

MORE PROFITS WITHIN YOUR REACH.*

BY W. W. FIGGIS.

I might state at the outset that I approach this subject with some reluctance, preferring to enjoy the comradeship of old and new friends without taking any prominent part, but at the invitation of the Section on Commercial Interests, it gives me pleasure to offer my view-points on the subject "More Profits within Your Reach" for what they may be worth in the hope that suggestions may be given by me, or my remarks may lead to such subsequent discussion from which something of benefit may be derived by the druggists with whom it has been my happy lot to be more or less associated for over a quarter of a century.

We are all in business to make money, and to increase legitimate profits in every feasible way, and to accomplish this and fully develop the resources of any drug store, there are certain fundamental issues which must be reckoned with as foundation principles, before any successful efforts are possible to rear a substantial superstructure.

I wish at this point to lay the premise that we are composite mortals made up of a little from here, there and elsewhere, molded more or less by environment, tintured somewhat by heredity, and growing by accretion.

In our activities and words we become like those with whom we associate, also in our thinking and modes of expression we are prone to follow beaten tracks; therefore, this paper is not presented as wholly original, because I have possibly woven into it, and sometimes even unconsciously perchance, the words as well as the thoughts of some who like myself have given considerable study and application to this interesting and profitable subject.

As I proceed and possibly become obsessed with my subject, I trust you will excuse me if I discuss it in an open, frank and disinterested manner, because it is far from my intention to be dogmatic, and further still to make any statements which could be construed into an attempt to offend even the most sensitive; at the same time, what is the profit accruing if I should treat the subject merely to entertain you? It is my sincere desire that out of what I have to say, something of permanent value may accrue to some druggist, which can be incorporated into the management of his store, the better to cope with the complex situation which confronts the average retailer in the performance of his daily avocations and put more profits within his reach.

It is axiomatic that the sun's rays never burn until brought to a focus, therefore, I have divided this subject under certain classifications in order that we may concentrate our minds on one phase at a time:

FIRST: Is the commercial spirit too prominent in the drug store?

SECOND: Should the purchasing of goods be confined to firms of unquestioned reputation?

THIRD: Has the average drug clerk been given sufficient technical information about the merchandise he is endeavoring to sell?

FOURTH: Is it expedient to foster and maintain a steady advocacy of your own proprietary articles?

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FIFTH Does it increase sales and put more profits within your reach to
AND study and apply the science of psychology which underlies the
LASTLY: act of selling?

IS THE COMMERCIAL SPIRIT TOO PROMINENT IN THE DRUG STORE?

I submit that in these days of commercialism the ethical and professional side of the drug business should not be lost sight of but fostered, because when sickness invades the home the purely commercial store does not get the business, and while it is evident that a druggist must be carried more or less with the drift of the tide toward commercialism, at the same time he should not allow himself to go to the extreme because the prescription counter, I suggest, should be the bulkhead beyond which the tide must not advance, and everything that fosters and maintains the ethical and professional dignity of the prescription department should be assiduously adopted and followed.

I claim without any fear of successful contradiction that the prescription and manufacturing department is the "barometer" of all drug stores, and I have gleaned, as the consensus opinion of the trade that the druggist who fully realizes this and is guided accordingly, enjoys the confidence of the community in which he lives, which is vastly better than endeavoring to hold trade on mere price.

Further, such confidence is not born in a day, but is the logical sequence of a fixed policy rigidly enforced and includes the little details connected with the prescription department, which are being practised by the "live wires" in all towns, who are, with few exceptions, the men who are forging ahead and steadily gaining the confidence and respect of their several constituencies and upholding the dignity of the profession. To illustrate let me refer in detail to a few of these little niceties in turning out prescriptions, such as a specially printed envelope to fit medicine droppers with the words "compliments of so and so," although charged for, like the proverbial traveler's suit of clothes.

A graduated medicine glass, because of the variation in capacities of all spoons in the home.

The old-fashioned stickers—"Put up by—Checked by—" on all prescription bottles which to the public speaks volumes for accuracy.

A distinctive cork, either black or aluminum tops, or cut in a "V" shape, because it's different to the other fellow.

A handsomely lettered prescription bottle of the best manufacture, because it looks prosperous and is a good advertisement, and in the last analysis is economical, because the cheapest bottles are not the ones which cost less per gross, but those which are nearest to specified capacities. And this is especially true in "hand-sale" because graduates are seldom used.

There are a thousand and one other little touches, which give tone and prestige, and tend toward the professional dignity of the prescription department even in the smallest towns, and which attract the attention mostly of the women folks, and I conclude that we are all agreed that when the female element start boosting your store it pays better than newspaper ads, and you soon find by increased profits that every rain-drop makes the shower, and that you are reaping profits which are within your reach.

SHOULD THE PURCHASING OF GOODS BE CONFINED TO FIRMS OF UNQUESTIONED REPUTATION?

A volume could be written *pro* and *con* on this important question because it is fraught with disastrous results to the one who lets price only control his buying, whereas the cumulative benefits of selling dependable goods are demonstrated by increasing profits and satisfied customers.

Further: where price only controls the buying it is usually down to the danger mark while there is absolute safety and at the same time an antidote for a lot of trouble in buying and selling goods of proven quality. I wish I had the gift to so state the following fact that it would never be forgotten, namely, that the grade of goods bought and sold always reflects the standing of the store and mirrors personality from which the deductions are obvious; also that repetition makes reputation, quality fosters confidence—confidence begets enthusiasm—enthusiasm means optimism, and optimism spells success.

It is like a breath of fresh air in a fetid atmosphere to spend a while with a man who is an ultra-optimist and who considers quality of paramount importance; therefore does not risk his reputation because he buys only dependable goods from firms of unquestioned reputation, while we must admit there are many who hazard their standing in the community by selling goods of no proven merit and allow price only to control their buying, and these learn by bitter experience that it is possible to hold a penny so close to the eye that a ten dollar bill cannot be seen a foot away.

HAS THE AVERAGE DRUG CLERK BEEN GIVEN SUFFICIENT TECHNICAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE MERCHANDISE HE IS ENDEAVORING TO SELL?

The subject of Atomizing and Nebulizing will illustrate the point I shall endeavor to make. Let us suppose a case of a prescription, the basis of which is petrolatum, and is directed by the physician to be sprayed down the throat. As a matter of fact most atomizers will spray light oils, but will not do the work when heavy oils are prescribed. Other atomizers when the throat tube is in position are nebulizers, but in this case it is necessary to have an instrument which will spray melted petrolatum into the throat. What is to be done if the proprietor who has been sold certain atomizers, and to whom the salesman has explained all the special features of his instrument, has not in turn conveyed to his clerks all the talking points and thoroughly explained same in order that they may talk and act intelligently when confronted by such a situation, instead of allowing them to get their information haphazard, knowing little or nothing about the goods, which always reflects discredit on the store, and often means the loss of a customer. Why should a clerk be allowed, as is often the case, for lack of technical information, to flounder around and guess if "such an such" an atomizer will do so and so; or will the bottle break if heated over a flame, or is it specially annealed to stand changes in temperature, so that petrolatum can be melted to a consistency for atomizing. Clerks also should be taught the difference between nebulizing, atomizing and vaporizing, and I submit that this definite posting should apply to all lines of goods needing any special knowledge in order that clerks may be in possession of the necessary information to talk intelligently, and effect sales when such items are called for, which involve the vital question of a simple prefix, *efficiency* or *deficiency*.

IS IT EXPEDIENT TO FOSTER AND MAINTAIN A STEADY ADVOCACY OF YOUR OWN PROPRIETARY ARTICLES?

I would not give much for a man who was not a dreamer along the possibilities of what he can do putting up his own preparations. I do not refer to "pillow dreams." Fortunately we *are* capable of dreams which are not "pillow dreams," but are had by the dreamer when his spine is vertical, and every fiber of his mind, soul and heart is vibrant and vital. I claim that such visions or dreams can be transmuted into mental plans that are possible of achievement by the man who fully believes in his ability to accomplish. Impossibilities are merely the half-hearted efforts of "quitters," and every store has its sarcophagus filled with dead opportunities.

I know a man who had a dream relative to what he could do with a "cold cream" and to all the jibes and jests of his fellow druggists he stated "Yes, but I am going to make a perfect article." Look at him to-day—known all over this country and is now living on "easy street," and every man in this presence would know his name were I to mention it, and I well remember selling him his first gross of jars, comparatively only a few years ago. I could keep you here all day telling of similar instances, but this ought to suffice that dreaming pays when followed up with action, and what is accomplished is just in proportion to the vividness, energy and persistence of the ideals that they saw in such dreams; therefore, I am unqualifiedly of the opinion that it pays a druggist to put up his own preparations rather than sell his goods' name for a paltry profit by establishing the reputation and pushing the sale of goods put up by and under the name of somebody else—but under no pretext should substitution be tolerated.

DOES IT INCREASE SALES AND PUT MORE PROFITS WITHIN YOUR REACH TO STUDY AND APPLY THE SCIENCE OF PSYCHOLOGY WHICH UNDERLIES THE ACT OF SELLING?

Answering this question let me state that most salesmen are born, not made, but that selling is often a latent potentiality which remains more or less dormant for lack of proper cultivation but which, if developed, and fully utilized puts more profits within your reach.

Although a druggist may have been awarded a Gold Medal at his College, and know Pharmacy from *Alpha* to *Omega*—it does not necessarily follow that he will make a financial success of his store, unless he has the ability of a salesman, or can develop the art until it becomes part and parcel of the warp and woof of his personality, and it is a wise man who, knowing his limitations, and having discovered his lack in this direction, surrounds himself with clerks who *are* producers.

I submit that salesmanship is a profession just as much as medicine, law, or pharmacy, requiring careful study, thought and application to develop the latent possibilities, and those who have had practical experience in selling goods acknowledge that one may talk ever so fluently, even intelligently, bringing to bear all the power of syllogistic argument, forcefully presenting all the advantages his goods possess, and yet find himself finally up against the metaphorical "stone wall," and the customer comes back with the usual stereotyped expression—"I'll call again." What's the matter? Why has a sale not been effected? I submit that the psychological phase of the subject was not reckoned with. In other words,

the "getting next" that individual customer and appealing to the *ego* which the scalpel of the surgeon cannot reach, was lost sight of. I do not for one moment advocate or infer that the seller should be too inquisitive, or brash in the endeavor to arrive at the "push and pull" of his prospective customer, but rather he must learn that the gods we worship are said to write their names on our faces, and we can, therefore, acquire by practice the faculty of reading character by a study of physiognomy, and observation of characteristic idiosyncrasies; but remember that phrenological conformations are often deceiving, because one cannot always take "a book by its cover," and the moods of customers often vary, but there are general surface indications which can be detected, and should, to some extent, determine the course to pursue, instead of using a stereotyped style of approach to all customers.

Also our subjective mental attitude has everything to do with what we expect to accomplish objectively, and we must remember that we neutralize a large portion of our effort because our mental attitude does not harmonize with our effort, and the strength and persistency of our habitual mental attitude to a large extent measures our efficiency; therefore, let us weigh correctly the difference in results between a positive and negative approach to the subject of selling.

The power of suggestion also plays a large part in your efforts to become producers; therefore, you should train yourselves to influence certain customers by suggestion, to which the average buyer is susceptible. Avoid arguments at all costs. The celebrated Marshall Field of Chicago built up a huge business on the slogan "The customer is always right." (I say, at least let him think so.) Remember that the supreme honor of salesmanship is that it deals with the most difficult of all raw materials, and it is a lesson worth learning—that you can be adaptable without being servile. Have a strong hand in a soft, pliable glove; have fineness without deception, and diplomacy without insincerity. Never forget that "satisfied customers are a permanent asset," and catering to the price-hunters never built up a bank account.

Commercial prosperity and true progress are possible only with coöperation; therefore, make confidants of the clerks in your employ, who, from observation, prove that they are working for your interest, and although they may have ideas at variance with yours, remember that seeming paradoxes of different individual opinions can be adjusted on the principle of alternating motion in machinery, by realizing the necessity of inter-relation and reciprocity in order to accomplish the common weal.

I suggest that it would be well to expunge the word "impossible" from the lexicon of our vocabulary, remembering that what some term the impossible, the other fellow comes along and does under your very nose; WHY? Because the former is beyond the point of learning any new ways and is, therefore, superior to being taught anything more along the lines of his vocation, while the latter has taken the attitude which is the basis of sane optimism and the groundwork of successful salesmanship.

In conclusion, let me add that your store should always breathe an atmosphere of "Welcome." Most customers are observing—especially the women-folk, who on entering take an optical "snapshot" of your store. Therefore, always be particular to keep your establishment clean and attractive, and by courteous

treatment and neatness, with a "thank you, come again" kind of spirit, you'll live "on the sunny side" and find more profits within your reach.

ABSTRACT OF DISCUSSION.

J. C. PEACOCK: Mr. Figgis has brought to our attention many of the possibilities within our reach. He has dealt with them from the material side and from the psychological side. I can realize, after listening to his talk, many selling opportunities that I allowed to pass.

CASWELL A. MAYO: Mr. Figgis' remarks are ethically valuable to every one and useful in the instruction of clerks regarding technical details. There is a woeful lack of knowledge about the goods which they are handling. Clerks take the goods from the shelves, but often they do not exhibit enough interest in them to know about them. Mr. Albert Plaut was a salesman, in his earlier days, and he was the best salesman I ever saw. He carried with him specimens of crude drugs and when he came into the drug store he would interest every one in the store in them. "Did you see that specimen of senna?" He would say, "See how different it is from this one; see how the leaves are shaped, and note their color. That senna is worth more than the other." And so with other drugs, and he created a lively interest in many a young man that way. When a capable salesman comes into the store there is an opportunity for instruction that ought not to be missed.

J. E. JUSTICE: Efficiency is the keynote of this paper. Efficiency means getting knowledge, and a man must familiarize himself in the knowledge of salesmanship as well as compounding of drugs. You can go into some stores and walk around in them and out again without anybody seeing you. You may find a clerk talking over the telephone in such a loud voice that you can hear him clear out in the middle of the street, entirely unmindful of the waiting customer. There is often a lack of knowledge of goods that can easily be acquired, if there was only sufficient desire or interest, or the quality of observation developed.

P. HENRY UTECH: I have built up a comparatively large trade on brushes from the fact that I am somewhat informed relative to their manufacture, and use this information in explaining their qualities to the customers. Knowing goods and informing customers helps sales more than other arguments possibly can, provided, of course, that the information is judiciously given.

DR. FRANK CRANE'S COMMANDMENTS OF SALESMANSHIP.

5. Tell the Truth.—Don't lie, or exaggerate, or mislead, or conceal. Let me feel that you are sincere, and mean every word you say, and that every statement you make is of *par value*. If you represent goods that need lying about, directly or indirectly, quit. There are plenty of articles that are straight and all right. Sell them.

6. Be Dependable.—Even in small things, create the impression that whatever you promise is as much to be depended upon as your signed note. If you make an appointment at 3 P.M. Tuesday, be there at 2.45, or telegraph. If I order goods of a certain grade, let them be found to be exactly of that grade when I receive them.

7. Remember Names and Faces.—If you have not a natural gift for this, acquire it. Get a little book and set down every day the names of those you have met, with their characteristics. Practise this until you become expert. No man likes to be forgotten or to have you ask his name.

8. Don't be Egotistic.—Eliminate the pronoun I as much as possible from your vocabulary. Talk about me, not yourself. Don't tickle yourself, tickle me, I'm the one you want to win.