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1839-1905

RALEIGH, N. C.

Forty-second President of the American Pharmaceutical Association, 1894-1895

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William Simpson, the forty-second president of the American Pharmaceutical Association, was born of Scotch parentage in New York City on May 21, 1839. He died in Raleigh, North Carolina, on June 23, 1905, at the age of sixty-six years.

Though born in New York, Mr Simpson's entire life was spent in the South. His family moved to Richmond, Virginia, when he was five years of age and thence to Warrenton, North Carolina, when he was sixteen. With the latter State, of which he remained a citizen until his death, his career is associated. In Warrenton, when he was just approaching manhood, he began the study of pharmacy, his life-work, under the tutelage of Mr. Ferguson, a local druggist. This study was greatly interrupted at first for the reason that it devolved upon Mr. Simpson at the age of seventeen to assume the responsibilities of his father whose health was failing rapidly. For some years in Warrenton, and then in Raleigh to which city the family moved, he managed a bakery established by his father, and it was in this wise that a livelihood was provided for the family. His evenings, however, were always given over to a study of pharmacy, and he had secured a working knowledge of the subject when in 1856 or 1857 he moved back to Richmond for a time and became employed in a drug store at the corner of Broad and Twenty-fifth Streets. For the next few years Mr. Simpson's study of pharmacy was very intensive and his later writings and teachings prove that it was thorough. In the late fifties he was for a short time employed by Meade and Baker, manufacturing pharmacists, of New York.

On October 15, 1860, Mr. Simpson was married to Miss Anna Cannon Shanks, of Richmond, Va., and immediately moved with his wife to Raleigh, N. C., where he remained until his death. In 1861, a year after coming to Raleigh to live, Mr. Simpson volunteered in a Virginia regiment of the Confederate Army, but the government, recognizing his fitness for a branch of service requiring pharmaceutical skill, detailed him for duty in the military hospitals at Raleigh. He also had certain duties to perform in connection with the commissary department.

In 1867 Mr. Simpson bought a partnership in the firm of Doepp and Jones,

druggists, and by 1870 had purchased the entire stock. Thus began his career as a retail druggist in Raleigh—a work continued until two years before his death. During the thirty-eight years that Mr. Simpson was a retail druggist there were two qualities that characterized the policy of his business. One was unfailing cordiality toward customers and the other was the supply of medicines without charge to the poverty-stricken sick of the community. That his store had a reputation also for reliable prescription service may be taken for granted.

In 1880 Mr. Simpson was one of the leaders in the formation of the North Carolina Pharmaceutical Association, and, together with five other druggists, was named in the first Pharmacy Act of 1881 as an incorporator of the Association. At the first meeting of this organization held in Raleigh on August 11, 1880, Mr. Simpson was elected second vice-president. The following year he was advanced to first vice-president, and in 1882 to the presidency. At the organization meeting above mentioned he was appointed a delegate to the twenty-eighth annual meeting of the American Pharmaceutical Association held at Saratoga Springs, N. Y., September 14, 1880. During the progress of this meeting in which Mr. Simpson took an active part in debate he was elected third vice-president of the organization. From that time until his death he displayed keen interest in the affairs of the Association and often had a leading part in its conduct. This interest and intelligent activity was rewarded in Asheville, N. C., on September 3, 1894, by his election as the forty-second president. The annual meeting of the American Pharmaceutical Association over which Mr. Simpson presided was held at Denver in 1895. His presidential address had education as its keynote, and in the message he urged not alone thorough technical training for pharmacists but stressed the importance of sound high school preparation as a prerequisite to licensure.

The emphasis laid on education in his address was characteristic of his career in North Carolina. An opportunity was never lost by him to stress the value to druggists and the importance to public health of careful, thorough, and systematized training for pharmacists. Shortly after the enactment of the law in North Carolina making mandatory the passage of an examination before incoming druggists could practice their profession, and before there were any schools of pharmacy in his own or neighboring States, Mr. Simpson began the work by which he is best remembered and which gives him a lasting place in the history of pharmacy in North Carolina. Reference is made to his contribution as a teacher. First that his own clerks might be assisted in passing the examinations of the State board, then that other clerks in Raleigh might be helped, and finally, as his instruction was advertised, that he might extend his usefulness to a larger field, Mr. Simpson began and continued a school of pharmacy that was unique in its conduct but highly successful in its results. From the early eighties until within a year and a half of his death hundreds of candidates for license as pharmacists were enrolled as his students and benefited by the brief but intensive and thorough schooling that Mr. Simpson was famed for giving.

Although his teaching was at first confined to his own school and his own race, his ability as an instructor was later recognized by his appointment in 1893 as the Dean of the Leonard School of Pharmacy of Shaw University, a negro institution of Raleigh, officered by white people and noted for the thoroughness of its instruction.

Mr. Simpson was appointed a member of the first board of pharmacy in North Carolina, and by this board elected to the post of secretary. From 1881 until the summer of 1902, a period of twenty-one years, Mr. Simpson acted as secretary and treasurer of the board of pharmacy, and even until his death in 1905 he continued to serve as one of the examiners. But failing health and an impaired vision which finally became total blindness caused him to relinquish one by one the duties and responsibilities he had assumed. The tedium of his executive position as secretary of the board caused him to resign that work first of all. Even so, his twenty-one years of continuous service was the longest at that time of any similar officer in the United States.

It is dangerously easy for a biographer to exaggerate the goodness or greatness of his subject, and hard for him to analyze coldly and report in unprejudiced vein. However, a student of Mr. Simpson's career is presented with so many clear-cut evidences of genius, achievement, kindness, benevolence and graciousness that he need not invoke his own enthusiasm in order to paint a pleasant picture. It has often been remarked that no person needing medicine ever left Simpson's Drug Store without it for lack of money, and it was this charitable impulse on the owner's part that kept him from attaining the financial success he might otherwise have enjoyed. Another quality that endeared him to people was the genuine courtesy that was inherent in his nature. Nothing perhaps was so characteristic of Mr. Simpson as the cordiality of his smile, the heartiness of his hand-clasp, the unaffected friendliness of his manner. Not even total blindness which developed about two years before his death could change the kindness of the man or rob his nature of its brightness. At first gradually and then rapidly Mr. Simpson's health failed and in 1905 he died from the effects of brain tumor.

Thus William Simpson lived his life, possessed of the confidence of associates and the love of friends; earned by repeated proofs of sincerity and acts of devotion; comforted with the knowledge that into the work to which he had dedicated his life had gone the very best he had to give and rewarded with evidence that this best was splendid achievement.

J. G. BEARD.

CHAPEL HILL, N. C.

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NEEDLESS NAGGING OF BUSINESS.

An editorial of a recent issue of the *New York Commercial* states:

"Out of thirty-three cases brought by the Federal Trade Commission in the United States Circuit Court of Appeals, its cease and desist orders have been reversed in twenty-four instances and enforced in four proceedings. In other words, it loses four cases for every one that it wins. Out of eight cases taken into the Supreme Court, the Commission's orders have been reversed six times, which means the ratio of four to one. Put in another form this

means that for every case in which the Federal Trade Commission has been able to force a business concern to amend its practice, four other concerns have been subjected to the annoyance and expense of long-drawn-out litigation to protect themselves against the fanatical orders of the Commission. Nor does it follow in the cases that have been affirmed that any serious public loss was likely to be encountered. In fact, in practically every case the courts were divided, so that the question was a debatable one in the end. That being so, there was no great public suffering or hardship either way."