fees upon a professional instead of a commercial basis and will divorce himself entirely from the pretext that he examines eyes for nothing and charges only for frames and glasses.

Here and there, in every large city, are one or two optometrists who have already acquired a relatively professional status along these lines, and whose work and professional spirit alike will compare favorably with the average refraction work, and the average professional attitude, among the ophthalmic physicians of this country. Some day, perhaps, two or three of the youngest of this optometric vanguard will find themselves the deans of a well developed profession. But that is far to look, and it is safe to say that any such development will be accompanied by preliminary and scientific educational standards little if at all inferior to those demanded of doctors of medicine and surgery.

In the meantime, let us put and keep our own house in order.

"Drumming up trade" is not unknown among ophthalmic physicians. It is to be feared that some of them have a point of view quite as commercial as that of the average refracting or dispensing optician. Those who, for work which they themselves have not performed, accept monthly rebates from wholesale optical houses, while the patient believes this part of the expenditure to have been made purely to the optician and not to the physician, can hardly throw stones at the commercial spirit of the optometrist.

In the main, the technique for self-advertisement among the medical profession is greatly more refined than the practices which Dr. Ellett decried and which our correspondent protests are not universal among his colleagues.

The issuing of circular letters of invitation to private hospitals or clinics is surely not altogether professional in purpose. Medical essays and addresses before either medical or lay organisations are not always conceived purely from altruistic or scientific motives, nor are all reprints circulated because the authors fear that their recipients would otherwise be deprived of valuable opportunities for medical education. Luncheons, dinners, and other invitation parties, as well as Christmas and other gifts, are sometimes written off, in the mind of the donor, to the professional "expense account". Publicity values are to be found in the paragraphs of the society column of the newspaper, or even in the news items of the medical journal.

As to professional qualifications, let us not forget that refraction, in theoretical knowledge and in daily practice, is still, even among physicians who profess ophthalmology as a specialty, one of the most lamentably neglected branches of medical art.

There are many ways of obtaining professional advancement, and some of them are legitimate and harmless, although they serve the purpose of "drumming up trade". But the grosser methods which may be excusable in one who is merely a salesman are not permissible in one who claims professional standing; and such grosser business methods can not be associated with professional purposes without debasing them.

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## NYSTAGMUS.

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Duke-Elder's conclusion is that the greatest promise of fertile enquiry lies in the physiology of the Postural Reflexes (1) and their visual and labyrinthine connections, the pathology of the central nervous organisations controlling them, and in the intimate nature of the mechanism of tonic activity in muscle.

- (x) **OPHTHALMIA NEONATORUM:** Ophthalmia in the new-born, usually noticed two or three days after birth; caused by infection from the genitals of the mother during parturition.
- (1) **DISSEMINATED SCLEROSIS:** Sporadic patches of hardening in the brain, or spinal cord, or both.
- (2) **LABYRINTHINE DISEASES:** Diseases of the internal ear which is made up of Cochlea, Vestibule and Canals.
- (1) **VESTIBULAR TRACTS.** The Vestibular tract is a cavity at the entrance to the Cochlea, in the internal ear.
- (2) **SEMICIRCULAR CANALS:** The long canals of the Labyrinth.
- (3) **FRIEDREICH'S ATAXIA:** An inherited disease, usually beginning in childhood or youth, with ataxia of dorsal and lateral columns of the spinal cord, attended with peculiar swaying and irregular movements, and paresis of muscles.
- (4) **SPASMUS NUTANS:** A Nodding spasm.
- (1) **SYNERGIC ACTION:** Acting together, or in harmony.
- (2) **SACCULES:** One of the two divisions of the membranous labyrinth of the vestibule of the ear.
- (1) **UTRICLES:** The larger of the two sacs of membranous labyrinth of the ear.
- (1) **POSTURAL REFLEX:** Characteristic responses evoked in an animal by which it orientates itself in response to gravity or other forces.

## OPTOMETRY IN CHINA.

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some old-fashioned Chinese, they might be seen wearing plain crystals, but not plain glass, and not in order to look wise. Many foreign writers, past and present, have jumped to this false conclusion. As a matter of fact, the Chinese with good vision is very proud of the fact, and anything which would reflect upon his powers would strike at his dignity.

The older generation of Chinese have a polite custom of removing their glasses when in company of friends or superiors. It is considered impolite to look at one another through lenses. A Chinese witness once said he could not read a letter and repeated it several times before the Judge told him courteously to put on his spectacles. This is not customary with the moderns.

## COMMERCIAL FACTORS.

An enormous opportunity at this moment goes abegging for the first optical manufacturer who will set up a manufacturing plant in China. The increasing demand for spectacles, and the increasing tariff rates making all imports dearer, makes it imperative to begin manufacturing in the country itself. Practically all the materials can be had in China. Labour is comparatively cheap, and while it requires careful supervision, that and other things are not insuperable obstacles.