

SYSTEM AND VIGILANCE THE GREAT ESSENTIALS IN BUSINESS.*

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ORDNUNG LERNE, LIEBE SIE,
SIE ERSPART DIR ZEIT UND MÜHE.

This German proverb does not mean that the writer is pro German, or pro anything else in the great conflict "across the pond," but does mean that a good faithful mother from among the numerous proverbs of her ancestors tried to impress her sons, of whom the writer was one, with the great good derived from systematic, orderly arrangement of affairs, and that by the observation of such rules time and labor are saved.

Only a few months ago the great importance of system and vigilance was again impressed upon the writer, by the lack thereof displayed in a pharmacy placed in his hands for disposal. The store in question had been conducted for a year or more for a practicing physician by the young doctor of pharmacy before he became the owner, and during that time was developing into a good stand; thereafter, instead of being the manager, our young P.D. became the owner with the responsibility of doing the buying as well as the selling. In spite of additional funds advanced from time to time from the holder of a bill of sale, the end came after the lapse of about two and half years, and why? First, because of the extravagant ideas of the owner, as although there were good serviceable fixtures in the store that would have answered every purpose, at least until the indebtedness had been largely, if not entirely liquidated, they were added to, remodeled, repolished and the store put into a condition that would have been a credit to New York's Broadway, instead of a small hamlet in the suburbs of Baltimore. When the store was turned over to the writer he remarked to the one who had been the owner, all that was necessary in the evening was a band of music and perhaps a female dancer to make one imagine they were in a New York cabaret. Among other decorations of the store there had been installed the latest and most improved patterns of tables and chairs for the patrons of the soda fountain; artificial palms and grape vines, with clusters of grapes, and next came a typewriter and an expensive desk for it, in the rear of the prescription counter.

Having put in these improvements, our young "Rockefeller" in pharmacy came to the conclusion that the next thing was to buy goods cheap, hence he started in to take advantage of all quantity offers and cornered all non-secret remedies by obtaining the agency by the purchase of quantity lots to prevent anyone else from getting them, although the market store was only 1½ miles from him. Goods were sold at the lowest cut prices prevailing in the business center of the city, four miles distant from the store in question. Business was done, the store was well patronized by the community, but somehow, inexplicable to the owner, bills could not be met, so more money was borrowed, and as somehow the system of book-keeping, or lack of system in keeping books, did not show satisfactory profits or gains, the advice of a salesman was taken, and the old cash register was replaced

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by the latest pattern, three-drawer register that was going to make everything so satisfactory that an automobile, steam yacht, etc., would soon have been purchased for the delivery of goods. But alas for the golden dreams of youth, instead of these came the landlord's distraint for rent, followed by the foreclosure of the bill of sale in the stock and fixtures and the declaration of bankruptcy for our young P.D.

The results would have been different in this case, and the same holds good in any case where there is trade to be had, if a system of book-keeping had been adopted that would have shown clearly the profits being made. These profits should have been arranged to meet the daily outlay, and a sinking fund provided also, so that the indebtedness would be cut down and not increased, then proper help employed and no dependence placed in hangers-on around the store for sale of cigars and soda water (as was the case here), as such help is always expensive, for the amount of cigars and cigarettes smoked, the ice cream carried off, etc., in a week amounts to more than the salary of a reliable youth regularly employed for such sales.

Another thing that was overlooked in the case cited and is so often misjudged by young beginners, is that while it is profitable to have a tidy, attractive store, this can be done without very expensive store furniture, and location must always be taken into consideration, as well as the people that constitute the trade. What might be very modest furniture for Broadway would perhaps be very expensive for a small suburban town, and, on the other hand, what might be especially attractive in a suburb composed of the office force and salesmen of manufacturing plants, would be very modest in a suburb whose population is of the millionaire class. But no matter where a store is located, the same vigilant care must be observed to keep expenses within reasonable bounds: not to be too extravagant in the matter of decoration and other methods of advertising; care exercised in purchasing merchandise and not to be too zealous in the cutting of prices. The employment of proper help is as essential as keeping a system of books, that will enable one to know what profits are being made; the store should always be attractive, the windows clean and a neat display therein.

Finally, it may be repeated, that courtesy, in the treatment of customers, is a drawing card, thereby they are made permanent patrons, and upon this hinges largely the success of every business, especially that of the smaller towns.
