

# BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PHARMACEUTICAL RESEARCH

Compiled by A. G. DuMez, Reporter on the Progress of Pharmacy.

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### PHYTOCHEMICAL LITERATURE.\*

BY EDWARD KREMERS.

With the classification of all natural objects as belonging to one of the three natural kingdoms, mineral, vegetable and animal by Emanuel Koenig in 1682, it became the practice of authors of chemical texts to arrange the *materia chemica* in like manner. A text of far-reaching influence is Lemery's *Cours de Chimie* which first appeared in 1675 and which served as a standard text in many countries for a century and a half. The division on Plant Chemistry in this treatise resembles a text on vegetable *materia medica* during the second half of the 19th century, rather than a text on phytochemistry. But very few chemical individuals are enumerated by Lemery. Even Berzelius *Lehrbuch*, as late as 1837, still suggests this resemblance though, by that time, many chemical individuals had been isolated from plants and receive due consideration in the text. Still later, in Liebig's *Handbuch der Chemie* of 1843 a goodly share of the section devoted to "Organic Chemistry" is replete with phytochemical material.

With the second half of the 19th century the tendency toward synthetic compounds gained the ascendancy. Witness Berthelot's *Chimie organique fondée sur la synthese* of 1860. After that Kekulé's structural theories prepared the way for a veritable orgy of synthetic organic chemistry. During the fourth quarter of the 19th century, organic chemistry began to share its primacy with physical chemistry and since the beginning of the 20th century, not only inorganic chemists, but organic chemists as well, have been trained largely in physico-chemical methods and have applied the new viewpoint to their researches.

If the chemical developments of the past half century have revealed a strong tendency away from the study of the products of plant life, the latest development has drifted, nevertheless, into an application of both synthetic organic chemistry and physical chemistry to the study of life problems. Thus Emil Fischer is quoted as having stated that "The great and stimulating problems of organic chemistry have their roots in their application to biology." His ambition, it has been said, was to synthesize a sugar, an alkaloid and a protein. He accomplished this and much more for phytochemistry though he seldom worked with plants as such. If Emil Fischer has done much for what may be regarded as phytochemical statics, so-called biochemists of to-day are utilizing their physico-chemical training in the study of phytochemical as well as zoöchemical kinetics. Both points of attack of the chemistry of plants are equally important. One danger in the latter point of view lies in the fact that its methods are not infrequently based on an insufficient knowledge of the chemical individuals involved in the investigation, hence, the interpretation of results may go astray. The present biochemical situation is comparable in a measure to the one existing in

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\* Section on Historical Pharmacy, A. PH. A., Miami meeting, 1931.