

AN ENORMOUS CONCERN IS THE DES MOINES DRUG CO.

Did you ever go through a large, modern wholesale drug house? It would be worth your while to go through an establishment like that conducted by the Des Moines Drug company at Fourth and Vine streets. It isn't possible to form much of a conception of the commercial immensity of a concern like this by simply looking at the building, because there are features that cannot be expressed in figures. You have to see them for yourself. Figures give an idea of the stupendous volume of business done; they cannot, however, convey an idea of the methods of such a concern. A house like the Des Moines Drug company stands in a class by itself. It is distinguished from other houses like it in much the same way that we distinguish any improvement of the present from some idea that may have been conspicuous in the past. The business of the firm exceeds \$1,000,000 annually.

The firm was incorporated in 1896. That is a record for any business to be proud of. All kinds of things might happen to a business in eighteen years. Things have happened to the Des Moines Drug company, but they have been of the sort that have enabled the management to write the story on the credit side of the ledger. The firm commenced with a capital of \$200,000. In 1911 this capital was increased to \$400,000. Today the firm places its assets at over half a million—\$500,000 to be correct. The assets of a business are practically what the business owns. In this case it includes the magnificent building which it now occupies. This structure is six stories high with a basement and covers a space of 104x132 feet. When one walks around a building of this magnitude it impresses one with the idea, in the vernacular of the street, that "it's some building."

The company not only owns the building and all the equipment, but it is the largest wholesale drug house and it has the largest amount of floor space of any drug house in the United States. This sounds like a rather strong statement, but nevertheless it is true. We naturally conclude that because New York, or Chicago or San Francisco can put it over us in the matter of population that everything of consequence must be located in these cities. As a matter of fact, St. Louis at one time had the reputation of having the largest drug house in the country with regard to floor space. St. Louis isn't it any more with Des Moines. At the time the Des Moines company held its opening one of the guests made the remark that Des Moines didn't know what a big enterprise it had in this line. How true it is. In fact we often have to go away from home to learn how great we really are. If the Des Moines Drug company were located in some other city that we had an opportunity to visit about once or twice in a lifetime we'd think it quite a privilege to get a chance to go through the establishment. We'd make special efforts for the event and tell the bootblack to give the shoes an extra shine.

\$75,288 in Yearly Salaries.

Just the salaries paid by the firm amounted last year to \$75,288. That is a sum big enough to brag about. If any one of us had that amount in the bank or well invested, we'd imagine we were worth being noticed. The firm began business with four traveling salesmen. Today it has fifteen. It sells goods all through Iowa, northern Missouri and southern Minnesota. It takes a good many salesmen to get over a territory like that. It requires push and energy, pluck and business acumen; in fact, it requires a good many things to boost a business from four traveling salesmen to fifteen. A person not only has to do a lot of thinking but he has to think in his sleep. He has to be what the world has come to designate as a "live wire." M. E. Sherman is the business manager of the plant. No special tribute to his business sagacity is needed. The business speaks for itself.

You deal with modern immensities when you deal with such an enterprise. Even the pumps that they load and unload the turpentine with are modern. A person who has never owned a drug store can't appreciate what these pumps mean. In the old days the man grabbed a tin can, rushed down cellar and filled a gallon measure five times when he had an order for five gallons of oil. What oil you didn't get into the can got on the floor or on your clothes. It isn't that way any more. Under the present system you can draw any kind of oil with white kid gloves and in your new spring suit and you wouldn't spill any. The oils are down-



DES MOINES DRUG CO.'S NEW BUILDING.
104x132 Feet; 100,000 Square Feet Floor Space.

LARGEST FLOOR SPACE OF ANY DRUG HOUSE IN U. S.

stairs but the pumps are on the first floor and measure the oil automatically. All you have to do is to set the needle and turn the crank. Doesn't make any difference whether you are after a quart or a gallon; just turn the crank and the exact amount is released by the pump.

Turpentine in Big Tanks.

In the basement they have two great steel tanks for turpentine alone. One holds 10,000 gallons; the other holds 7,000 gallons. When they are filling a tank of turpentine from the cars, they attach an electric meter and it measures the product automatically. When they are filling a barrel to ship out, they do the same thing. No chance for short measure or for mistakes. It's all registered on the meter. The pumping is done by electricity. No necessity for a man pumping his arms off. Turpentine used to come in wooden barrels. That's the old way. In fact it is shipped out in barrels yet to some extent, but there is a good deal of leakage and loss in this way. Today they use steel drums a great deal. Steel is better. No leakage or loss, you know.

Glycerin is shipped in 1200-pound drums altogether when it is bought in big lots like a wholesale house buys it. It is also shipped in five-gallon tin cans. Glycerin is mean stuff to handle. Oozes out. It gives druggists lots of trouble. It will almost climb up the sides of a bottle and run over if the bottle is not kept clean. Makes the druggist sore. Glycerin, owing to its specific gravity, weighs ten pounds to the gallon. It is a by-product of the big packing houses and of the large soap factories. One of its striking peculiarities is that it is a good-mixer. Mixes with oil or water. This makes it very valuable in the arts.

Cars Load at the Doors.

The firm has its own steam trucks and cars are loaded and unloaded right at the doors. Gravity rollers take the goods from car to elevator. Saves all kinds of time. Time is a big thing in a big wholesale house and the firm is equipped with time savers on all sides. It is one of the features of the business. No lost motion, you see. The firm has a spiral chute extending from the top floor to the basement for shooting down goods that are ready for shipment. The chute delivers the goods from any floor to any other floor below and does it almost instantly. There are also dumb waiters for hurry orders in the office. Druggist may want a bottle of pills quick. He has barely finished giving the order when he has the goods.

Another great thing is the bottle filling plant. Bottles are washed by electrically driven motor washers. Dozens of bottles are washed at a time instead of the old slow way of shaking the straw out of each bottle one at a time. The liquor is pumped through filters by suction instead of waiting for it to take its time to percolate through. The bottles are automatically filled and then taken by a belt conveyor to the labeling station, where the girls label and wrap them. The chemical laboratory on the third floor is in charge of a graduate. Here the firm grinds its own drugs to any fineness by electricity in a battery of drug mills, and makes the elixirs and things that the busy druggist doesn't care to bother with. Labels are kept in automatic cabinets that not only expedite the work but the cabinets eliminate the chance of mistakes. Makes errors impossible and that's a great thing in a plant of this kind.

Immense Humidor for Cigars.

Leading from the laboratory is a tin-lined vault for cigars. No chance for cigars to dry out. A humidor is used to keep a certain amount of moisture in the atmosphere. This is done automatically. An electric motor works the humidor, which seems to know more about humidity than the weather clerk. Keeps the air just so all the time.

The employees are well provided for on the first floor. There are separate quarters for men and women; large, airy, well lighted rooms with steel lockers, luncheonette chairs, mirrors where the female employes can put on a dab of powder before they go into the street, and other conveniences and comforts. The sample room is also on the first floor. This room has samples of everything that is sold by samples, including manicure sets, surgeons' supplies, school supplies, brushes, leather goods, plasters, thermometers, baseball goods, corkscrews and an amazing lot of small goods, including soda water fountain supplies. Most of the samples are in air-tight cases. No germs, you see.

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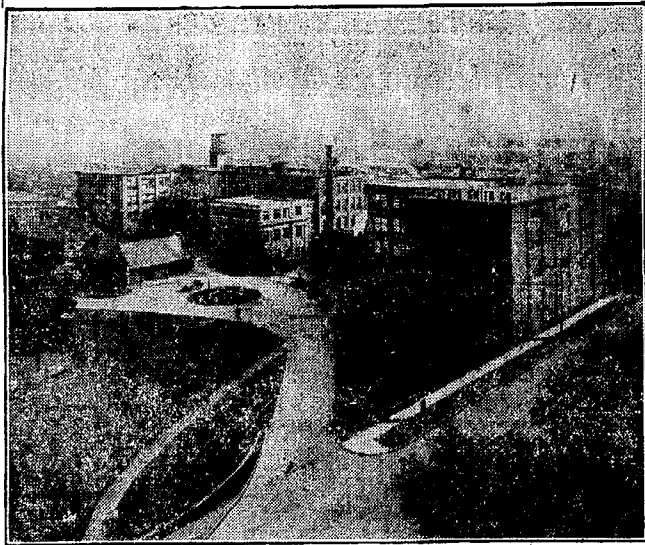
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