

Section on Historical Pharmacy

Papers Presented at the Fifty-Ninth Convention

SOME PHARMACISTS IN NEW YORK CITY THREE-FOURTHS OF A CENTURY AGO.

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A country lad, the third of six brothers, with an education primarily acquired in the little red school house, with an added two and one-half years at what was then known in New York state as the "Academy," now obsolete, to secure that education walking nearly three miles morning and evening, realizing the need of a choice of his life work, secured a position in New York City with George D. Coggeshall, corner of Rose and Pearl streets, the corner now occupied by Scott and Bowne's Cod Liver Oil business. The then prevailing arrangement for an apprentice was for four years; compensation, board and lodging, two courses of lectures on Pharmacy and Chemistry, and at the end of the four years, \$150 in money.

The country lad served the four years, graduating at the College of Pharmacy in 1847. He remained with his employer three years longer, and then being seized with a desire to do for himself, opened a modest store at what was then considered out of the city, at the corner of Broadway and 18th street. At the time cows were kept on one of the opposite corners and milk sold; on another corner pigs were kept. It may interest some beginners to state that the receipts for three weeks averaged less than 11 cents a day, and for three months about one dollar. There were no houses above 16th street, on the east side, and none above 23d street on the west side of 5th avenue. Corporal Thompson's coach house was at 23d street, Broadway and 5th avenue:

The store doing the largest prescription business at this time was at No. 6 Bowery, carried on by Adamson & Olliffe. Mr. Adamson was a well educated man, highly esteemed in his profession, of most decided character and opinions. He was president of the N. Y. College of Pharmacy at the time of the enactment of the first law for the inspection of imported drugs, chemicals and pharmaceutical preparations, and took an active part in all movements for progress and higher aims in pharmacy. An answer to his letter to English manufacturers and exporters, viz., that "chemicals and preparations exported to this country were as good as we Americans would pay for," went far, very far, to pass the bill. The store, No. 6 Bowery, is still being carried on in the old wooden building, a curiosity hidden under modern necessity for rapid transit, by the unsightly elevated railroad. There is none of the old firm interested in the present store; all have passed away.

Rushton and Aspinwall carried on the first store on lower Broadway near Maiden-Lane. It was probably the largest and most showy store in the city at the time, and in its history passed through many changes. Mr. Aspinwall separated from the firm and for many years carried on a store at 86 William street,

a wholesale and retail store doing quite a large business, especially wholesale, but he got into some difficulty with the government concerning duties on Oil of Bay, finally made a disastrous failure, and soon after died, and the business closed. Rushton continued the business at the Broadway store for some years until his death, when his clerk, Wm. Hegeman, taking in a partner, A. M. Clark, continued the business until Mr. Clark's decease, when the business continued under Mr. Hegeman's name. At one time he had five stores on Broadway, but alas, panic and hard times came, rents had to be paid, business or no business, and he failed, and soon afterwards died. Mr. Hegeman was a good pharmacist, was president of the College, taking quite an interest in his profession. His son for a few years had a store near 10th and Broadway, and was a most capable and efficient secretary of the College for several years. He died, and now there is only the name left used as a trade mark to exploit the modern departure in business, combinations and associations without an atom of personality in them.

John Milhau, a French refugee from the massacre and rebellion in San Domingo, carried on the next store at 183 Broadway. He was a gentleman of the old school, well educated, polished and courteous in his manners and of kindly disposition; had a fine business, and for many years supplied the navy with drugs. I had the great pleasure of his relation to me at my store of the incident that decided him to choose Pharmacy as his lifework, and I think it is worth repeating. When Mr. Milhau and his father escaped from San Domingo during the rebellion and landed at Baltimore, in order to save some of their property it was necessary to get some gold. After a diligent search all over Baltimore, it was found impossible to secure what they needed, but they were told there was an old Portugese apothecary in the city, and if they would go to him and tell him their story and its needs, it was thought he could supply what they wanted. They did so, and the old apothecary at once went to an iron box and produced the needed gold in Spanish doubloons, so on leaving the shop young Milhau said to his father, I shall have to choose some business, and as the only party in Baltimore that has gold is an apothecary, I shall choose that business, which he did. One of his grandsons afterwards informed me that his grandfather entered business in Baltimore and was able at 20 years of age to sell his business, go to Paris, enter the schools there and graduate as an apothecary; and also related that his grandfather was a relative of General Lafayette, who advised and urged Mr. Milhau to go into business in Paris. Mr. Milhau declined the advice, stating that America was his country and he would return to it, which he did, opening the store at 183 Broadway. Lafayette was at Mr. M.'s wedding, the grandson stating it was one of the reasons of his, Lafayette's, second trip to America. Mr. Milhau took much interest in every movement for educating and improving the members of his profession, for many years was a trustee of the N. Y. College of Pharmacy and its president for some time, and active in the organization of the A. Ph. A. At his decease his son continued the business for some years, but at his death the business passed from the family and was closed.

Charles Ring, corner of Broadway and John street, was the next store. The place was notorious as a back-room bar. It was not very long lived as a business. Ring was my immediate predecessor at G. D. Coggeshall's as clerk.

The store at the corner of Broadway and Chamber was the next, kept by

a Mr. Hart, a quiet man who seemed to do a nice business and never to be much interested outside of his store. The business was closed when A. T. Stewart put up his great store on that block, including the drug store corner.

John Meachim was the next, at 511 Broadway. He was a graduate in pharmacy, and clerk, I think, at the Hegeman store; was greatly interested in his profession, secretary of the College of Pharmacy for many years, had a good business, continued for many years at the same place. At his death his clerk, Mr. Marsh, continued the business at 511 for a time and finally moved to Broadway near 22d street, and at one time the firm was Gautadan and Marsh.

Adamson & Olliffe had a branch store for a time at the corner of Broadway and 4th street. At Mr. Adamsan's death John Caucevan carried it on in his own name.

J. and I. Coddington had the store at the corner of 8th street, under the N. Y. Hotel, for several years, moving to Union Square finally, where both brothers died and the business was closed.

A curious character by the name of McNally had for a time a store at the corner of Broadway and 12th street, but finally sold it to a Dane whose name I have forgotten. The Dane moved to near 20th street, carrying on the business there until his death, when it was closed. Rushton opened a store, Broadway and 14th street, a very showy store, but in 1849 it was owned and carried on by a Mr. Merseveau, and in a year or two by Thos. T. Green, a good apothecary, but irritable, cross-grained and not a success in the business. He died and the store was sold out at auction.

Helmbold, proprietor of Helmbold's Buchu, who used to drive around the city four-in-hand, spent a good deal of money in fitting up a store near Broadway and 17th street, but before he was ready to open it he was declared by the courts to be crazy, and the store was never opened. It was finally sold out at auction.

The next was at the corner of Broadway and 18th street, where it was carried on eight years on the southeast corner, and forty more years on the northeast corner, when it was closed and the business removed to 55th street and 6th avenue, and is still continued.

Now after all these years the lad is still spared, greatly honored by the A. Ph. A. at its last gathering by its action so entirely unlooked for and unexpected. He wonders if it be possible that in the next seventy-five years the marvelous progress that has taken place in his day will be repeated. He remembers that he has counted thirty or forty wagons and teams a day, known as "prairie schooners," loaded with a few household effects and sturdy New England pioneers, on their way to settle the West; now the great states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Michigan. He has seen building the second traffic railroad in this country, from Schenectady to Utica, passing near his father's door. In those days there were no matches, no photographing, telegraph, electricity and its marvelous adaptation in the service of our everyday life. There was no A. Ph. A., even. Shall all this great progress go on? And why not? For even now we see machines and men flying in the air. So it behooves every member of this Association to stand with one purpose, one aim, to raise high the standard of our profession, and do all that we can and should do in relieving sickness, suffering and pain so largely a part of man's inheritance.