

Along the Years . . .



William A. Strother had thought it all out. He was twenty-one years old and had completed his druggist's apprenticeship with Mr. John P. Wright. There was a good place for him in Mr. Wright's store, but young Strother's fancy ran to something more than a comfortable job. He had decided—come what may—to stake everything, savings and credit, on a venture in Lynchburg. He had in fact bought out, lock, stock and barrel, the drug business of Dr. D. R. Lyman.

For a man just turned voter and still new in town, his decision was to say the least a brave one. But those were times when a young man saw the best of all possible worlds unfolding its marvels. The new mechanical age had seized the mud-street village of Lynchburg and was remaking it into what wonders he scarcely knew—but he intended to grow with them. Why, down by the canal they were already building a gas lighting plant and 'twas said the town council was going to light the streets as bright as day! Some town people were right then building a railroad pushing the tracks out daily to capture the trade of the cotton rich South and the teeming West. They already had a locomotive—the first many had seen—chugging with marvelous power on the new tracks. And then there was that newest wonder, the magnetic telegraph. William had seen the men stringing the wire that would bring the world to Lynchburg and yet it was only yesterday that he had come as a lad from Richmond by the only conveyance—the four-mile-an-hour canal boat.

Yes, those were wondrous times filled with hope and William Strother boldly added to his standard drug stock the latest proprietary remedies all displayed by that new marvel, gas illumination. He had been at great pains to secure only authenticated proprietaries, a feat of some magnitude in the days when the markets were flooded with all manner of ingenious forgeries of labels and trade marks.

We of today might well envy the solid atmosphere of Strother's old establishment with its neat array of gold lettered jars of rhubarb, goose grease and camphor. There was little of the variety store about the place but, even then, druggists carried more than drugs. Dr. Strother— for so he was respectfully known—kept on hand window glass, putty, painter's oils and colors. These were usual sidelines of druggists in those days, but Dr. Strother went beyond this. For example, only shortly after Commodore Perry opened our trade with Japan, he had Japanese painted trays on display.

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