

A UNIQUE PATENT OF 60 YEARS AGO.

BY CHARLES WHITEBREAD.

The device for administering pills shown in the accompanying drawings was invented by a citizen of the Province of Ontario, Canada, and patented in 1871. About all the explanation which is necessary concerning this odd apparatus is incorporated in the specification—the inventor's request for Letters Patent—which reads in part as follows:

“* * * The nature of this invention relates to a device having for its object an easy and certain administration of pills to the patient; and it consists in the novel and peculiar construction of the same, which I will now proceed to describe.

“In the drawing, A represents a vessel provided with a handle, B, and spout, C, in the general form of a tea-pot, but much smaller in size. The spout is flattened toward its extremity, to which is soldered, if it be made of metal, a downwardly inclined nozzle, D, the shorter diameter of which should not exceed four-twentieths of an inch, for reasons which will be presently explained. To the end of the nozzle a horizontal mouth-piece, E, is secured, which is intersected at the top, near the nozzle, by an inclined pill-chute, F.

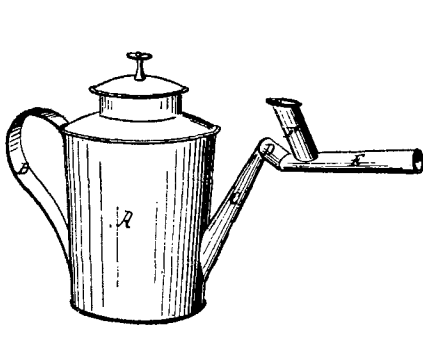


Fig. 1.

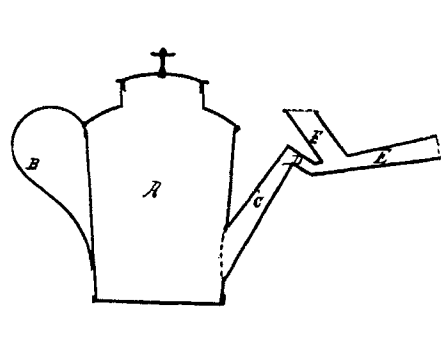


Fig. 2.

“The difficulty of administering pills and powders to all children and very many adults is well known, to overcome which is the object of this invention, which is used in the following manner: The vessel is partially filled with tea, milk or other palatable fluid. The attendant taking it by the handle in one hand, with the pill in the other, presents the mouth-piece to the mouth of the patient, tilts the vessel so that the patient can drink the fluid, dropping the pill down the chute, which is immediately swallowed by the patient with the fluid. If several pills are to be given they should be dropped in the chute at intervals, so that a swallow of the fluid may intervene, thus rendering their administration certain and without the knowledge of the patient. Powders may be given in like manner.

“The object in flattening the mouth of the nozzle to the diameter given is that it shall form a trap, so that the pill cannot accidentally pass into the vessel. A perforated strainer in the nozzle might accomplish the same purpose, but it would diminish the flow of the fluid and impair the efficiency of the device. A strainer may be placed at the bottom of the spout, as shown, to prevent tea leaves, etc., from passing out. This device may be made of any kind of metal, glass, china, or earthenware, and may be varied in form to suit the taste. * * *”

The apparatus never came into general use, so played little or no part in overcoming the “difficulty of administering pills.” Smaller pills, improved methods of coating, etc., have overcome much of the difficulty mentioned, but no doubt there will always be with us those who, while able to swallow a large bolus of favorite

food rapidly and conveniently, will wince at the taking of a small pill and find difficulty in having it pass down the esophagus. The inventor's desire to administer the pill without the patient's knowledge leads one to believe that he understood he was dealing with a more imaginary than real "difficulty."

The original patent model of the device is on exhibition in the Division of Medicine, U. S. National Museum, where it attracts the attention of those in any way interested in the administering of medicines.

"THE LINE-UP."*

BY JOHN A. J. FUNK.

Independent retail druggists in the larger cities have been contending with chain store competition for a long time. During this period, those in small towns have been looking on with sympathy for their contending brother pharmacists, but with little thought that they would become involved in the conflict. But the spread of chain stores to smaller cities, the improved roads, the automobiles in every family, have made chain stores factors to be considered by every individual pharmacist, wherever located. Yet this condition need alarm no capable pharmacist and business man. Let us assemble the resources and personal equipment of the antagonists, and endeavor to determine who has the most logical chance for success from this line-up.

Location.—The chain stores go to the traffic centers. They know how many people pass a certain location in a day; they know the rush hours; they know the types of people, the class of employments represented. They consider other lines of business at the same location. The independent can surely exercise an equal amount of judgment in selecting his location. He can well afford to spend some time in analyzing the neighborhood before locating, and he should be awake to seize an opportunity, if a better location and building develop near him.

Building and Equipment.—Chain stores have well painted and attractive exteriors; inside, they use standard fixtures, but they specialize in good floors. The independent who fails to have his lease specify that his building shall be kept in repair has lost a point to the chain store.

Stocks.—In proportion to the number of demands and customers they serve, the chains carry smaller stocks than do most independents. They carry carefully standardized stocks, and have the sales-force so well trained that the number of "missed sales" is astonishingly small. The independent druggist who tries to carry, or promises to obtain everything called for, soon has a museum stock and much dead capital.

Display.—The chain store features display; windows are changed weekly, cases are attractively arranged and there are many counter-displays; the independent can match this feature, and where it is done there is reasonable assurance of success.

Salesmanship.—It is generally conceded that the chains have the best sales force. They train their sales-people in groups and individually. They emphasize volume sales, correlated sales and the long-profit items of the store, and no other qualifications of the clerk will do more to hold a job, and deficiency will make the holding of the job uncertain. The independent retailer has an equal oppor-

* Section on Commercial Interests, A. Ph. A., Rapid City meeting, 1929.