

DR. CHARLES RICE.*

BY JOHN URI LLOYD.¹

On the authority of Mr. Menninger, a prominent pharmacist of Brooklyn, acquainted with the incident, and fortified afterward by Mr. Rice's personal interviews with me, I make the following statement.

In 1865 or thereabout a warship from Japan came into New York harbor. The Bellevue Hospital was advised that a sick man on board this vessel needed attention, this man having been a general roustabout on the ship. The ship officers had no data whatever concerning the man, as to where he came from or his relationships. He was very ill and remained in the hospital for some length of time. On convalescing, inquiries were made as to his friends but without resulting in any information whatever. He stated that he was absolutely unknown to anyone in America, nor could they obtain any information as to his antecedents.

During his convalescence he was put to work in the kitchen, accomplishing such work as cleaning kettles and pans and scrubbing around the kitchen, menial service in all directions. During this period he came into contact with the physicians of Bellevue Hospital, who were surprised to find he was acquainted with medicine and medicines as well as with pharmacy, and also that as a linguist he spoke and read many languages. Consequently he was taken from the kitchen and transferred to the library where he became interested in publications, systematizing them as they had never been systematized before, and also taking part in pharmaceutical and chemical manipulations of Bellevue Hospital. Within a reasonable time he became indispensable in all these directions and he was given charge of the laboratory as well as being made Librarian of the Hospital.

It was during this period that I visited him in Bellevue Hospital, this because of correspondence we had had relative to certain features of American materia medica, the Eclectic work therein, as well as concerning certain publications I was seeking to obtain for the Lloyd Library.

Need it be said that I was overwhelmed with the knowledge Dr. Charles Rice



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* Presented by J. T. Lloyd, Section on Historical Pharmacy, A. PH. A., Dallas meeting, 1936, who stated as follows:

To account for the origin of this paper, I will explain that it is the stenographic record of a statement made by my father, about fifteen years ago, in response to my request that he tell me what he knew concerning Dr. Charles Rice. When the notes were transcribed I submitted the paper to my father for approval or correction. He made little if any change, but requested me not to make use of it during his lifetime. This paper I am now presenting.— J. T. Lloyd.

¹ The details furnished by Mr. Menninger were not referred to by me in discussions with Dr. Rice; this, because of their very personal nature which might have been unpleasant to him.

possessed regarding every phase of the subjects touching chemistry, pharmacy, medicine and languages.

Not long after that he was made Librarian of the College of Pharmacy in the city of New York. Then he became officially connected as trustee and practically the manager of the scientific phases of the College of Pharmacy and Library as well, which he reconstructed along systematic scientific lines. In it all he was exceedingly modest, never forcing himself on anyone, assisting every one he could and seemingly capable of doing so regardless of what phase or what subject touching science might be presented.

Naturally, the fame of this man extended. He took an interest in the pharmacopœial work and within a short time overtopped all others connected therewith. The preceding Pharmacopœia was a small book as is well known. They made Dr. Rice chairman of the Pharmacopœial Revision Committee. He began to work systematically and the forthcoming book under his name as chairman was a marvelous improvement over anything and everything that had preceded. It was while he was thus engaged that I came into close touch with Dr. Charles Rice. This by reason of the fact that Professor J. F. Judge, of Cincinnati, one of the Committee of Revision, failed to even answer letters. Dr. Rice wrote me and I assumed Judge's work, attending to it all from beginning to end and when completed requested Dr. Rice to ignore my name and let Judge have the credit therefor, which was done, excepting that in the introduction Dr. Rice thanked me for assistance I had given in the revision of the Pharmacopœia. Afterward in correspondence with me in a letter which I now have in my files, he mentioned the problem in connection with a great favor I had been able to show Dr. Judge in his business affairs. This is very personal and for the first time recorded.

During the interval from the time that Rice was carried from the warship to the Bellevue Hospital to his chairmanship of the Pharmacopœial Committee, Dr. Rice moved in all directions in New York City: he attended conventions; the students in Colleges and all connected therewith knew him; he was associated with Dr. Castle in the editorship of *New Remedies* published by Wm. Wood and Co.; his name was in print the world over, his picture likewise familiar to every one. Yet, never to my knowledge was there a man anywhere who recognized him or who knew anything of his history or who could connect him with science either as a student or professor, or who had any authoritative knowledge of him.

Dr. Fred Hoffman took much interest in that direction, discussing with me Dr. Rice's personality and wondering over the record of a man so accomplished and yet who seemed to be absolutely unknown previous to his arrival in New York. It had been reported that Dr. Rice was a graduate of a German university, Heidelberg, I believe, and when Dr. Hoffman returned to Germany he made it his business to look up the subject, and wrote me from Germany that he could find no evidence of a Charles Rice ever being graduated from any institution in Germany.

Thus I would say Dr. Charles Rice was an enigma, inexplicable, and I state this in the face of the fact that on his death a biography of Dr. Rice was published which carried details presumably of his early life, and which are in direct conflict with what I have herein written.

My last interview with Dr. Rice, for I had many confidential talks with him on subjects concerning medicine and pharmacy, was to the effect that I advised

him to take a rest, otherwise he could not maintain his health. I saw he was failing physically although his mind was as bright in mentality as it had ever been. Said he to me: "I can't rest by doing nothing." I suggested that he make me a visit and I would give him something to do that would be a rest and change. He replied that his duties there prevented his taking a vacation.

Finally, after he had been three times chairman of the Pharmacopœial Revision Committee, we were informed that Dr. Charles Rice was dead.

I wrote to him before he accepted the chairmanship for the third time and begged him not to accept it as it would be too great a strain. He had accomplished enough and sacrificed enough. To which he agreed, but still said his duty led him to continue the work in which, as I have said, he died.

In an interview with Dr. Rice at the time of the meeting of the AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION in Saratoga, N. Y. (while *chairman* of the Revision Committee), he took me aside and said to me as we sat on a sofa together:

"Professor Lloyd, your work pleases me very much, our interviews and correspondence have been exceedingly pleasant and satisfactory. You may have wondered as to my personality as others have done. Let me tell you that my name, Charles Rice, as you know it, has been changed from the original name of my family. When I came to America and became an American citizen by choice, I felt it my duty as well as privilege to make my name in accord with the American language. The original name being German was Reis, meaning rice. I am an American citizen and this is to be my home permanently and I feel it is proper to have my name in accord with the American spelling of the word." I was in hope that he would continue and give me something of his past history. His object seemed to be simply to show me that as an American citizen he wished to be wholly American and that even in his name he had cut off all foreign affiliations.

In one of our early meetings I said to Dr. Rice, "I am informed that you fluently speak and read many languages. This I can hardly comprehend." His answer was—"Mr. Lloyd, for this I deserve no great credit. When I commenced with one and mastered that, Latin, German, French, Italian, Spanish, English, Russian, Sanscrit, and others all came easily. I deserve no great credit for more than the rudimentary learning of the first language acquired." To this I will add that I understood that Dr. Rice was engaged by the English government to translate Sanscrit in the direction of botanical work.

Now I have briefly given as a narrative for record as I know it, or as I have heard and believe it to be true, all that came to me concerning this remarkable man who came from the unknown into such prominent place. I have not attempted to touch his personality, nor have I been able to give a clear conception of his versatility in scientific lines: in every committee he was appointed on any subject of the Pharmacopœia he proved to be so well informed that he could offer helpful suggestions and criticisms even to men who had made a life specialty of the subject. Talented and highly educated as he was, he must, in the years of his acquisition of this knowledge, have met hundreds, perhaps thousands of men in scientific work, yet no man to my knowledge had ever heard of Dr. Charles Rice before he came into New York harbor. I never met a man who had previously known him or knew of anyone who had.
