ON THE WORK OF THE COUNCIL ON PHAR- 
MACY AND CHEMISTRY OF THE AMER-
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Among the many reforms which have 
sprung up in the last few years and have 
grown in a modest way one may be men-
tioned which, while of great practical 
value to the public, has appealed first and 
directly to medical men only, and has 
therefore been generally overlooked by 
the people at large. To understand the 
gene-
sis of this reform a few words of history 
will be necessary.

We do not have to go back very far to re-
call a time when a marvelous faith was 
placed in the power of drugs to cure or 
alleviate all manner of ills. Many of these 

drugs were of the crudest description, and 
were often extracts or tinctures of various 
barks, roots or leaves of somewhat uncer-
tain composition, used alone or in combina-
tion with certain inorganic, and a few or-

ganic salts. The use of these things was an 
inheritance and also a development from 
older usages, going back to the materia 
medica of the disciples of Galen, on the one 
hand, or to the mineral chemistry of the 
followers of Paracelsus, on the other. In 
spite of the advance of knowledge the 
pharmacopoeias of the nineteenth century 
contained a great deal of rubbish, the 
weeding out of which has been a difficult 
task.

In consequence, however, of the rapid 
advance of knowledge a gradual distrust 
of the value of the great majority of drugs, 
and indeed of drugs in general, began to 
appear among medical men. The situation 
was described as one of therapeutic nihil-
Science 32 (834), 889-928.