

THE SLOT-MACHINE DRUGGIST.*

BY H. V. ARNY.

In 1915 I wrote an editorial (*Drug. Circ.* 59, 1915, 353) in which among other things I had this to say about the then observed tendency of pharmacists to sell the products of other people rather than medicaments put up in their own stores:

But, if we view the same topic from the standpoint of the druggist, if we ask ourselves, "How soon will the 'original package' idea pervade the drug business as it has the grocery trade?" we are apt to experience a feeling of alarm. It causes the druggist to stop and think what his calling will be when it is reduced to the vending of other men's commodities. That this danger is very real no one that has given the subject any attention can possibly gainsay. If the druggist is contented to merely drift along as a vendor of other men's goods, he will find that his drifting will end in disaster.

In 1928 these predictions have become verified and we see the average druggist of to-day merely a vendor of other men's goods. In fact we are confronted with the distressing situation where, in some stores at least, the only manufacturing carried on in the pharmacy is the making of soups and sandwiches and salads and sundaes; where all articles of medicinal character sold over the counter are not only the products of large manufacturers but are actually dispensed in the manufacturers' original packages. If this means up-to-date retail pharmacy why not install "Automat" drug stores (like the "Automat" eating places of our larger cities) wherein the drug consuming public may drop quarters or dimes in the slot and receive in return the packaged medicament?

This paper is not intended as an attack on any branch of the drug trade. For a decade or more, I have endeavored to the best of my ability to promote good feeling between all of the several subdivisions of American Pharmacy. Nor is it easy to place the blame upon any single branch of pharmacy, for each has contributed perhaps to the present unfortunate situation wherein the average retail drug store has degenerated into a bazaar and an eating house.

Instead of finding fault let us attempt to find a way out. I believe that every trained pharmacist who reads these lines will admit that he is no more satisfied with the situation than I am. I believe that the logical outcome of present trend unless checked will be the absorption of the entire retail drug business by groups of capitalists who are ready to invest in anything (be it railroads, restaurants, cigar stores or pharmacies) which give promise of yielding dividends. I can even imagine that just as the retail shoe stores of fifty years ago have given place to the present-day chains of shoe stores conducted by shoe manufacturers, even so, despite pharmacy ownership laws, we may find pharmaceutical manufacturers running the drug stores of this country. I say "I can even imagine" advisedly, for there is a big "IF" in the way; the "IF" being *provided those pharmacists who are deeply interested in their prescription departments sit supinely by and permit*

* Section on Practical Pharmacy and Dispensing, A. Ph. A., Portland meeting, 1928. After acceptance of the paper, it was referred for consideration by the incoming President of the ASSOCIATION.

pharmacy to degenerate into a mere business of vending, and that ultimately destined to be gobbled up by promoters.

Fourteen years ago (JOUR. A. PH. A., 3, 1914, 1542) I suggested that the prescription pharmacists of America get together in an organization which I dubbed the "American Institute of Prescriptionists." This month (*American Druggist*, Aug. 1928) I have published a second paper on the "American Institute of Prescriptionists." In the fourteen years the pharmaceutical situation has suffered a radical change. In 1914 such an "Institute" seemed advisable to promote the interests of the high grade prescription pharmacists of this country. Now such an "Institute" seems *essential to save the profession of pharmacy.*

The place to save the profession of pharmacy is in the retail pharmacy itself. The manufacturer may produce, the jobber may distribute, the editor may write, the teacher may preach, but in the ultimate analysis it is the retail pharmacist who directly serves the public. If he serves the hungry with soups and sandwiches he may be performing a service but he is not following the profession of pharmacy. If he furnishes beauty aids to the near-beautiful he may be performing a service but he is not following the profession of pharmacy. If he acts as a machine shooting forth packaged goods of other men's manufacture, each time a dime or a quarter is dropped into the slot, he may be performing a service but he is not following the profession of pharmacy.

It is the prescription pharmacist alone who can save the profession of pharmacy and he can only do it by means of an organization conducted entirely by prescription pharmacists. It is a task that cannot be done by manufacturers, by jobbers, by drug journalists or even by loquacious college professors. It is a job for the pharmacists who love their prescription work more than any other part of their business.

Of course the "American Institute of Prescriptionists" (first suggested in 1914 and brought out and dusted off this month) is merely the germ of the idea of what the organization of prescription pharmacists should really be. There are lots of flaws to be found in the original plan, but it is something to start on and it seems to some of us *that now is the time to start.*

Let us see whether a start cannot be made this week in Portland. A college professor has made the preliminary suggestions and is willing to talk things over with a group of prescription pharmacists. But the organization itself must be run by prescription pharmacists, themselves, unencumbered by entangling alliances.

Stardust.—Verses of all sorts. By ROBERT RAYMOND LAMPA. Boards; 5½ by 8¼ inches; 51 pages; \$1.25. New York: Swenarton, Sallary & Collins, Inc., 1929.

Many of the readers of the JOURNAL will remember the author and poet who is responsible for "Stardust" in business and fraternal associations, and in social gatherings; some will be reminded that on occasions he extended fraternal greetings in meter and rhyme and spoke memories' thoughts in measured lines,

even though he warns that "critics in search of perfect rhyme will fail to find it here."—*Foreword* of "Stardust."

The Veteran of N. Y. V. D. A. has given poetic treatment to thirty or more subjects in which he has sung of country, section, faith, music, fraters, friends and flowers; he has dreamed and reminisced; smiled and greeted in welcomes; cheered joys and successes, and lamented losses and sorrows.
