

JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION

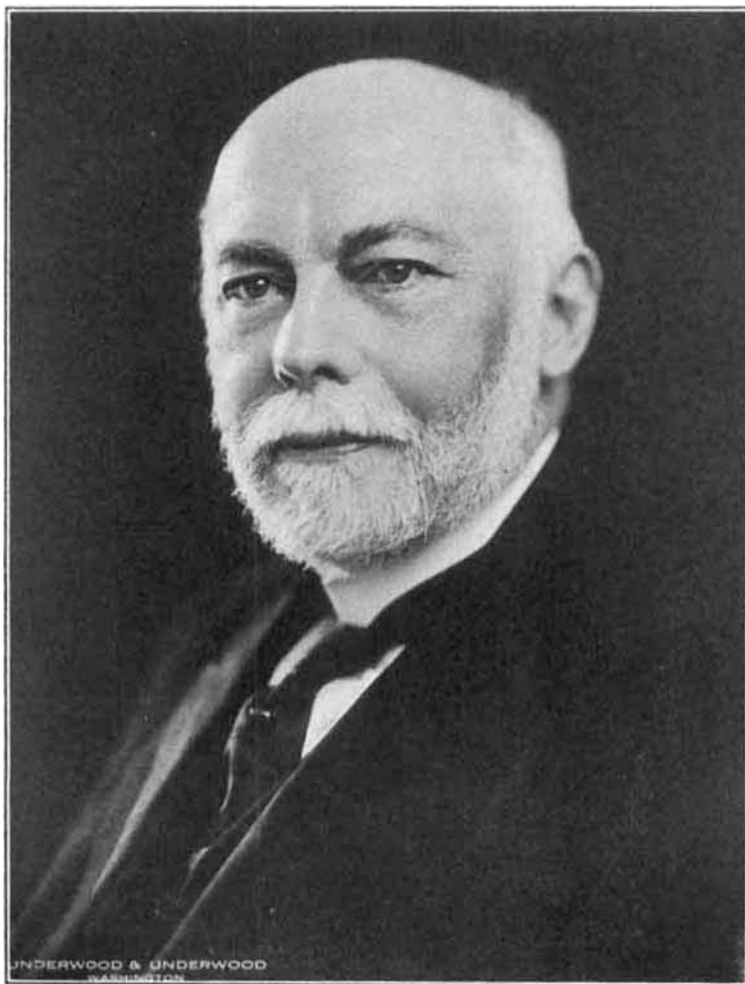
VOL. XI

JUNE, 1922

No. 6

FREDERICK BELDING POWER, PH.D., LL.D., F.C.S.

The subject of this sketch was born at Hudson, N. Y., March 4, 1853, where his early education was acquired at a private school and at the Hudson Academy. At the early age of 13, he entered a pharmacy in his native town, where he served for five years. This was a period of strenuous work from early morning until late at night, but much valuable information was gained regarding the character of drugs and chemicals and a stimulus was given for the pursuit of chemical studies. A desire was soon awakened in him for further knowledge respecting the methods of preparation of chemical compounds, and the first book he purchased as a guide in this direction was a copy of Parrish's "Practical Pharmacy." There was probably no thought at that time that circumstances would so develop within a very few years as to afford this studious youth the happy privilege of being associated with Professor Parrish as an assistant in his pharmaceutical establishment. The first experiment that may be recalled during the early years of Power's apprenticeship was his attempted production of the so-called *pyrophorus* by carbonizing a mixture of dried alum and sugar and heating this mixture in a Hessian crucible to redness in the kitchen stove. By means of the information gleaned from the above-mentioned book, Power found it possible to prepare a considerable number of the ordinary medicinal chemicals, and this collection was to him a source of much gratification and pride. Through the kind interest of a medical friend during these early years of service, the idea was suggested that he should attend a school of pharmacy, and such an opportunity was offered by his acceptance of a position in the pharmacy of Thomas Whitfield, Chicago. At the age of 18, Power accordingly left his boyhood home for the purpose of gaining wider experience and increasing his knowledge. The plans that had thus been made were, however, for a time frustrated by the disastrous fire that occurred but a few months after his arrival in Chicago and caused the nearly complete destruction of the city. Power decided in the spring of 1872 to go to Philadelphia, and but a few hours after his arrival in that city he was offered a position in the pharmacy of Professor Edward Parrish. A new world was here unfolded to the aspiring youth, and it was his good fortune to have become intimately acquainted with many of the leaders in pharmacy of the period; the friendships and recollections of those days have been cherished by him through all the later years of his life.



Underwood & Underwood Studios, Washington, D. C.
FREDERICK BELDING POWER.

Affiliated with the American Pharmaceutical Association in 1872.

It was in 1872, just half a century ago, that the subject of this sketch became a member of the American Pharmaceutical Association, and his application for membership was signed by Professors Parrish and Maisch. It was also just fifty years ago that camphor monobromide was first prepared by Power on a large scale in Parrish's laboratory, and a specimen of this product in handsome, colorless crystals made in 1872, is now preserved in the United States National Museum at Washington.

The lamented death of Prof. Edward Parrish in the summer of 1872 while on a peace mission to the Indians in what was then the Indian Territory, now the State of Oklahoma, led to the recall of Prof. William Procter, Jr., from his retirement, in order to deliver the lectures in pharmacy, and he died at the close of the session in 1874. The course of instruction at the college, which then consisted only of evening lectures, during a period of about five months for two consecutive years, together with optional exercises in the chemical laboratory, was attended by Power, and he graduated with high honors in 1874, having been awarded by the Alumni Association the highest prize in chemistry. A close friendship was then formed with one of his classmates, Henry S. Wellcome, which has continued unabated through all the intervening years. It could then not have been foreshadowed that it would lead to so much closer association with him in the future.

Having been persuaded by some of his friends to continue his scientific studies, Power decided to go to Germany. He was accordingly matriculated at the University of Strassburg in 1876, and pursued his studies there for four years, receiving in 1880 the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. During that period he attended the lectures in several branches of natural science, worked daily in the laboratories, carried out important researches, and was brought into close association with his teachers. He was especially befriended by Professor Flueckiger, who constantly manifested a deep and almost fatherly interest in him, and during the last year of his sojourn at the university he served as his officially appointed assistant.

After returning to America in 1880, Dr. Power was in charge of the chemical laboratory of the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy for three years, when he was called to a professorship in the University of Wisconsin. He there organized and directed the school of pharmacy and gave instruction in both pharmaceutical chemistry and materia medica by lectures and laboratory work. While in that position he also served on the Committee of Revision of the U. S. Pharmacopoeia, and a large part of the work pertaining to the Pharmacopoeia of 1890 was committed to him. In 1892 he responded to a request to become the Scientific Director of the new works of Fritzsche Brothers, then a branch of the firm of Schimmel & Co., Leipzig, which were located near New York, and during the four years that this position was retained many important scientific investigations pertaining to essential oils were conducted.

The next most important event in the career of Dr. Power was when his friend, Mr. Henry S. Wellcome, in 1896 established his Chemical Research Laboratories in London, and appointed him the director of that institution, which has since gained such renown in the scientific world. He was thus in a position to devote himself exclusively to chemical research in which he was assisted by a large staff of highly trained chemists. During those years in London, Power gained a wide reputation for the highly scientific character and fruitfulness of his researches, which covered a wide field, especially in plant chemistry. The results of these researches were communicated to the various learned societies and published in the leading scientific journals. At the same time an opportunity was afforded him

of meeting many of the most prominent scientists of Europe, with some of whom close and enduring friendships were formed.

Dr. Power was elected a fellow of the London Chemical Society in 1896, and he was also intimately associated with the Society of Chemical Industry on the Council and Publication Committee of which he served for several years.

He resigned his position in London the latter part of 1914 to enable him to return to his native country and be near his family. His scientific work has been continued in the phytochemical laboratory of the Bureau of Chemistry at Washington, D. C., of which he has been in charge since it was organized. This more limited field of work has, however, afforded him the opportunity for conducting many interesting investigations.

The many years devoted by Dr. Power to scientific work have been attended by numerous expressions of appreciation from the foremost scientists at home and abroad, and he has been the recipient of many high honors; among these it may be noted that in 1908 the University of Wisconsin conferred on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws, in 1913 the Chemical and Linnean Societies and Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain jointly awarded him the Hanbury Gold Medal in recognition of his researches in the natural history and chemistry of drugs. This was followed by the presentation to him of a beautiful illuminated address and album which represented the appreciation of numerous scientific men in many parts of the world and contained their signatures. On retiring from his position in London in 1914, a gold medal bearing his profile portrait in relief was awarded him by Henry S. Wellcome. This medal was inscribed in recognition of his distinguished services to science during the eighteen and a half years he was Director of the Wellcome Chemical Research Laboratories in London. The presentation of this medal took place in Washington, D. C., in May 1921, in the presence of Mr. Wellcome and a very distinguished company. The address on this occasion was delivered by Dr. Charles D. Walcott, of the Smithsonian Institution and President of the National Academy of Sciences, who in the course of his remarks said:

Dr. Power for fifty years has spent his thinking hours among the complicated molecules of organic compounds, and, because he possesses that peculiar faculty of exhausting each subject which he takes up, has had the greatest influence both in America and Great Britain in raising the standards of our Pharmacopoeias. He has gained distinction by his most difficult and life-consuming researches into the chemical composition of plant compounds.

Honorary membership in various scientific societies and institutions have been bestowed upon him, and he has received many awards, consisting of grand prizes, gold medals and diplomas of honor, from the great international exhibitions at which products of research by Dr. Power were exhibited. Dr. Power was awarded the Ebert Prize in 1877, 1892 and 1906. He was elected vice-president of the United States Pharmacopoeial Convention in 1920. The most recent and greatly appreciated honor was his appointment by President Harding as a member of the National Research Council on the Committee of Federal Relations. E. G. E.
