

THE PLACE OF THE APOTHECARY IN THE EVOLUTION OF MEDICAL PRACTICE

“WE have to deal here with a sort of men not of Academical, but Mechanick education; who being either actually engaged in the late Rebellion, or bred up in some mean and contemptible trades were never taught the duty they owe to God or their Sovereign, to their Native Country or the Laws therof” – thus wrote Charles Goodall, the energetic defender of the rights of the London College of Physicians, in 1684. Goodall, who became president of the College, had, in 1665, received at Cambridge a licence merely to practise surgery and did not gain incorporation until five years later on the strength of a Leiden MD obtained after a mere thirteen days at that university.⁶ In his character assassination of the apothecaries, he was following the example of another fellow of the College, a man of greater stature, Christopher Merrett FRS, who, fourteen years earlier, wrote in his *A short view of the frauds and abuses committed by Apothecaries . . .*, “But before I descend to particulars I shall first lay down this Proposition. . . . That they may be the Veriest Knaves in England.”

These were but two of the many blasts in the pamphlet war between the physicians of the College and the apothecaries of the London Society that raged for the forty years between 1665 and 1705. On the whole, one gains the impression that the opponents were fairly evenly matched, with the weight coming down rather more on the physicians’ side. It is a different story from the first phase of the battle immediately before the outbreak of the Civil War, when the position of the Company of Apothecaries was indeed parlous.

The foundation of the College of Physicians dates from 23 September 1518, when Henry VIII granted letters patent under the Great Seal for the incorporation of “the College of Commonalty of the Faculty of Medicine of London”. No one was to practise physic within London and for seven miles around unless admitted by the president and College by letters sealed with their common seal, and offenders were to be punished by fines and imprisonment. There was no clause safeguarding the rights of the English universities to be licensing bodies for the practice of physic throughout the kingdom. This was to lead to considerable controversy. Nor was the Act of 1511 repealed. This stated that within London and seven miles around no person was to practise as physician or surgeon unless he were examined and approved by the bishop of London or the dean of St Paul’s, who were to be assisted in the case of physicians by four doctors of physic, and in the case of surgeons by experts in surgery. In the rest of the country, aspiring surgeons and physicians were to be examined by the bishop of the diocese or the bishop’s vicar-general, who were also to seek assistance from such experts as they thought necessary.

Clark is of the opinion that the ecclesiastical authorities must have regarded their powers as having been revoked in London in respect of physicians, as there was little

⁶ A. H. T. Robb-Smith, ‘Cambridge medicine’, in A. G. Debus (editor), *Medicine in seventeenth century England*, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1974, p. 365.

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controversy between the bishops and the College, unlike that between the bishops and the surgeons.⁷ No Parliament met until 1523, when the College took the opportunity of petitioning for incorporation by statute. The Act (14 & 15 Henry VIII c. 5) was passed without difficulty, a clause being added which greatly extended the College's powers, at least in theory. In the provincial dioceses, it was not always possible to find men capable of examining candidates for the practice of physic as demanded by the Act of 1511, so it was enacted that no one was to practise throughout England until such time as he had been examined at London by the president and three elects and received letters testimonial. The only exceptions were graduates of Oxford and Cambridge who had fulfilled all the requirements for a medical degree without being excused any part. The College's very small numbers and lack of administrative organization outside London made the clause completely ineffective, though it is probable that in it lay the origin of the type of membership known at a later date as "extra-licentiate".

The Act of 1540 increased the powers of the College over the London apothecaries, who at that time were still members of the powerful Grocers' Company, by giving it the right to enter the shop of any apothecary, examine his wares, and, if they were found defective, summon the wardens of that company for their destruction. If we consider that the next Act but one of Henry VIII's reign (32 Hy. VIII c. 42) dealt with the amalgamation of the Barbers' Company and the unincorporated surgeons, they had the remarkable foresight to have included in their Act (32 Hy. VIII c. 40) a clause that any member of the College had the right to practise surgery if he so desired, "Forasmuch as the science of physick doth comprehend, include and contain the knowledge of surgery". They thus safeguarded themselves from possible future accusations of infringing the rights of a City company.

The physicians gained greater coercive powers in the time of Mary, and in the early years of Elizabeth's reign were very active in their efforts to supervise apothecaries' wares. Only days before the sealing of the Bill for the separation of the apothecaries from the grocers, the physicians obtained a new charter from James I which gave them all the powers they wished for controlling non-collegiate practitioners, sellers, and handlers of physic, such as apothecaries, druggists, and distillers. This charter was, however, never confirmed by statute, which the physicians were to find distinctly inhibiting as the Civil War approached.

The desire of the apothecaries to separate from the grocers became apparent in 1588 when they unsuccessfully petitioned the queen to give them a monopoly in the compounding and selling of drugs and medicines; at the same time they accused the physicians of compounding physic. Following the accession of James I, the Company was given a new charter and, in 1606, was explicitly re-incorporated as "The Freemen of the Misteries of Grocers and Apothecaries of the City of London". Despite this title, the apothecaries were still aggrieved, as they had no representation on the governing body of the Company and so could not control their own "mystery".⁸ It is possible that their wish to break away had less to do with their concern for the wellbe-

⁷ Sir George N. Clark, *A history of the Royal College of Physicians of London*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1964, vol. 1, p. 60.

⁸ C. Wall, H. C. Cameron, and E. A. Underwood, *A history of the Worshipful Society of the Apothecaries of London*, Oxford University Press, 1963, vol. 1, p. 10.

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ing of patients and pharmacy, than with an attempt to escape the dominance of the powerful oligarchic trading elements of the Grocers' Company. The concentration of executive and electoral power in a few hands in the different companies represented the dominance of the merchants over the craft interests. The history of each of the new companies, for example, the felt-makers, the glovers, and the pin-makers, began in the revolt of a craft, or what Unwin calls an industrial section, against the governing body of one of the older companies who were accused of usurping power.⁹

After an unsuccessful Bill in 1610, the apothecaries made another attempt in April 1614, largely at the instigation of Gideon Delaune, apothecary to the queen. This time they petitioned the king, pointing out the dangers that arose from unskilful persons making and selling "...without restraint false and corrupt medicines in and about London...". The petition was well received. The law officers of the Crown, Sir Francis Bacon and Sir Henry Yelverton, were instructed to discuss the matter with the king's physicians, Sir Theodore Turquet de Mayerne and Dr Henry Atkins. On 13 May 1614, it was recommended that the apothecaries should be allowed to separate themselves, because of "...disorders... many and great... which wee doe impute partly for the want of skill in the Grocers concearning the Art of the Apothecaries, and partly to the disp[ositions] incident to marchants and tradesmen rather to favour the Lucrative part of the trade of undersellinge than the true use thereof, by utteringe that, that is perfect and good". The apothecaries, they added, would be more fittingly subordinated to the physicians than merchants and tradesmen. The king accepted this advice.

The first draft of the charter was drawn up, signed by Atkins, Mayerne, and seventy-six apothecaries, and submitted on 23 May 1614 to a comitia of the College of Physicians, where it was approved by a majority. There were twenty clauses, nine of which were concerned with the control of pharmacy. The most notable of the draft recommendations were that there should be no difference in status between freemen who were wholesalers and those engaged in retail pharmacy, and that no apothecary should be allowed to practise unless he had undergone a seven-year apprenticeship and been examined and approved by both the College and the Company, and, furthermore, been granted a licence to keep a shop. Pharmacy was to be controlled by the College of Physicians and the new Company within the City and seven miles around, and registers were to be kept of licensed physicians and apothecaries. All apothecaries' shops were to be inspected at least quarterly by the president and censors of the College and the master and wardens of the Company, either separately or together. No by-laws were to be made without the participation in Apothecaries' Hall of the president and censors of the College. All freemen of the new Company were to take an oath which had seven separate clauses.

The draft received severe criticism from all interested parties, and it was not until the preparation of second and third drafts that the charter finally passed the Great Seal on 6 December 1617. The most important changes from the first draft are to be found in the freeman's oath, which from the physicians' point of view was completely emasculated. The apothecaries were *not* confined to the formulae of the new

⁹ G. Unwin, *Industrial organisation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1904, p. 201.

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antidotary, or to dispensing only those prescriptions written by licensees of the College. The recommendations regarding registers were dropped, as were restrictions on the supply of poisons, and, most important of all with far-reaching effects, nowhere were apothecaries forbidden to give advice or medicine either in the patient's home or in the shop. Wall and Cameron believed that Sir Francis Bacon, no lover of physicians, thus deliberately frustrated the designs of the College to make the apothecaries totally subservient to it.¹⁰

The position of the new Company was far from secure until at least the Civil War. It soon ran up against another newly constituted company, that of the Distillers; far from receiving support from Mayerne, they were bluntly told that the purpose of the apothecaries' charter was to make sure that they dispensed the physician's prescriptions as he required them to be done, and ". . . not abuse the powers put in their hands but content themselves to use them with order, modesty and reverence to their superiors, the physicians." In 1630, the College decided the time was ripe to tighten its hold over the apothecaries. The physicians demanded that the apothecaries should in future take an even more comprehensive oath, one which they could only interpret as an intolerable insult to their integrity. This was backed by four further demands two years later, one of which was that the College should supervise the pricing of medicines.

The apothecaries were not intimidated, and fought back with vigour. The College issued a manifesto, complaining that the apothecaries aided unlicensed physicians, but the Society replied firmly that they were freemen of the City and so entitled to trade with all, and, in any case, there were many doctors of medicine in practice both in London and the rest of England who were not members of the College. Possibly the requirement the apothecaries found most infuriating was that they should bring all their wares to the College for testing before they were put up for sale. In the end, the Company told the College bluntly that the apothecary's skill and honesty should only be subject to the control of his own organization, and, besides, the physicians were not competent to judge his wares.

The whole quarrel came to a head with the small matter of whether lac sulphuris might be sold by the apothecaries or not. The College appealed to the privy council and the attorney-general. The latter entered a "quo warranto" suit, and the privy council in 1639–40 appointed a body of referees, who seem to have been far from impartial. Their report, if accepted in full, would have deprived the Society of Apothecaries of any independent action and made it but an appendage of the College, for it included such recommendations as that the apothecaries should no longer have the right of search of their own shops except at the direction of the physicians and that their professional conduct was to be regulated by the College, from which they would receive their ordinances.¹¹ The Society had no alternative but to refuse to comply; happily for them, national events then overtook both parties. In the rapidly hardening divisions of the country, the king was impotent in London, and Parliament had more important things to debate.

At the Restoration, the fortunes of the College of Physicians were at low ebb and

¹⁰ Wall, Cameron, and Underwood, *op. cit.*, note 8 above, p. 20.

¹¹ Clark, *op. cit.*, note 7 above, p. 272.

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they were forced to introduce the concept of the “honorary fellow”. There were many doctors in London who had good reputations as men and scholars but who were neither fellows nor candidates. The new fellows were admitted without examination and on payment of £20; as the first list of 1664 held seventy-three names, the College made a very handsome sum of money. The physicians had received their new charter from Charles II in March 1663, and were once more in a position to do battle with the apothecaries, who, in their opinion, had become thoroughly out of hand. Almost immediately, however, the Great Plague erupted, an event that did little to improve the image of the physicians in the eyes of the public.

The attacks of the physicians in their pamphlets were so virulent that one suspects they were nervous, even frightened, men. Possibly some of the more percipient feared they were waging a war which would ultimately go against them; one of them wrote in reply to *Medice, cura teipsum* (1671), “The sick call the Apothecary, Doctor; if allowed to do so they will soon think him a fit and lawful practitioner.” Apparently despairing of controlling the apothecaries by earlier methods, they made a foray into the enemy’s own country by establishing in June 1697 their own dispensary at Warwick Lane, to be followed by two branches. By no means all of the College’s members were in agreement, and many, such as Robert Pitt (later to change his views), Tancred Robinson (friend of the apothecary, James Petiver), Hugh Chamberlen, Francis Barnard (originally an apothecary himself), and Edward Baynard (who started life as a surgeon’s apprentice) refused to sign the approval for making medicines at the College.

Whether the dispensaries were just one more manoeuvre in the physicians’ fight, or whether there was a genuine element of philanthropy is debatable. Perhaps both were present at first, but the endeavour to obtain a contract for the supply of drugs to the navy seems to have had little to commend it. Possibly a lucrative contract was desperately needed to ease the physicians’ severe financial difficulties, and at the same time it would be denied to the apothecaries, but one inclines to the view that plain greed was the motive. In the event, the Society came well out of the business, because it gained all the later naval contracts. The tide was running strongly in the favour of the apothecaries.

In February 1701, William Rose, apothecary, was sued in the court of Queen’s Bench by the College of Physicians under the Act of Henry VIII for practising physic. There was no doubt that he had been summoned to the sick man and that he had prescribed and supplied boluses, electuaries, and juleps, but the jury was unsure if this constituted practising as a physician in such a way as was prohibited by the Act – an admission of the degree to which the public had accepted the physic-practising apothecary. After protracted discussion, the court found for the College. As is well known, a reversal of decision was obtained in the House of Lords on 15 March 1704. The peers’ view was that the earlier judgment was not only contrary to custom but that the advice and the treatment given by apothecaries was in the public interest. Before the Rose case, the apothecary had not charged a consultation fee, a custom which the Lords confirmed was to be continued. In future, the apothecary would have the legal right to diagnose, to advise, and to prescribe, however serious the illness, but he was not to charge for these services, only for the medical preparations supplied.¹²

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This must have led to over-prescribing, but was not necessarily the cause of a national ineradicable demand for large quantities of physic, as is often alleged; a number of other western European countries with a totally different tradition behind them consume today considerably more “pills and potions” than England.

Puzzlement has more than once been expressed at Samuel Dodd’s plea during the hearing in the House of Lords, that the reversal of the earlier finding would be to the benefit, “. . . not only for the apothecaries but for all the poor people of England.” Rose’s patient, John Searle, a butcher, had received a bill for £50, a large sum of money.¹³ The answer lies in the statement of the apothecaries’ counsel in 1694, when the Society successfully petitioned that all freemen of the Society and all provincial apothecaries who had seven-year apprenticeships behind them, should be exempt from municipal office and jury service. He had said that his clients had nineteen-twentieths of all the medical practice in London, including all that of the *sick poor* – a reference to the fact that it was the apothecary (and often the surgeon too) and not the physician who was called in by the parish Overseers of the Poor to attend their sick poor (see pp. 31ff).

During the years prior to the Rose case and immediately afterwards, two groups of people, the druggists and the “chymists”, grew in number. They both dealt in apothecary wares to an extent that alarmed the Society, which, in 1721, approached the College, suggesting they should join together in the regulation of pharmacy. They did not receive the support for which they had hoped, the physicians alleging that the College and the Society already held adequate powers for dealing with the problem. Despite this answer, two years later, the College decided to promote their own Bill asking for new powers, “to search the shops of druggists and chymists and all vendors of medicines as they do now apothecaries.”¹⁴ The apothecaries petitioned against it, on the grounds that no medicine should be destroyed without the agreement of their own wardens, as the physicians were incompetent to judge faulty drugs. The Bill, however, passed, without the apothecaries’ amendment, in May 1724 (10 Geo. I c. 20); the Act was limited to a period of three years.

It was renewed in 1727, in spite of further opposition by the apothecaries, who even went so far as to think of testing the physicians’ expertise in the assessment of drugs. Again, the Act had a three-year limit imposed on it. When it came up for a further renewal in early 1730, the apothecaries made it known that they would only let it go forward unopposed if their wardens were granted an equal share of power. They knew they were on fairly safe ground and that their accusation of incompetence was well founded, because when James Goodwin, chemist and apothecary (though not a freeman of the Company), appealed to the whole College against the decision of the censors to burn five of his preparations, type-specimens had to be obtained from

¹² This clause was not rescinded until 1830 as a result of the case *Handey v. Henson*.

¹³ Holmes, *op. cit.*, note 2 above, p. 187. “. . . ‘but for all the poor people of England’ [provided, one must presume, the poor had £50 to spare].”

¹⁴ Wall, Cameron, and Underwood, *op. cit.*, note 8 above, p. 184. Why the Physicians should have decided on this Bill is not at all clear, as the charter granted to the College by James I laid down that the censors “. . . shall and may have full and absolute power . . . to enter into the House Shoppe Cellar Vault Workhouse or other rooms of the house of any Apothecarie Druggist Distiller and Sellers of Waters Oyles or other compositions. . . .”

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Apothecaries' Hall.¹⁵ The physicians refused to concede anything, but the Bill failed and the Act expired.

After these tests of strength, the two parties settled down to a period of peace. For the apothecaries, however, the problem of the chemists and druggists became ever more pressing. In 1724, they contemplated promoting an Act "for a General View of Medicines over England", which included arrangements for co-operation with apothecaries in other cities.¹⁶ Though difficult to operate, this could have had desirable consequences, and, as we have just seen, was not the first time the Society had shown a concern for the provinces.¹⁷ Two years' work was carried out on the 1724 proposal but it was then dropped, and not revived until 1746.

It is obvious from the declining numbers of the Society in 1746 that there were many apothecaries practising in London who were not members. In order to coerce them into joining, the court of assistants ordered the drafting of a Bill, "to oblige all apothecaries and other persons making and keeping medicines for sale within the limits of the Company's charter, to be examined and admitted members of this Society." Apart from bringing wayward apothecaries into the fold, chemists and druggists were to be forced to become brethren. Powers of search in all such establishments were also sought. The useless exercise of seeking the College's co-operation was not entered into; when they did show the proposed Bill to the physicians, they received the not unexpected reply that it would be opposed. Naturally, the Bill was resented by the chemists and druggists, but it was not their efforts that caused its failure. The physicians made an underground attempt to revive and make perpetual the Act of 1724, which put the apothecaries in the extraordinary position of having to fight what should have been their own Bill. Parliament was prorogued before any final decisions were made.

The failed Bill provides evidence that efforts were being made to band together the apothecaries on a national basis. After the petition from the Society, which was supported by a similar application from the non-freemen of Westminster and the City, there were in quick succession petitions from the apothecaries of Chester and Shrewsbury, in which they suggested that legislation should be extended to the rest of the country. From the examination of the witnesses, there would seem to be little doubt that it was normal practice for the chemists and druggists to send their inferior materials to country apothecaries. One witness, William (later Sir William, MD) Watson, apothecary, botanist, and experimenter in electricity, was of the opinion that two-thirds of the drugs used in the country originated in London and that the bulk of the trade was in the hands of the chemists and druggists.¹⁸ It was rare for a London guild to have juridical powers over provincial craftsmen, two exceptions being the Framework-Knitters' Company and that of the Pewterers. Administrative problems were considerable, but the Society does not seem to have been unduly daunted.¹⁹

¹⁵ Clark, *op. cit.*, note 7 above, p. 495.

¹⁶ Wall, Cameron, and Underwood, *op. cit.*, note 8 above, p. 185.

¹⁷ Clark, *op. cit.*, note 7 above, pp. 442–443. The Act of 6 & 7 Wm. III c. 4 was renewed in 1702 and 1712 and made perpetual in 1722.

¹⁸ 'Attempted legislation in 1748', *Chem. Drugg.*, 1926, 105: 198–199.

¹⁹ The Framework-Knitters' Company had written into its charter executive powers extending throughout England and Wales, and all mayors, bailiffs, constables, etc., were ordered to assist the officers

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The inquiry into the Bill also revealed the number of shops involved. John Staples, the beadle of the Society, related that their searchers visited once a year all apothecaries' and chemists' shops, whether they belonged to freemen or to "foreigners" within the area of the Company's charter and that they amounted to some 700, at least half of which did not belong to men free of the Company. He added that the druggists' shops did not receive such visitations, and he had not included them in his figures.²⁰ If these figures are to be believed, the size of the problem facing the apothecaries was immense; the physicians may well have been relieved that their revived Bill of 1748 came to nought.

The first half of the eighteenth century was not a period of great activity for the physicians, and their relationship with the surgeons was even quieter than it was with the apothecaries. Dissent between physicians and surgeons nearly always hinged on the use of internal medicines, something which was forbidden to the latter. Time and again, they presented Bills and petitions to try and gain this right but were unsuccessful. After about 1706, the College paid little attention to the surgeons and we can guess that the regulation was generally flouted.²¹ Relations between the Company of Barber-Surgeons and the Society of Apothecaries were, as a rule, amiable. The Society had opposed the surgeons in 1689 in the matter of internal medicines, but the two quickly came to agreement in 1705 before the presentation of the next Bill. The apothecaries had the Rose case safely behind them, and the two groups drew closer together.

The surgeons were much irked by the episcopal powers inherent in the Act of 1511, and in 1689 sought for themselves the sole examining and licensing powers for surgery. In this they were unsuccessful, but the bishops became less and less interested in wielding their power and scarcely exerted themselves after the first two decades of the eighteenth century. The surgeons had an altogether different problem then.

The Cromwellian ordinance authorizing disbanded soldiers to practise a trade to which they had not been apprenticed was re-enacted in 1660,²² and again later. On 15 April 1709, a complaint was brought in the court of the Barber-Surgeons' Company that Henry Drudge was "exercising Barbery and Surgery within the City not being free." He "alleged that he having been a soldier in the late Warr thought himself intituled to keep his shopp without takeing up his Freedom by virtue of the Act of parliament made upon the disbanding the Army which gives liberty to disbanded soldiers to exercise any trade within the Corporations or places where they were borne although they had not served seven years to it." The court believed that they had found a loophole, as Drudge had not been born in London, and "... ordered that in Case he did not shut up his Shop in a Months time he should be presented upon the

of the Company. See R. J. Blackman, *London's livery companies*, London, Sampson Low, Marston, [n.d.], p. 202. The jurisdiction of the London Pewterers over standards of production was extended throughout the realm by virtue of their charter. See J. Hatcher and T. C. Barker, *A history of British pewter*, London, Longman, 1974, p. 174.

²⁰ In spite of the failure of the Act, the College continued to visit chemists and druggists until March 1856, but even when a shop was reported to be of a very poor standard, they do not seem to have tried to exact penalties. See L. Dopson, 'State of London chemists' shops in the 18th and early 19th centuries', *Chem. Drugg.*, 1955, 163: 718-721.

²¹ Clark, *op. cit.* note 7 above, p. 500.

²² C. Hill, *The century of revolution, 1630-1714*, Walton-on-Thames, Thomas Nelson, 1980, p. 176.

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statute made in the 32nd. year of King Henry VIII.”²³ Nothing more seems to be recorded of the matter.

The Surgeons’ Company, after its separation from the barbers of the old Barber-Surgeons’ Company, had even less coercive powers than their predecessor, owing to the loose manner in which their constitution had been drawn up. In 1749, an Act was passed that allowed, “such officers, marines and soldiers as have been in his Majesty’s service since the accession of George II to set up in trade without any let, suit or molestation”, even though they had served no apprenticeship. The new Company was in no position to enforce the examination of such men who practised as surgeons, nor could they exact any penalty, which unfortunate situation was fully confirmed by Sir Dudley Ryder.²⁴ In 1763, another Act extended the exemption to those who had been in the services since 1749, and went so far as to include their wives and children as well. Counsels’ opinions were again sought, but their views were no more encouraging.

Thus, even in London, by the mid-eighteenth century, the neat boundaries and spheres of influence of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries beloved of many medical historians had faded away.²⁵ The physicians had failed to control the apothecaries, the apothecaries gave up all attempts to control the chemists and druggists, and the surgeons were quite unable to control the retired army and navy surgeons.

The position in the provinces was even more fluid. Raach has shown that between 1603 and 1643 there were 800 physicians outside London, almost ten times the number admitted by the College for practice inside London and thirty-two times greater than the extra-licentiates; three-quarters of them had matriculated, and a quarter had an MD, but, as Roberts noted, Raach’s *Directory* gives no hint that many of the physicians listed were in fact surgeons and apothecaries practising physic who had taken out episcopal licences.²⁶ Nor is this surprising, for the case of Thomas Edwards, apothecary of Exeter, in 1607, in which he won the right to practise as a physician was as great a watershed in the provinces as the Rose case in London a hundred years later.

The licences granted by the episcopal authorities had little to do with a man’s medical qualifications, indeed, they were usually issued *after* he had been in practice for years; as Rowse wrote, they were rather “certificates of honesty and good conduct”.²⁷ The College made a feeble attempt in 1556 to control provincial practice, and a few prosecutions took place, but we must suppose that any other control that was exerted must have lain with the guilds, to which, by an Act of Edward III in 1363, every man practising a trade had to belong.

No town outside the capital was large enough to possess single, unmixed guilds for

²³ Guildhall Library, Company of Barber-Surgeons’ court minutes, MS. 5257/7, f. 31.

²⁴ C. Wall, *The history of the Surgeons’ Company, 1745–1800*, London, Hutchinson, 1937, p. 139.

²⁵ Wall, Cameron, and Underwood, op. cit., note 8 above, p. 188. Writing of a period as late as the 1770s, they stated: “The healing art was still looked upon as divided into separate territories presided over by different corporations and none must encroach upon the other. The surgeons ruled their own domain and no apothecary must venture to conduct the most trivial surgical procedure.”

²⁶ R. S. Roberts, ‘The personnel and practice of medicine in Tudor and Stuart England’, Part I: ‘The provinces’, *Med. Hist.*, 1962, 6: 363–382, see p. 363.

²⁷ A. L. Rowse, *The Elizabethan renaissance, the cultural achievement*, London, Macmillan, 1972, p. 260.

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either the barber-surgeons or the apothecaries. Matthews successfully traced the line of descent of those who dealt in apothecary wares and pharmacy from the Spicer of the thirteenth century to the grocer of the fifteenth and the apothecary of the next century in the towns of York, Leicester, Norwich, and Canterbury.²⁸ In Canterbury, the apothecaries were in a fellowship that included grocers, chandlers, and fishmongers; in Leicester, they were in a large guild of merchants, whilst in Norwich they were, in 1561, associated with physicians and barber-surgeons, but, after civic re-organization in 1622, they were placed in the fourth company, which comprised upholders, tanners, and others. The Fraternity of the Blessed Mary in York became, in 1408, the Guild of Corpus Christi, which, in its turn, was incorporated in 1581 into the wealthy Merchant Adventurers' Company, which included apothecaries, mercers, grocers, and ironmongers.²⁹

The boundaries between the different guilds were by no means hard and fast. Berger has shown that a protracted battle went on between the Barber-Surgeons' and the Mercers' companies of Coventry for the allegiance of the apothecaries. In 1578, the former prosecuted a non-freeman before the mayor and council for illegally retailing drugs, yet in 1593, the latter, while ratifying a new set of by-laws, claimed that the town's apothecaries were under their control.³⁰ Berger believes them to have been evenly divided between the two groups.

There is no reason to suppose that the provincial guilds were any more vigorous than their London contemporaries in pursuing errant freemen and non-freemen, but records are, on the whole, scant. Where they do exist, as, for example, those of the Barber-Surgeons' and Tallow-Chandlers' Company and the Mercers', Grocers' Apothecaries' and Ironmongers' Company of Chester, the records deteriorate so rapidly and so completely after about 1720 that it seems reasonable to suppose that there had been a collapse in guild power. A similar picture is to be seen at Bristol, except that the date was some thirty years later.³¹

It should not be forgotten in considering the organization of medical practice in the provinces that by no means all towns had guilds; indeed, in 1689, of 200 towns in England, only a quarter had any organized guilds at all.³² It is frequently stated, and probably with much truth, that the prosperity of the rapidly rising industrial towns such as Birmingham was due to the fact that they were not chartered boroughs, had no guilds, and Dissenters were free from the restrictions imposed by the Clarendon Code. The practice of medicine and pharmacy must have been equally free from control, though with what result is not always clear.

²⁸ L. G. Matthews, 'Spicers and apothecaries in the city of Canterbury', *Med. Hist.*, 1965, 9: 289–291; *idem*, 'The spicers and apothecaries of Norwich', *Pharm. J.*, 1967, 198: 5–9; *idem*, 'The city of York's first spicers, grocers and apothecaries', *Pharm. Hist.*, 1971, 1: pt 1, 2–3.

²⁹ For Norwich, see Margaret Pelling and Charles Webster, 'Medical practitioners', in C. Webster (editor), *Health, medicine and mortality in the sixteenth century*, Cambridge University Press, 1979, pp. 165–235, see pp. 210–215; and Margaret Pelling's paper in *Scienze, credenze occulte, livelli di cultura*, Florence, Olschki, 1982. For York, see T. D. Whittet, 'The apothecary in provincial guilds', *Med. Hist.*, 1964, 8: 245–273, see p. 259.

³⁰ R. M. Berger, 'Mercantile careers in the early seventeenth century: Thomas Atherall, a Coventry apothecary', *Warks. Hist.*, 1981–2, 5: 37–51, see p. 42.

³¹ For a fuller discussion, see J. Burnby, 'Apprenticeship records', *Trans. Br. Soc. Hist. Pharm.*, 1977, 1: 145–177, see pp. 172–174.

³² Hill, *op. cit.*, note 22 above, p. 176.