

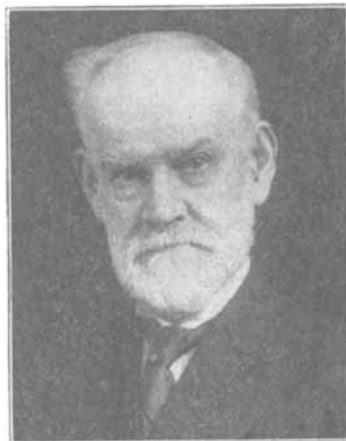
Whether or not the financial returns are as great in a store of the Blair type as they are in some of the department drug stores of to-day is, of course, an open question but there is no questioning the fact that the satisfaction which the Blairs have had in really practicing pharmacy professionally is greater compensation for their efforts than could be represented by a few extra paltry dollars.

MY EARLY IMPRESSIONS OF THE DRUG BUSINESS.*†

BY W. L. DuBOIS.

The Chairman of the Historical Section has written to ask me if I would prepare a paper on my impressions of the drug trade when I first entered it. I will endeavor to do so, but it must be from memories of long ago. In the spring of 1851 I was attending the school of the Collegiate Reformed Dutch Church in New York. On leaving school one day my teacher, Mr. H. W. Dunsher, asked me if I would like to take a position in an wholesale drug house. He informed me that Mr. Bradhurst Schieffelin had asked him to recommend a good lad and he had suggested me. I went home, talked the matter over with my father, and I concluded to go down town and make an application for the place. The store was then located at 104 and 106 John Street. The first person I met on entering the store was Mr. W. A. Gallatly, with marking pot in hand, as he was shipping clerk at that time. He sent me in the office to Mr. J. H. Westerfield and he took me to Mr. James L. Schieffelin. After a long talk I was engaged at a salary of fifty dollars a year, and given a small desk in one corner of the office. As I remember the firm of Schieffelin Bros. & Co., it consisted of Samuel B. Schieffelin, James L. Schieffelin, Sidney Schieffelin, Bradhurst Schieffelin, A. D. Randolph and John Dix. Mr. Randolph and Mr. Dix with Mr. Westerfield attended to the out-of-town business, and Mr. Horace Willard to the city business. Mr. Willard I remember as a fine old gentleman, loved and respected by every one, and many a red apple, pear or orange I found on my desk put there by him. He died the following winter and his place was taken by Mr. Walter Coon.

The John Street store was connected by a covered glass stairway with a store on Platt Street, where all the orders were put up. My first errand, I remember well, was an order for some pressed herbs at W. T. Peck's, a few doors above on John Street. My work was to get the mail three times a day, to take the bills of lading to have them signed, and to carry the monthly statements to some of the old drug houses, among whom were McKesson & Robbins, B. A. Fahnestock, A. B. & D. Sands, Ward Close & Co., Philip Schieffelin, Israel Minor and S. R. Van-



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† The three historical papers (including this one) have an interest for pharmacists because they link the past to the present in American pharmacy; the personal touch, quite naturally, enters into the writings.

deuser. My second year was a repetition of the first, the third year I was transferred to the City Order Department and there I was taught to put up square packages. It was that same year, if I remember correctly, that the firm removed to a larger building just then completed at 170 William Street, corner Beekman, the business was increasing, but we had plenty of room to work in the new building. Among the boys at the city counter was Mr. D. R. Noyes, who later, when the sundries department was added, was put there under Mr. Elihu M. Weed, who was in charge. Mr. Noyes went to St. Paul when he left Schieffelin's and there he eventually became the head of a large wholesale drug house. Some of the others associated with me at that time were Theodore Edwards, Israel Coon and Jacob Ring. Edwards was taken downstairs to assist Mr. W. H. Schieffelin in the buying department. Mr. Walter Coon had charge of the City Department with a Mr. Meyers as cashier. Mr. Meyers being in poor health was succeeded



DR. ABEL BRACE



DR. THOS. O'HARA CROSWELL

by Mr. W. S. Mersereau. After Mr. Coon's death Mr. Mersereau was put in charge of the department. I was put in charge of the city counter where the goods were put up. Goods going to Jersey City, Brooklyn, and New York City were delivered by express, and 12 M. and 5 P.M., when they had to be ready for delivery, were busy times.

I remained in the same position till March, 1863, when Mr. Benjamin Wey, whom I had known for a long time as an old customer of the House, made me a proposition to go in business with him at Catskill, and I accepted, arriving there on the last day of February, 1863, which fell on Saturday that year. On Monday morning I came to the old store which had been established in 1795 by Dr. Thomas O'Hara Crosswell and Dr. Abel Brace. Thomas O'Hara Crosswell had come from

Connecticut and was a practicing physician. There never has been, or will there probably ever be, one of the profession who did, or will secure, the confidence, esteem and love in which the good old "Uncle Doctor" was held by all ages, sexes, classes and conditions of men. Perhaps as great a share of love, esteem, and confidence as could be transferred from this excellent old man to any other was possessed by Dr. Abel Brace, his protégé, student and partner, and who succeeded not only in business, but in the affections of the people. This will give you an idea of the two noble men who established the old drug store. Dr. Croswell was interested in many things. He, with his brother Mackey, founded the first newspaper published in Greene County, and it was called *The Catskill Packet and Western Mail*. It was printed on coarse blue paper and the latest intelligence was brought by the fast sailing packet sloops which in those days made the passage from New York to Catskill (wind and weather permitting) in something less than six six days. This sheet also contained a goodly array of advertisements, and were interspersed with wood cuts which were said to be the handiwork of the doctor. His brother told that one of them was intended to represent a very black negro in the act of running away with a bundle attached to a stick swung over his shoulders. He said that "Tom sat up shivering through four d— cold nights to cut that little nigger." After he started the store he found that this, with his medical practice, was all that he could attend to, so he gave up the paper. They did a large business in oils, paints and dye woods, and they furnished all the doctors from Catskill to Delhi with their calomel, jalap, ipecac, etc.

When there was a post-office opened in Catskill Dr. Croswell was appointed post-master by George Washington. How well and how faithfully he performed his duties may be inferred from the fact that through all the changes of politics he had the appointment up to the time of his death—fifty years. I quote here from an article written at the time of his death, which occurred in February, 1844. The writer says: "My earliest recollections of Dr. Croswell are associated with the sugar plums and licorice sticks with which his capacious pockets were stored, and which for all my youthful ailments were a sovereign panacea, and whose sweet flavor still seems to linger on my tongue. I remember his kind looks and cheerful laugh, and can recall the very words of the nursery rhymes which he essayed to sing. Albeit, the melody was not of the richest, nor the music precisely such as would be adapted to a modern concert room, for the chiefest merit's of the Doctors warbling was, that it came directly from his benevolent heart. So from early manhood to old age he lived and labored in the village of Catskill. Many whose first earthly gaze was upon the doctor's face grew up through childhood and youth to man's estate, and then gave their last look to that same kind face as they passed away forever. Few who began life with him here remain, and yet he lingered to minister to the children and children's children of his early associates and friends. With no family except his excellent wife, he acquired a fair proportion of this world's goods and was esteemed quite wealthy. Possessed of a liberal mind, and desirous to contribute to the welfare of all around him, and confiding in the integrity of his fellow man, he parted with a large portion of his means, and lived to find his confidence misplaced, and his hard-earned gains virtually lost. Years and incessant occupation had at last begun to leave their mark upon him, and one winter morning we heard that God had called him home."

Mr. William H. Wey, who married Dr. Croswell's adopted daughter, succeeded to the business which he conducted until his death in 1856. Then Mr. Benjamin Wey conducted the business after his father's death for a number of years alone. Then he associated with him Mr. Edward Lavelle, but that partnership lasted only a little over a year, but during it the old store was remodeled in 1861, and at the time was considered one of the finest up-to-date stores on the Hudson River. In the spring of 1863 I became associated with Mr. Wey. The firm was "Wey & DuBois" for thirteen years, when Mr. Wey retired after a very pleasant business relation, in 1876. Since then the writer has conducted the business, but what a change! When I came to Catskill in 1863, we did an extensive business in paint, putty, and window glass, dye woods, potash, and Lorillard's snuff. Every farmer's wife in the fall would get in her supply of extract of logwood, cochineal, muriate of tin and indigo, and would send her wool to the little fulling mills, which were to be found on nearly every stream, to be carded, and she would do the spinning of the yarn and the dyeing during the winter. It was a very common thing to receive, about the last run of the boats, our extract of logwood, logwood chips, fustic, madder and red wood to carry us through the winter. Another great trade was potash. Every family at that time made their own soft soap and it did not take long to get rid of a seven-hundred-pound cask of potash. That is all done away with now, for the people are using the aniline dyes in place of making their own, and there are few now who make their own soft soap. In the old days we sold large quantities of Lorillard's Maccaboy snuff and Scotch and French rappe snuff, probably as much as a ton in the course of the year, that has gradually grown less until now we sell only about two hundred and fifty pounds in a year, quite a falling off as the younger generation have not followed in the footsteps of their grandparents in regard to that habit. We used to supply the country stores with essence of peppermint, wintergreen and castor oil and extract of lemon and vanilla. The railroads and the commercial travelers have changed all that now. The doctors carry their own medicines and put up their own prescriptions, except where there are ointments, liniments or suppositories to be made, we druggists get those. It is the manufacturing of tablets that has hurt the prescription business and made it easier for the doctors. One would scarcely recognize the business of to-day as compared to fifty years ago. My friend, Mr. Wey, remarked a few years ago, "If I was to come in the store now I would not know where I was at." Our trade is simply a local trade and to make ends meet we have to put in lines of trade we would not have thought of doing years ago. The changes since I came to Catskill fifty years ago are very great. All the old people have passed away, and I am the oldest man in business in the town now. I am very thankful for the good health that enables me to attend to business every day. I have had the pleasure of seeing my family grow up and am the proud father of nine children, four grandchildren and two great grandchildren, quite enough for one old man.

REMINISCENCES.*

BY THOMAS D. McELHENIE.

On August 7, 1865, I entered the drug business in Wooster, Ohio, my father

* Read before Section on Historical Pharmacy, A. Ph. A., Atlantic City meeting, 1916.