

Book Reviews

LES APOTHECAIRES DIEPPOIS DU XVI^E au XIV^E SIECLE. Par André Liôt.
Brochure de 89 pages. Société Libre des Pharmaciens de Rouen. 1912.

Well nigh twenty years ago, the writer began the study of local pharmaceutical history by spending leisure hours during vacation in newspaper offices, going through the old files, page for page, in search of material that might serve as documents. He was criticized by a good friend who claimed that the editing of local documents was not history, nevertheless he continued and even today is happy if he can find a leisure moment to rummage through a volume of old newspaper files in the Library of the State Historical Society. It is perfectly true that the collection and editing of documents is not writing history, yet historical generalization based on intuition, as it were, is worse, it is false history. Too many mistakes have been made in the attempt to write history without a knowledge of facts as they may be found in documents ordinarily not known to the so-called historian.

If one reads the edict of Federic II, as published in the histories of pharmacy, the thinking reader naturally wonders why the pharmaceutical millenium did not reign during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Yet these were the times in which modern European pharmacy but had its birth, and not an easy one, but one accompanied with much travail. In order to appreciate the contradiction between edict and practice, it is necessary to understand the political situation of the Holy Roman Empire, and to be further told, if necessary, that, as Freytag expresses it in his "Bilder aus der deutschen Vergangenheit," the edicts were not obeyed in the country in which they were issued, much less in other countries that constituted the political conglomerate ready to fall apart as soon as roughly handled by a political opponent to the royal *primus inter pares*.

In France the political situation was not dissimilar to that in Germany and it cannot be good history to write an account of the pharmaceutical past of France simply because the author possesses a fund of information concerning the Paris corporation. It has been very gratifying, therefore, to those who are seriously interested in the past of our calling, to see how much study is being bestowed upon the local development of French pharmacy. A number of more or less pretentious monographs have appeared in the last decade and the good work seems to continue without interruption. The latest monograph has appeared under the above title as one of the "Contributions to the history of pharmacy in Normandy." It was presented as a thesis for the doctor's degree at Lille by the author, who is "Préparateur de Chimie et de Radiologie" at the General Hospital at Rouen, and has been published by the "Société Libre des Pharmaciens de Rouen" which has the exclusive sale of the book.

To the student of American pharmaceutical history, the inventories of medicine chests made up at Dieppe, at one time the principal seaport of France, are

of special interest. They reveal the names of medicaments with which the sea-going crafts, that crossed the Atlantic to New France, were provided. No doubt, these medicaments were not only used en route but in the American ports as well in which these vessels were anchored. Hence these lists may throw some light upon the materia medica available to the early, though transient, practitioner on this side of the Atlantic.

While these monographs are making better known the past of French pharmacy and will ultimately make possible the writing of a true history of French pharmacy, they are serving another equally useful purpose at the present time. Whereas some of the modern commercial tendencies seem to weaken the foundation on which professional pharmacy rests, these historical studies strengthen it. Pharmacy is more in need than ever of scientific research on the one hand and of historic research on the other. May both receive greater support with each year and thus bring about the pharmaceutical renaissance of the future.

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GESCHICHTE DER CHEMIE. Kurzgefasste Darstellung von Dr. Thor. Ekecrantz, O. Professor der Chemie und Pharm. Chemie an dem Pharmazeut. Institut zu Stockholm. Aus dem Schwedischen Original von Verfasser Bearbeitet. Ein Bd. pp. viii, 230 mit funfundzwanzig Bildnissen im Text. Leipzig. Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft M. B. H., 1913.

Inasmuch as the book is not provided with a preface, the reader is left to surmise what induced the author to publish this history and what principles guided him in writing it. There are eight chapters, the first four of which are devoted to the period of antiquity, the alchemistic period, the iatrochemical period and the phlogistic period respectively. Chapter five is devoted to the downfall of the phlogistic doctrine. Chapter six bears the heading "Chemical research after Lavoisier up to the middle of the nineteenth century," and chapter eight that of the "Development of theoretical chemistry from the middle of the nineteenth century up to the present time. Chapter eight is a three page, hence totally inadequate account of the "Development of chemical instruction" and comprises chemical literature as well as institutions for instruction.

Chapters one to four are an attempt at a brief but well rounded presentation of the guiding theories as well as the practical accomplishments of the respective periods. Detail is in large measure suppressed by placing short biographical sketches of the principal representatives at the end of the respective chapters. The next three chapters are devoted to theoretical considerations only. The short biographies with occasional portraits are again appended, hence in no way mar the presentation of conflicting theories and hypotheses.

Those of us who are interested in the renaissance of the history of the sciences welcome every new treatise as a manifestation of the spread of the attention that is being devoted to this, so long neglected, aspect of the natural sciences. It does not follow, however, that each attempt at writing chemical history comes up to our expectations. The course in the history of chemistry as a part of a college or university education is still in its formative stages and teachers do not appear to have come any where near to an agreement as to what ought to