

Section on Historical Pharmacy

Papers Presented at the Fifty-Ninth Convention

THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF PHARMACY.

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The organization of the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy was the result of the efforts of the Massachusetts Medical Society to improve the practice of pharmacy in the state during the early part of the last century.

The records of the Medical Society from 1821 to 1824 contain frequent references to the relations existing between the apothecaries and the physicians and to the need of a better education of the pharmacists of the state, and of a regulation by the commonwealth of the practice of pharmacy.

On June 6, 1821, the Society appointed a committee to see if the apothecaries "will conform to the Pharmacopœia," and also one, consisting of Drs. Mason, Hayward, Bigelow, Chaplin and Wyman, on "the better education of apothecaries."

October 2, 1822, the Society voted that its fellows should write recipes after January 1, 1823, according to the new Pharmacopœia and to advise the apothecaries of their purpose by publication in the *Columbian Centinel*, *Patriot* and *Advertiser*.

June 4, 1823, it appointed a committee to render more safe the retailing of medicines and followed this by the appointment of another committee to petition the Legislature, either alone or in conjunction with the apothecaries, for the better regulation of pharmaceutical practice throughout the state.

February 4, 1824, the committee on the subject of the education of apothecaries reported, which report was accepted and the committee were requested to report from time to time upon the subject.

The first meeting of the organizers of the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy was held at the call of Dr. Ephraim Elliott (A. M., Harvard, 1780), Daniel Noyes and W. B. White, on February 7, 1823. At this meeting Mr. Terence Wakefield was chosen moderator and Mr. Samuel N. Brewer, secretary.

The only business which appears by the record of the meeting to have been transacted was the reading and the discussion of a communication from the Massachusetts Medical Society to "the Druggists and Apothecaries of Boston," and the appointment of a committee representing the Pharmacists to meet the committee of the Massachusetts Medical Society for the purpose stated in the communication, said committee to report at an adjourned meeting.

Another meeting followed this one on a date not specified in the record and a

report from the committee appointed to consult with the committee of the Medical Society was received, which report seems to have been allowed to rest in abeyance for some months, for the next meeting of the organizers appears to have been held on December 8, 1823, on which date a committee was appointed to take the report of the previous committee into consideration.

Although considerable effort has been made to ascertain the exact tenor of the communication from the Massachusetts Medical Society to the druggists and apothecaries of Boston and of the report from the committee thereupon, the work has been fruitless of result, but the substance of the communication may be inferred from a petition of the Massachusetts Medical Society to the Legislature, which petition was filed on June 6, 1823, by a committee, of which two of its members were John Gorham, Professor of Chemistry at Harvard College, and Jacob Bigelow, Professor of Materia Medica of the same institution. The petition reads as follows:

BOSTON, JUNE 6, 1823.

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives in General Court Assembled:

The undersigned, a committee of the Fellows of the Massachusetts Medical Society, beg leave to respectfully represent that the compounding and vending of medicines in small quantities by unqualified persons is attended by extreme hazard to the community and that mistakes of an alarming if not of fatal character have arisen from this source.

They would beg leave further to state that this evil is of such a nature as will in all probability increase with our increasing population, as physicians are daily discontinuing the practice of compounding or preparing the medicines which they use, and have therefore become in a great measure dependent upon the druggists and other retailers of medicines. They therefore pray your honorable body that the Counsellors of the Massachusetts Medical Society together with an association of apothecaries for all parts of the commonwealth, *if such an association should hereafter be incorporated,** may have the power to appoint boards of examiners in various parts of the state, who shall examine all persons who may hereafter wish to compound or retail medicines in small quantities, or to put up the prescriptions of physicians, and to grant licenses without expense to those who may wish to retail medicines, and they further pray that said board may have the power to determine upon what subjects the candidates shall be examined and be allowed to prohibit all others than those who have passed an examination or been licensed for retailing medicines in small quantities after the passing of this act prayed for, *and in case no association of apothecaries should be formed at present,** the undersigned respectfully pray that the Counsellors of the Massachusetts Medical Society may have the power of appointing the boards of examiners and proceeding in the business alone until *such an association may be formed,** and as in duty bound will ever pray.

JOHN G. COFFIN,
DANIEL THURBER,
GEORGE HAYWARD,
JACOB BIGELOW,
JOHN GORHAM.

This petition shows conclusively the desire of the Medical Society that an association of the druggists should be formed to co-operate with it in the regulation of the practice of pharmacy in the state, and also the lines along which its committee

*The italics are ours.

was proceeding, and it is therefore considered probable that the business of the letter to the druggists which was considered at the first meeting of the organizers concerned the formation of such an association.

The petition of the Massachusetts Medical Society was opposed with acrimonious articles in the press of that day, principally in communications signed "Vesicator," in which articles the members of the Medical Society were termed pickpockets, tyrants and accused of being influenced solely by mercenary motives, and the Legislature gave the Society leave to withdraw its bill and petition.

But, notwithstanding this, the endeavor set in motion by the Society continued to receive the approval of the druggists, at least so far as it related to their organization and education. On December 11, 1823, an adjourned meeting of the organizers was held at which meeting letters were read from several of the trustees of the College of Apothecaries in Philadelphia; these letters presumably supporting the idea of the organization by the pharmacists of Boston, and a committee was appointed to draft a constitution and by-laws and to report a plan for a permanent organization.

On December 26, 1823, this committee reported a plan of organization and a constitution, both of which were adopted by the organizers and the meeting then adjourned until December 29, 1823, on which date the first board of officers for The Massachusetts College of Pharmacy was elected and the college came into actual being; Dr. Ephraim Elliott being chosen as its first president.

The New England Journal of Medicine and Surgery thus notes the birth of the college, in its issue of January, 1825:

MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF PHARMACY.

An institution with this appellation has been organized in this city and has gone into operation. Its objects are stated in the preamble of the constitution to be: 'to provide the means of a systematic education; to regulate the instruction of apprentices, to promote a spirit of pharmaceutical investigation and to diffuse information among the members of the profession; to discountenance the sale of spurious, adulterated and inferior articles, etc.' We are happy to perceive upon the list of members the names of the most reputable apothecaries in this city and we hope most sincerely that the laudable and truly important objects which they have in view may be fully answered.

The preamble of the constitution adopted by the organizers is noteworthy. It reads as follows:

PREAMBLE.

The apothecary is intimately connected both with the mercantile and the learned professions. On the one hand, he must become acquainted with the principles and the various forms of commercial transactions, and acquire the enterprise, prudence, and skill of the merchant; and on the other he must familiarize himself with the branches of natural science which are cultivated by the physician.

Medical science has for its object the cure of diseases. For this purpose, the character of the diseases and the remedies for them must be ascertained. It is often found requisite in the general practice of medicine that the numerous remedies should be collected, prepared and kept in a proper state for exhibition. This latter branch belongs to the pharmacist and is by the division of science in this country, assigned to the apothecary, while the former is reserved exclusively to the physician.

Pharmacy embraces a knowledge of the physical and chemical qualities of

medical articles, and the art of preserving, preparing and compounding them for application in practice. Of these the preparation of medicines is the most important and includes the principal operations in pharmacy. These operations require not only a knowledge of the general principles of chemistry, but also an extensive, minute and practical acquaintance with its details and manipulations. Since, then, it is committed to the apothecary to select and prepare the medicines on which the practitioner depends for his success in preserving life and restoring health; since these medicines are very various in number and quality, and require extensive and accurate knowledge for their preparation; since also they are easily sophisticated so as to destroy their efficiency without it being detected by simple inspection (thereby increasing the temptation to adulterate which arises from the competition in prices), it is at once apparent that a scientific and practical education in pharmacy is requisite, to qualify the apothecary for discharging the duties of his profession with credit to himself and with safety to the community.

In order therefore to provide the means of a systematic education; to regulate the instruction of apprentices, to promote a spirit of pharmaceutical investigation, and to diffuse information among the members of the profession; to discountenance the sale of spurious, adulterated and inferior articles; to regulate the business as far as practicable and consistent with our social institutions; to cherish habits of friendly intercourse, and in general to advance the character and interests of the profession, we the undersigned, druggists and apothecaries, agree to associate together under the following constitution, which we adopt in principle and to which we will adhere in practice.

On April 12, 1824, by-laws were adopted of which the following are worthy of being noted:

Article 3. No members shall receive an apprentice for less than five years, and it shall be obligatory upon all apprentices to attend the lectures of the College, and it was further provided that to be eligible for membership a person must have served an apprenticeship for three years with a person competent to instruct him.

September 24, 1824, it was voted to levy a fine of 25 cents on all members not present at the beginning of the meetings, and 25 cents extra on all those not present at its close.

March 16, 1825, President Elliott declined re-election as president and a letter of sympathy was sent him by the College for the affliction which caused his declination.

Trade questions obtruded themselves early into the business of the College, for on March 16, 1825, the question of a regulation of retail prices was considered and a committee was appointed to prepare a list of prices for the trade, and again on March 21, 1827, another committee for the same purpose was appointed, and another on September 16, 1829.

On March 17, 1830, the price of sulphate of quinine was fixed at two cents per grain for quantities under forty grains, and on March 16, 1831, the retail prices were again the subject of regulation, and on September 20 of that year the price of citric acid was fixed at fifty cents per ounce; sulphate of quinine at three shillings and nine pence per drachm, and bi-carbonate of soda at eight cents per ounce, and it was voted that the president inquire of the Boston Association of Physicians relative to blisters, whether the size written by them means to include the margin or otherwise.

On September 26, 1831, early closing of the shops was considered.

On March 21, 1832, a committee was appointed to investigate the retailing of medicines by wholesalers, and on September 23, 1833, another committee was appointed to revise prices. On December 18, 1833, this committee reported the price of morphia and its salts should be six cents a grain, and strychnine twelve and a half cents per grain.

December 16, 1835, another committee was appointed to revise prices, and they reported that the price of kreosote should be two cents a drop, bi-carbonate of soda six cents an ounce, Seidlitz powders fifty cents a box; Rochelle powders thirty-seven and a half cents a box and soda powders twenty-five cents a box.

Almost all the business transacted was in reference to prices, but little attention being given to the question of the education of apprentices although some effort was made for the formation of an exchange and library for the trade, and in the winter of 1826 and '27 the college secured the services of Professor John W. Webster, the Professor of Chemistry at Harvard College, to give a course of lectures before its members, and in 1830 a similar course was delivered by Martin Gay.

March 16, 1831, it was voted that the trustees may establish a School of Pharmacy and that they may nominate one or two lecturers on the sciences connected with Pharmacy.

December 17, 1835, it was voted that "apprentices belonging to members of this society shall attend Dr. Hale's lectures on Chemistry and Pharmacy once a week," but March 18, 1835, the Committee on Lectures reported that owing to the illness of Dr. Hale, the course of lectures had not commenced.

December 14, 1842, the expediency of dissolving the college was considered and on March 21, 1843, it was voted to suspend the article relating to meetings and to have but one meeting a year, and here the record closes of the early days of the College for no further meetings are made the subject of record until December 31, 1850, when a meeting was called by the secretary at the request of William A. Brewer, Thomas Restieaux and Daniel Henchman for the purpose, as stated in the call, of "reviving the Society."

At this meeting Mr. William A. Brewer was elected president of the College, and a complete reorganization was effected, with a membership of about sixty, and pharmaceutical meetings were appointed for each month.

Mr. William A. Brewer, writing from New York City in 1881 at the age of seventy-four years, in a series of interesting letters, now in the Medical Library, relating to the early history of the College and which throw interesting side-lights upon its history, says:

It is sixty years since I entered the drug business as apprentice to the firm of Bartlett & Brewer, the junior partner being an elder brother. Its business was wholesale and retail, and they prepared everything possible for our sales in the country and town. About two years after I entered the business the conference of Dr. Ephraim Elliott and Mr. Daniel Noyes with a few of the oldest dispensing apothecaries led to the creation of the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy.

Mr. Brewer gives the most credit for the scientific character of the College to Mr. Daniel Noyes, whom he says was a graduate of Harvard and evidently by his account, one who appreciated the necessity for a systematic and thorough education of pharmacists.

April 3, 1852, the College was granted a charter by the state, and February 29, 1876, this charter was indefinitely extended.

During the winter of 1852 a course of lectures on Chemistry was given by Charles T. Jackson, M. D., and in 1853 and 1854 a course of lectures on Pharmaceutical Chemistry was given by Professor J. P. Cooke of Harvard College and in 1858 Mr. Charles T. Carney delivered a course of lectures upon Pharmaceutical Chemistry. None of the courses was largely attended and the effort to evolve a systematic course of instruction failed of any definite result, but they doubtless sowed the seed which was to bring abundant fruit in the future.

Nine years later in the spring of 1867, largely through the efforts of George F. H. Markoe, the board of trustees authorized Mr. Markoe and Mr. Henry W. Lincoln to arrange for the delivery of a course of nine free lectures upon Pharmacy, these lectures to be given by Mr. Markoe. The number of persons attending this course was twenty and its results were such that the College decided to inaugurate a systematic course of instruction in the fall of that year, and a circular was issued announcing that a course of lectures on Chemistry, Materia Medica, Botany and Pharmacy was to be inaugurated on December 11, 1867, at the rooms of the College, No. 12 Temple Place. These lectures were opened by an introductory lecture by Mr. Samuel W. Colcord, the chairman of the board of trustees. The lecturers were, for Pharmacy, George F. H. Markoe; for Chemistry, E. L. Stoddard; for Materia Medica and Botany, C. M. Tracey. The fees for the three courses were \$25.

The circular announcing this important step forward in the life of the College was signed by Thomas Hollis, Henry W. Lincoln and George F. H. Markoe.

Since this time there has been no break in the instruction of the College and its history has been that of every other educational institution, with changes of its faculty and progression and development along the lines natural to such an institution.

The College has received several bequests and donations to its funds which have placed it upon a secure and safe foundation for the future, and it should become by a wise development of its resources, an institution second to none in the country and a credit even to Boston, with educational institutions of which any city might be proud.

The most important of its bequests is that known as the Warren B. Potter fund. Its history is singular in the fact that the generous donor of this fund stipulated that it should bear the name of her husband, rather than her own, another instance of self-abnegation with which the history of womankind abounds.

Warren B. Potter was a wholesale druggist of Boston, who died in the possession of about \$3,000,000. His will, after his decease, bequeathed to his wife the sum of \$5000 and the income only from the remainder of his estate during her life, and no mention of the College was made in the will.

At the death of Mrs. Potter, in 1904, she bequeathed, from her savings from this income, \$50,000 to the College and made it a residuary legatee, the College receiving as such the additional sum of \$196,699.69, making the total amount received from this philanthropic woman \$246,699.69. Because of the stipulation that the fund should bear the name of her husband, her service to the College has not met with the recognition to which she is justly entitled, and it is to be hoped that some

way may be devised to keep her name before the members of the College and before the members of the profession as one whose memory should be perpetuated, not only as a patron of the College and the profession of Pharmacy, but also as the generous friend of humanity, for her bequests to other institutions and charities mark her conspicuously as one whose noble gifts entitle her to that name.

The history of the College since 1867 has been uneventful and is marked simply by the changes which inexorable time brings to the life of every institution as well as to that of every individual. With ambition to improve the character and standards of Pharmacy and to make itself a beacon-light for the profession in America, it is assured of a glorious future and not alone of a glorious one, but what is better, one most useful to American Pharmacy and to America.

In closing I desire to acknowledge my very great appreciation of the assistance rendered me in the preparation of this study by Professor B. F. Davenport, the former Professor of Chemistry of the College, and E. H. Brigham, M. D., the Librarian of the Massachusetts Medical Society, without whose kindly and helpful aid I would have been unable to secure much of the interesting material relating to the history of the College.

THE PROBLEM OF THE MODERN DRUGGIST.

“But the fact must be faced squarely that the old use of complicated prescriptions has been greatly curtailed and that it must continue to decline. There are two ways of solving the problem of the druggist. The easiest way is for him to relegate his profession to still greater obscurity, pushing his prescription counter farther and farther to the rear, and making it smaller and smaller, giving greater and greater attention to the business of soda water, cigars, magazines, postal, express, gas, laundry and other agencies, stationery and toilet articles and the like. Some druggists have already solved the problem so satisfactorily in this way that they say openly that they do not care an obstruction to a stream of water-n, whether they get prescriptions or not. This is an undignified solution, but a few weeks of European travel rather tend to convert one to the view that the type of American drug store, with its many conveniences, is something to be retained, even with quack medicines. The latter, indeed, have a conservative value in acting as fool killers and in reducing certain patients to the point at which they are glad to accept skilled medical attendance.

“The second way of solving the problem is for the druggist to study critically the advance of medical science and art and to meet the new demands made upon him or, rather, which may be made upon him if he will prepare for them. For example, he might secure quite a little business merely by keeping track of new remedies, inquiring as to the likelihood of their use in his own community, putting them in stock or, at least arranging for their delivery more promptly than the physician can secure them on direct order. Co-operation would help in this regard.”—*Buffalo Medical Journal*.