

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCIAL INTERESTS

CONDUCTED BY DR. ROBERT P. FISCHELIS.

Richard Spillane, the editor of the Business Section of the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, touched a vital spot in discussing the drug business a few weeks ago before the students and alumni of the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy. He said: "The trouble with you druggists is that you do not seem to want me to come into your stores and make myself at home, and, furthermore, you don't trust me. When I go to your soda fountain you make me buy a check before I get my drink. That makes me feel you do not trust me to pay for what I am getting."

There is much truth in the remarks recorded above. The business man cannot always see things from the same viewpoint as his customers. Hence, what may be a good system as far as the financial management of the store is concerned may be a very poor system for holding customers, and it is not difficult to decide what should be done under the circumstances. We have all read that large chains of stores, hotels and other business ventures proceed on the theory that the customer is always right, and instruct their representatives, clerks and others to do business on that basis. Of course, there is a rational middle ground which the independent conservative retailer must follow to win success. It is not necessary to let a customer make a servant of you or your clerks, nor should the store-keeper be expected to lose money to gratify a customer's whim, or break long-established methods of doing business that have withstood the test of time in order to favor one out of a hundred customers. It is well to ignore many unreasonable demands made by customers, but it is one thing to refuse to do things in a gruff and offensive manner and another thing to explain in courteous tones why it is impossible to comply with the unreasonable request. In the first instance the customer will leave with a vow never to return to the store again for anything, whereas in the second instance he will feel as though he should apologize for having wanted to impose on the druggist.

The pharmacist, more than any other retailer, is somewhat of a public servant, and he should be accommodating, especially where sickness is involved, yet withal he should maintain that quiet dignity and poise which becomes a professional man. There are two ways of doing everything—one is the wrong way and the other is the correct way. No human being can select the correct way one hundred percent of the time, but one can train oneself to automatically do the correct thing nearly one hundred percent of the time. This is the true measure of success. The man who continually explains what he might have done or should have done under certain circumstances belongs to a type which cannot depend on snap judgment. He should always spar for time when he is confronted with a new or unusual situation. I know the head of a large pharmaceutical house whose snap judgment is the best judgment ninety-five times out of a hundred. When he turns things over in his mind and deliberates long upon a problem he invariably does the wrong thing. The quicker he disposes of a problem the better is his judgment. It is a case of "Know thyself" with every man. Those of us who are

impulsive and do things on the spur of the moment know it, and we should guard ourselves against the dangers of this disposition in dealings with our fellow-men; on the other hand, those who deliberate long before coming to a decision should take care lest they may be hours or days too late to enjoy the success that would have followed their decision had they made it in time. Sizing up one's own limitations requires great moral courage, but a good business man will have this courage and will call upon his associates or employees to do the things which he knows he can not do well himself. The greatest organizers who get results are those who can marshal the brain and brawn of their fellow men and get them to accomplish what they know they can not accomplish themselves.

So it is in the apothecary shop. It is no sin for the proprietor to be less skillful than his clerks in certain branches of the business, but it is nothing short of a sin for him to continue to do things in a mediocre way which he can afford to have others do for him to much better advantage. If the proprietor is not a good mixer, and has pronounced likes and dislikes, he should endeavor to meet, in the store, only those people with whom he can make a favorable impression, and send one of his clerks out to the counter to meet those with whom he has nothing in common and whom he is likely to offend by an indifferent manner. That is good business judgment and tends to hold trade.

If the conditions in the soda fountain department make it necessary to require buying checks of a cashier before serving, this requirement should be enforced as graciously and inoffensively as possible. It is very annoying to the customer to be told to buy checks when he is treating some friends, because he must find out what each person wants and then tell the cashier so as to get the right amount in checks to hand to the dispenser. If one person changes his mind before a drink or sundae is served it means trotting back to the cashier's desk to have the checks adjusted. How much simpler for the customer to order and then be told how much he must pay or to be handed a check for the amount due and pay the cashier as he leaves. The easier you make it for the customer to spend his money the better he likes it. Don't forget his viewpoint when you evolve your system.

LABORATORY NOTES.*

BY GEORGE E. ÉWE.¹

THE GERMICIDAL POWER OF OXALIC ACID.²

The National Standard Dispensary, on page 71, states that oxalic acid "is a good anti-septic and is used by many surgeons to disinfect the hands."

While the fact that oxalic acid does possess considerable germicidal power is quite generally known, yet its relative power in comparison with phenol, which is the generally accepted standard

* Scientific Section, A. P. H. A., City of Washington meeting, 1920.

¹ Unless otherwise stated the reports are by the author.

² Credit is due Mr. R. J. Monson, of the Biological Laboratories of the H. K. Mulford Company, Glenolden, Pa., for making the phenol coefficient tests mentioned in this communication.