

PHARMACY*

BY S. W. LEIDIG.

The antiquity of pharmacy is attested by the fact that about the time when Moses had arrived at the age of manhood an Egyptian scribe, whose name is unknown, recorded on a roll of papyrus a number of rules and recipes which, in some respects, do not seem alien to these ultra-modern times.

For several thousand years the pharmacist has been recognized as the physician's chief aide, and as far back as the many-wived reign of Henry VIII we find such a preachment as the following, written by the cousin of one of that monarch's consorts:

"The apothecary must first serve God; foresee the end, be cleanly and pity the poor. His place of dwelling and shop must be cleanly, to please the senses of all. His garden must be at hand, with plenty of herbs, seeds and roots. He must read Dioscorides. He must have his mortars, stills, pots, filters, glasses, boxes, clean and sweet. He must have two places in his shop, one most clean for physic, and the base place for chirurgic stuff. He is neither to decrease nor diminish the physician's prescription. He is neither to buy nor sell rotten drugs. He must be able to open well a vein, to help pleurisy. He is to meddle only in his own vocation, and to remember that his office is only to be the physician's cook."

James Tagree was classified as a pharmacist in 1703; his shop was in the thrifty village of New York, at the mouth of the Hudson, and he was the first in this country to be designated—the business of drug dispensing was standing on its own legs, and they were fairly steady and reliable legs at that—black cats and hoot-owls and like impediments had been shown the door.

About that time the only other legally recognized pharmacist in the Province of New York was Governor Hunter, who administered the affairs of the colony from 1709 to 1719. Meantime, in 1706, the Van Burens started pharmacies at New Brunswick, N. J. and Philadelphia. Their most famous medicinal product—the "Red Drop"—held its popularity well into the nineteenth century. About that time also a certain Manhattan merchant, who sold crude drugs, was arrested for offering colored sawdust as rhubarb! By the time the Declaration of Independence had become effective, at the close of the Revolutionary War, there were perhaps twenty apothecary shops in Philadelphia, with Christopher Marshall's "At the Sign of the Golden Ball," established in 1729, outranking all the others.

In the nearly two hundred years that have elapsed, nothing has undergone greater changes than the average pharmacy, or drug store. Even in 1857, no one ever thought of going to a druggist's for anything which did not, in some way, have to do with the tendency of the human machine to get out of order. In those "good old days" there were some pharmacists who would not even sell eau de cologne except on the doctor's order. One can hardly appreciate the vast distance that separates 1857 from 1926, when measured by what has taken place in this line of activity. The modest shop, with gilded pestle and mortar swinging over the entrance and multi-colored globes serving as sole window decoration, has given way, in our so-called march of progress, to a veritable jazz palace, in

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many instances. To-day we have many drug stores in which drugs appear to play so small a part as to be almost nil. Some of these institutions seem to emphasize everything but drugs.

Doubtless this new kind of drug store—the sort which stresses everything but drugs—has come as an answer to a public demand. That is the real reason behind many of our ultra-modern developments, and so long as the people seem to want them, we give them to the people. At the same time it must be remembered, that there rests on us a responsibility to give the people what they need, as well as what they want.

However, in this day of an entirely new kind of drug store, we can remain true to the highest ethics, and produce a place where members of the medical profession may, at the same time, find high and constant regard for their time-honored code. It is necessary to modernize in many directions, but the wise druggist is the one who sees to it that such improvements do not entirely cover up the basic purpose and meaning of the business he is conducting.

The best type of modern drug store does not eschew the soda fountain and handsome or even showy equipment, but at the same time, it does not depend upon these to give it place and standing in the community. Its owner remains faithful first to the health needs of those who patronize the store, and never is unmindful of the fact that the reputable physician is his most valuable ally.

If the store has the advantages of a laboratory department in which certain preparations are skillfully compounded, the proprietor sees to it that such of these as appertain to treatment of involved conditions requiring skilled diagnosis are put up and sold only for prescription use, and not indiscriminately passed out to every one who details what may or may not be true symptoms. This is a feature which never can fail to secure the confidence of the medical profession.

This best and most useful type of drug store does not have to do with any but the most competent pharmacists in its prescription department, and it demands trained and even skilled help in its other selling departments. With so many mediums for help or harm within its scope the owner cannot afford to take any risks.

The pharmacy, first of all, should be a medical service station, and all other departments should be attuned to this purpose. The store should by its equipment and the attitude of its staff impress those who come in with the purpose of the establishment, to minister to the needs of its patrons, and the staff must give due consideration to their wants and their fancies. But to reverse this order and play first to the fancies is not the goal that should be sought.

Conservation of health and lessening of disease is the chief purpose of the drug store that serves the best interests of the public.

CONSOLIDATION OF FIVE CHAIN DRUGGISTS IN EGYPT.

It is reported that a consolidation of five chain druggists with an authorized capital of 274,000 Egyptian pounds is taking place in Egypt. The organization will be controlled by Heppels (Ltd.) of London, which, according to previous reports, had contracted

in 1926 to act as sole buying agent for the "Drug Stores of Egypt." This new company known as the Societe Anonyme Drogueries d'Egypte, announces plans to operate 36 stores and anticipates an average annual profit of 30,000 Egyptian pounds. (Cable from Commercial Attache James F. Hodgson, Cairo.)