

SECTION ON HISTORICAL PHARMACY, AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION

MY EARLY EXPERIENCES IN THE DRUG TRADE.*

BY JOSEPH L. LEMBERGER.

Our worthy chairman, with his usual zeal and persuasive influence, has induced the writer to offer a volunteer paper; he indicated the subject but did not hand me copy. I believe he fully expects me to unbosom early experiences in the drug business. I will try not to disappoint him, even though I may stray into some of the later experiences for the sake of history. Contrasts are allowable, as this paper is to be an historic relic. I am carrying my convictions along this thought and purpose unfolding early recollections of a verdant country lad.

When the writer first felt a desire to learn the drug business the *only way open* was to become an apprentice. The advertisement read: "*Wanted.*—An apprentice to learn the Drug Business. Address, P. Chemist, Ledger Office, Phila."

This advertisement was answered and with my father's aid found the way to the store in Philadelphia. At my age, less than 14 years, the transaction in mind involved submission to being bound by indenture for a term of six years and seventeen days. Before much serious thought was given to the transaction I was put through a rather unpromising examination somewhat of a physical character. I overheard the remark made to my father, "He's a little fellow, I wanted a taller boy," and my father's reply, "You know, doctor, the most valuable goods come in small packages." There was no argument on that point. The next query was addressed to me—"You are from the country, do you speak German?" My father answered for me that I not only spoke, but could read and write the language, having taken up the study of German at school. A German doctor's prescription, just presented, was handed me to translate the directions. I had no difficulty writing in the language. "Einen theelöffel voll alle zwei stunden" (one teaspoonful every two hours), and after testing my ability to handle the heavy wood slides, protecting the glass in the doors, a regular duty at closing shop at night, indicating that I had some muscle, I was passed upon favorably as an applicant. With my father at my side helping me to determine the subject I willingly submitted to severance from the home family ties, and enter the family and service of a stranger and new master thereafter, until I would become of age, 21 years. The papers were prepared and duly signed and I became an indentured or bound apprentice, my compensation being board, washing, clothing and the full privileges and cost of the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy included. At that time there was no other college of pharmacy, and I graduated with the class of 1854, two years before the expiration of my apprenticeship. This incident gave my employer the benefit of two years' service of a graduate in pharmacy, at the small salary of board, washing and clothing and *very few* tips or perquisites.

* Read before Section on Historical Pharmacy, A. Ph. A., Atlantic City meeting, 1916.

When I embarked upon the enterprise of learning to be a pharmacist I had at that early period a year's experience in a country general store, which was a commercial advantage and an asset in favor of my employer, as it was easy for me as a country youth to receive and wait upon customers with polite attention, although my previous service had been among Pennsylvania German people, I could readily adapt myself to this new community composed, to a considerable extent, of foreign Germans.

The rules of the drug store governing my relation to new conditions were rigidly impressed upon me. I was soon made acquainted with the various duties devolving upon the apprentice. A fixed set of rules were posted in a prominent place, and I was informed that the closer attention paid to the requirement of said rules the more comfort would I find in the new position.

My first duty was to become well acquainted with my daily routine of work, and it was not long before I fully understood my status as the bottle washer, the daily sweeping of the floor, dusting counter cases, drawers, cleaning the shelf bottles, mopping the floor once and sometimes twice a week, cleaning windows every Friday, also learning the place for everything and putting everything in its proper place.

One of the rules intended to make the right impression was as follows: "Have a place for everything and everything in its place." One of the novelties to this country lad was the opening and closing the heavy window shutters every morning and evening, and placing and removing the slides on outside door front.

I was instructed to familiarize myself with names, taste, smell and color of all drugs, roots, herbs, tinctures and all other preparations. This soon became an inspiring factor when washing and arranging the shelf bottles, especially as I was inclined to be inquisitive and wanted to familiarize myself with all that belonged to the business. The peculiar appearance of a bottle labeled Aqua Ammonia took my attention. I was on a step ladder, requiring that to reach this particular shelf, and taking a smell—you know the result from similar experience; this made an indelible impression, and I have never forgotten the useful lesson taught me, and afterward it was some satisfaction to play the trick on others just as unsophisticated.

I was early taught the value of weights, and the graduate measures, and knowledge of capacity all along the line from a drachm vial to gallon bottle and from the smallest tin box to the gallipots and jars. The specie jar with metal cover was in use at that period. Much care was taken to have me learn to make a neat package, and it soon became my duty to put up epsom salts, senna and manna, in 3 and 5 cent packages, to be ready on call; cut powder papers of various sizes for prescription use and Seidlitz and Soda powder. In the early days I was allowed to be at the prescription case, read and study the prescriptions, and witness the compounding, and ere long was permitted to cut and roll the pills by hand and with the pill machine, the preceptor, or senior clerk, preparing the mass. I had an ambition to do everything I saw others do and after my first year in the college of pharmacy I realized that I was making progress and was permitted to make the more simple preparations of the Pharmacopoeia. During my first and second year a senior clerk was employed; after that time I was considered qualified and under the surveillance of my preceptor, to some extent, to take charge of the store and make most of the preparations. Many pleasant mem-

ories come to me as I review those times, among the number is the association with the three evenings a week during the college course. The tramp of about 2 miles to the college were equivalent to recreation walks. There were no afternoon and evenings for the apprentice, except as a special privilege, at long intervals. Those trips to the college generally included the companionship of other students in that district, and these tramps were often spent in quizzing each other on matters appertaining to the lectures. This quiz feature was found very useful. We had no quiz masters those days as later introduced, and now in vogue in most of the colleges.

The retail drug business of that period was vastly different from what it is today, and it is not surprising to hear occasionally that we are losing our identity. Many things are sold in drug stores now, that were not thought of in that day. We generally kept what our customers wanted and in this particular store they sometimes wanted glass and putty and an occasional call for mixed paint and I have a memory of a remarkable fact, that these articles were most frequently called for on a Sunday morning. There were no mixed paints in that day in convenient tins of one-quarter or one-half pound. We had mixed white lead as a base and with aid of chromes, yellow and green, Prussian blue, vermilion, lamp black, we were able to accommodate such calls. There were no side lines, such as a soda water and sandwich counter, cigars and tobacco, confectionery, wash rags, cheap watches, cutlery, safety razors and chewing gum. We did sell good toilet soap, most generally imported white and mottled castile and the highly perfumed Brown Windsor, home made cologne water, and the foreign Farina cologne and a few French extracts for the handkerchief, and we made a specialty of genuine chamois skins and sponges.

The writer was messenger boy and enjoyed the outing when we had a call for something "just out of;" the run down town to Jenks & Ogden, or Charles Ellis & Co., or out to Powers & Weightman was generally an acceptable innovation. No horse or trolley cars then; there were occasional omnibuses, not for the accommodation of the drug apprentice; it was economy to walk; the bicycle was not in use then either. Things are different now, as we all know. I want to emphasize the fact that the drug store of that day was what the patrons expected it to be—a place to get the medicinest hey needed: three cents' worth of epsom salts to the family receipt for cough syrup or the doctor's prescription. We did compound prescriptions with care, as our sign on side of house indicated, and we made all our own preparations, some solid extracts, fluidextracts, tinctures, in the good old way, by percolation. The iron mortar and pestle was in practical use, now seldom seen in the modern pharmacy. The Swift drug mill was also one of my companions. We had no drug millers at that time to prepare the powdered or granulated drugs. We went to the basic thing; if it was tincture of rhubarb, aloes, cinchona, columbo, or any other bitter or aromatic drug, we got busy with the mill or mortar, with the aid of our bolting cloth or wire sieve, made what we wanted, and we did it skillfully and cheerfully, of course. You will agree with the writer that the use of iron mortar and pestle is almost a forgotten art in many modern stores. We powdered all the pulverizable drugs we needed. Your historian well remembers his aversion to aloes and acknowledges the frequent temptation, and sometimes expressed with mild harmless expletives, his feelings, when aloes had

to be powdered and sieved to make tincture of aloes or of aloes and myrrh or *Hiera Picra*, all of which preparations were popular remedies in that day.

This apprentice had an *extra* experience that I venture to affirm few others had. My preceptor was a mechanical genius, as well as a practicing physician and pharmacist. As a sideline he had orders for articulated human skeletons. The bones were obtained from the University dissecting department, where they were carefully boiled, cleaned and dried, presumably by the janitor. By means of a turning lathe and screw cutting device, the necessary work was done by ourselves. Any spare time was occupied in drilling proper holes through the parts, the sternum ribs, vertebra, etc., assembling the bones of the wrist, hands and feet, joining the parts together with fine brass wire. The cranium and vertebra were strung on a heavy brass wire extending through the coccyx, the thorax being completed by wiring the end of the rib to the vertebra on back and the sternum cartilage in front. The lower part from hip bones to feet were joined to the upper part through the middle or hip and the job was completed. Of course, you wonder how such preparation, so foreign to the retail drug business, found sale. When finished, they were easily packed in short boxes, as the arms were hinged at the elbow and the legs at the knee, and when ready for the market were delivered to a manufacturer of all kinds of secret society paraphernalia and are, or were no doubt used in secret society initiation ceremony. I never learned that as a fact, but have received that impression in later years. We never exhibited the anatomical specimens in the show windows, nor did the apprentice know the price received for them.

We also had another innovation; my preceptor had all necessary moulds for making fireworks and we were skilled in the art of making sky rockets and Roman candles for the Fourth of July celebration. These extra experiences did not demoralize the business nor the apprentice; on the contrary were personally useful and educational. Many changes have taken place since that period and I want to refer to a few things in conclusion, incidental to later times, the present age. Animal fats were rarely called for in our store. We did sell bear's grease and dog fat, while at the present time we are expected to have polecat fat (or skunk fat), rabbit fat, opossum fat, goose grease, rattle snake fat or oil, weasel skin, eel skin, and because we country druggists are supposed to have almost everything wanted in the line of remedies for all sorts of ills, it was quite natural for an old lady living about ten miles up the pike, for whose rheumatism some friend had recommended the use of the skin of a rattlesnake as a bandage, to write to us for the remedy, as she was informed that she "could get any kind of remedy at Lemberger & Company's drug store in Lebanon." On receiving this very complimentary letter we replied that we had none on hand but it was possible for us to send her the article in a week or ten days, as we knew a person who hunted for rattlesnakes and prepared the skin and the oil for sale. The man was a truck farmer living near the Blue Mountain, and came into the store next day, being market day. He informed us that he had none on hand, but expecting to go to the mountain for berries the coming week, believed he could promise one by next market day, and true to his word, next Saturday morning, imagine our surprise when he left a package and on opening we discovered a glass covered box with a three-foot rattler confined therein. We very cautiously handled that package, and soon our friend informed us that the catch was made too late the day before to skin and clean the

reptile, and as he had promised to bring us a rattlesnake skin he wanted to make good. We objected to dealing in a strange art; we wanted the skin without the snake. He enjoyed his joke and satisfied with the explanation, he took the snake home, killed, skinned and prepared the fat and, having caught another in the interim, we had an option on two with rattles in place, complete on both, as well as the fat, or so-called rattlesnake oil. Our old lady friend got the skin she wanted, paid the price and we hope she was cured.

Incidents *ad infinitum*, serious, comic and otherwise, might be incorporated in this historic paper. It has been extended sufficiently, I feel sure, and, I trust will suffice to make good my promise to our friend, the chairman.

THE FINANCIAL AND ACCOUNTING SIDE OF THE DRUG STORE.*

BY E. FULLERTON COOK, P.D.

Bookkeeping in a retail drug store is not a popular subject because there is usually enough other work to be done which forces itself upon those in the store and shows immediate results, while accounting is looked upon by many as a luxury and not a real necessity.

Furthermore, the proprietor of the usual drug store, who would have to keep his own books, feels that the kind of bookkeeping which will give the facts so often talked about to-day, *i. e.*, percentage relations between sales, "first cost," expenses and net profit, "overhead," gross profit, etc., is too complicated for his use.

Bookkeeping naturally falls into two distinct divisions: First, that which provides the necessary records for the accounts of credit customers; and, secondly, that which is specifically for the benefit of the proprietor of the store.

Every store which does any credit business is compelled to carry on the first type in a more or less perfect fashion, but it is the second type of accounting that I especially wish to discuss, and urge the adoption of.

Double entry methods are generally those recommended for securing these guiding facts for business, but fifteen years of teaching double entry has demonstrated the futility of expecting its adoption in the average drug store. This condition stimulated the development of an accounting scheme which would not involve a large amount of work or special training, and yet would yield figures and facts comparable in value with those from double entry books.

This plan requires a daily record, for which a special form was devised (See Fig. 1). Here are recorded the daily cash and credit sales, either in total or classified as desired; also the petty cash expenditures of the day, each followed by a classifying word, such as "Lemons 40 cents, soda" (the "soda" to indicate that the lemons are charged to the soda supplies), and at the bottom of the sheet a simple form for determining the theoretical "cash balance" for the day.

The bank account is kept on the opposite side of the sheet (See Fig. 2), the checks drawn being recorded here in detail instead of on the check book stub, as is usually done. Through this plan the record becomes a part of the books of accounts, while the bank balance is determined each day and with less work than

* Read at the meeting of New Jersey Pharmaceutical Association, 1917.