A ChemEd SYMPOSIUM

50th Anniversary / Division of Medicinal Chemistry

The birth of the Division of Medicinal Chemistry was heralded in the advance announcements of the Meeting of the American Chemical Society held in Baltimore on December 27, 1908 to January 1, 1909, which stated, in part, that Professor Edward Kremers of the University of Wisconsin had accepted the responsibility for a program in pharmaceutical chemistry.[1] Included in the minutes of that meeting is the following:[2]

After careful consideration it was further voted that a committee of three be appointed by the President to consult with the pharmaceutical chemists of the Society as to the advisability of recommending the formation of a Division of Pharmaceutical Chemistry to the Council.

President Whitney appointed to the committee Professor Kremers; Professor A. B. Stevens of the University of Michigan, who was elected temporary chairman; and Dr. R. L. Murray, of Merck and Company, who served as temporary secretary. These three arranged for the first official program for the Division, held at Detroit, June 29 to July 2, 1909. Concerning the first business session of the proposed Division, we read:

The first business taken up was a discussion of the advisability of requesting the Council to establish a Division of Pharmaceutical Chemistry. The meeting was decidedly enthusiastic and thirty-five listed themselves on the roll call—it was unanimously voted to recommend to the Council that a Division of Pharmaceutical Chemistry be formed.

In anticipation of approval by the Council the duly elected officers were: chairman, A. B. Stevens; secretary, B. L. Murray; executive committee, Edward Kremers, J. P. Remington, and J. M. Francis. By letter ballot sent out on October 12, 1909, the Council unanimously approved the organization of the Division.

The objectives were outlined by the first secretary in the following words.[3]

And it will be an excellent beginning for this New Division of Pharmaceutical Chemistry to investigate and, if possible, to agree upon some or a few methods of analysis now entirely omitted from and so much needed in the United States Pharmacopocia.

This is entirely understandable, for on June 30, 1906, the first Food and Drug law went into effect, and the *U. S. Pharmacopoeia* was now empowered to set up legal standards for quality and potency of drugs; many new reliable methods of assay were needed.

However, in a fast-moving world of science, change is *de rigueur*, and the first objectives had to be amplified and finally seem even to have been forgotten.

With the advent of World War I synthetic drugs which had established a place for themselves in this country could not be imported, and American scientists were called on to supply the deficiency, e.g., local anesthetics, barbiturates etc., thus bringing on the scene names like Dox, Shonle, Volwiler, and many others. Not only were the deficiencies taken care of, but newer and more efficacious remedies began to make their appearance. In harmony with the newer trends, the By-Laws of the Division were changed in 1927 and reaffirmed in 1938 to read:

Article I. *Name and Object*

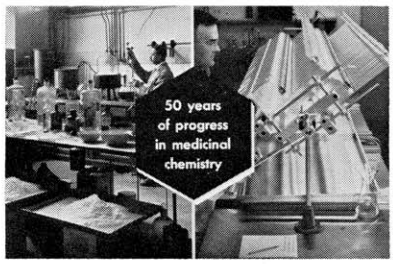
Section 1. This Division shall be known as the Division of Medicinal Chemistry of the American Chemical Society.

Section 2. The objective of this Division shall be the advancement of knowledge of chemistry and pharmacology of substances used in medicine.

It is to be expected that the members of the Division are alert to new challenges, and already many papers appear on the Division's programs which describe the pathways by which drugs are metabolized or detoxified; that is, the reactions or mechanisms by which chemical agents produce their desired therapeutic effects. Our chemists are more and more cooperating with the biologists to attain "completely new horizons—that justify the hope of achieving one of their ultimate aims, namely, to understand the living cell on a molecular level in terms of physics and chemistry."[4]

Walter H. Hartung, *presiding*
Medical College of Virginia, Richmond

The cover



The CIBA laboratory pictured on the left was operating in France when the half-century spanned by this symposium began. The photograph on the right shows a present-day laboratory tool, a Craig counter-current distribution apparatus for fractionation and purity studies on natural products in the Merck organic and biochemical research department. These photographs were selected from those made available by CIBA through the courtesy of Dr. Albert J. Plummer, Director of Macrobiology, and Mr. Gaylord J. Haftiezer of the public relations division and from Merck Sharp & Dohme by Dr. Max Tishler, President, and Miss Janet King of the public relations department.

The Editor is grateful to many who have made the publication of this symposium possible. Dr. John H. Biel, Secretary of the Division of Medicinal Chemistry, deserves much of the credit for assembling the manuscripts. The illustrative photographs scattered throughout the text were made available by Dr. Edward Elslager of Parke Davis Co.

[1] *Ind. Eng. Chem.* **1,** 53 (1909).
[2] *J. Am. Chem. Soc.* **31,** proceedings p. 31 (1909).
[3] *Ind. Eng. Chem.* **1,** 776 (1909).
[4] NACHMANSOHN, D. A., *Annals of N. Y. Acad. Sci.*, **81,** 219 (1959).