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Pharmacy—Past, Present and Future.*

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When I was asked to prepare a paper to be read at this Convention, I hesitated doing so for I much preferred coming as a student. Thinking, however, if every person asked straightway began to make excuses the Convention would be a dismal failure, I determined to do my best, knowing I would have the kindly forbearance of every brother present, even if the views advanced did not meet their approval.

A very different person from our modern chemist was the apothecary of the olden time. Without laws for his protection he had to impress the people with a sense of the mysterious. Deep in the lore of the alchemists, surrounded by the emblems of his calling, so arranged as to strike reverence, if not terror, into the hearts of his customers. The apparatus displayed, the mortars of stone, of metal, of agate; the furnace and still; the stork, the alligator and vipers; the fantastic labels; the studied wizardly look of the proprietor himself, were all part of the ultimate purpose to make his patrons believe he was deep in the mysteries of the "Black Art," and one not to be offended with impunity. It is not my purpose to trace back pharmacy till its origin becomes lost in Arabic fables, nor to review the work of the old-time alchemists—those early druggists who bridged the time between the days of Arab superstition and modern chemistry, but to review it from the time when

the profession was first recognized by the law of the land.

The different branches of the medical profession were not regularly distinguished till the reign of Henry VIII. when separate duties were assigned to them and special privileges given to each. In 1518 the physicians of London were incorporated, and the barber surgeons in 1540. In addition to these physicians there were a great number of irregular practitioners who were, of course, prosecuted and persecuted by their legalized rivals, until in 1543 an Act was passed for their protection, and as many of these practitioners kept shops for the sale of drugs, the term of apothecary was used to designate their calling. This term, by recent Acts of Parliament, is now defined as pharmaceutical chemist and chemist and druggist.

The apothecaries were both the prescribers of, and dealers in, drugs and chemicals. Men who occupied a dual position as prescribers of their own, and compounders of physicians' prescriptions. During the 17th century there arose a warm contest between the physicians and apothecaries, the former, then as now, accusing the latter of usurping their province, and the latter more strongly than at present, continuing and justifying their usurpation until the House of Lords, in 1703, finally set the matter at rest by deciding that the apothecary should not only compound and dispense, but gave them the power of directing and ordering remedies for the treatment of diseases. Their powers were still further increased by other Acts of Parliament, one in 1722, giving the Apothecaries' Company power to visit all the apothecaries in London and destroy drugs found to be unfit for use, another in 1748, authorizing the appointment of examiners, without whose license no persons should dispense medicines in London or within seven miles of it, a third in 1815, in which the provisions of the previous Act were extended to England and Wales. An Act of Parliament, passed in 1858 and known as the "Medical Act," made very little alteration in the powers of the Apothecaries' Society, in fact, it rather confirmed, and in some degree, amplified them by extending their powers to Ireland and Scotland. The members of this Society did not possess any exclusive power to deal in or sell drugs, and it was not until 1868, or only three years previous to our own Act, before unregistered persons were prohibited from selling drugs and poisons.

Now, having noticed the laws which have been placed on the statute books for protection and higher education—I say education because most of the laws passed have incorporated in them clauses providing for study and examination—let us see in what respect does the old-time alchemist differ from the pharmacist of to-day. Seriously considered and freed from all hypocritical cant, the ultimate design of pharmacy, as with all other professions, is the same yesterday, to-day and forever. Is not the invariable feature of pharmacy—ancient and modern, high-class and low-class the design of making money, and is he not considered the successful pharmacist who has the nicest store and the largest number of customers coming and going, whether it be with a scientific combination of his own composition, a vial of aqua vite, or a bottle of Dr. Kuremall's Celebrated Liver Twister? Comparing the two we find the old-time alchemist made splendid fortunes by imposing on the public a belief in their semi-magical power, whilst their modern successors with high attainments and scientific training must be satisfied with a mere living, or at best a very modest competency. What is the reason for this? Why is it that the profits of the pharmacist have year by year diminished so as almost to reach the vanishing point? Some will give as the sole reason that our lines have been taken away by energetic grocers, others will ascribe the decline to the competition of the big bazaars and the consequent cutting of prices. One of these two reasons will be given by the great majority of chemists throughout the province. But are they the real ones? In France, where the Pharmacy Act to us living in Ontario, appears perfect, where everything employed in medicine must be procured from a qualified druggist, and where doctors are not allowed to dispense unless twelve miles from a drug store, the practical results are still the same—diminished profits and an increasing difficulty to meet expenses. From this it can justly be argued that the profession of pharmacy is now undergoing a complete change from the traditions of the past, and if things are allowed to run on as they are the result is not easy to foresee. An advertisement in a recent edition of a Marseilles paper quotes liquid ammonia at 14 cents per pint, spirits of camphor at 44 cents per pint, and other articles in proportion, whilst patents were boldly announced at a discount of from 15 to 60

* Read before the Provincial Retail Druggists' Association.