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With an Introductory Note

by DENIS I. DUVEEN

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

SOME years preceding the second World War I conceived the idea of publishing an annotated catalogue of my books which was intended to supplement the meagre bibliographical armament at the disposal of the student of the history of chemistry and its literature. Once hostilities ceased, I put in hand publication of my *Bibliotheca Alchemica et Chemica*, London, E. Weil, 1949, which described the collection. At this period my wife and I decided to emigrate to the United States, and we brought the books with us. These books represented about twenty years of collecting; they are now in the possession of the University of Wisconsin.

Since the compilation of the catalogue, I continued acquiring books not included in my previous collection with the intention of forming a second library and eventually publishing a second annotated catalogue. It is the collection of these books which is now offered for sale through the House of H. P. Kraus as a Supplement to the *Bibliotheca Alchemica et Chemica*. It consists almost entirely of items not represented in my original library and was assembled from the point of view of a person primarily interested in the history of chemistry.

Such an interest leads one imperceptibly into the fields of alchemy, pharmacology and balneology. Previous to the middle of the eighteenth century we find alchemy and chemistry inextricably mixed and this explains the presence of a number of works on the former subject. The development of chemistry was greatly furthered by the iatrochemists whose primary interest lay in the study of the effects of various chemical compounds on the human body; their labors brought about improved methods of preparation, purification and characterization of numerous chemicals. The history of this development is to be found recorded in works devoted to pharmacology, and for this reason a quantity of books on this subject, too, will be found in the present collection.

Also included is my collection of books on balneology, and this fact is due to a realization of the great importance of these works for following developments of chemistry and analytical chemistry in particular. This important aspect of cultural and scientific history seems hardly to have been touched upon and work in this field certainly needs to be undertaken. Certain of the great Medical Libraries of this country have small holdings on the subject and there are some works on the subject at Saratoga. The present collection is, however, apparently the largest of such books recorded. It includes a number of works unknown to Proskauer and not mentioned in his bibliography*; they do not exist in any of the numerous European and American libraries or in the bibliographical works which he consulted.

* *Bibliography of Balneology and Hydrotherapy* by Dr. Curt Proskauer: sponsored by the "Doctor Simon Baruch Foundation for Medical Research"; not printed but cards on Man at the New York Academy of



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It is certain that this collection is the only well-integrated and comprehensive library on balneology in this country, and it would prove a rich mine and valuable source for a systematic study of the subject. This continent possesses many natural springs which are still unexploited but are known to equal or even to exceed in potency and therapeutic value those of world-famous European spas: this fact makes these works of obvious current value. They represent a significant accumulation of analytical and experimental data on the chemical and medicinal properties of the various waters.

American books on chemistry were hardly present in my earlier collection but an interesting group will be found in the present supplement. American chemistry is, naturally, directly descended from European chemistry. Its development came during the nineteenth century, and it is this period which is mainly represented here. Keen interest in this field has recently been shown by American scholars but a great deal more remains to be done - the books here present furnish suitable material for such a study.

A word about the interesting *provenance* of some of the books may not be amiss. A number of them come from the important Prince Liechtenstein Library which has been dispersed in recent years. A few books bear the autograph ownership entry of Jean Vauquelin des Yveteaux (1651-1716), for many years president of the Academie Society of Caen, who lived only for his studies in alchemy, history and theology. Some bear the autograph signature of Dr. John Dietzel (1869-1947?), the Austrian physician and dentist of Marbach a. d. Donau, who occupied himself for many years with alchemical experiments; he flourished under the Nazi regime and enjoyed the protection of Hermann Goering.

Eventually came the realization that an attempt to cover the whole literature of chemistry, alchemy, pharmacy and balneology from the XVth century beginnings of the printed word to the close of the XIXth century was too vast an undertaking for a private collector. Such a task is best undertaken by scholarly institutions - by universities and research libraries.

I had for some time been especially interested in the founder of modern chemistry, Antoine Laurent Lavoisier and his period, in his multifaceted activities and the impact of his work. I decided, therefore, to concentrate on forming a collection of books and documents by or about the great chemist, together with a supporting collection of works showing the trend of scientific thought immediately preceding and succeeding him - in fact, a collection built around Lavoisier and illustrative of the so-called "Chemical Revolution." The first results of this new orientation can be seen in the annotated catalogue of exhibits from my collection held at the Grolier Club last year. Furthermore, I am now preparing an annotated bibliography of Lavoisier's works. Other publications will follow. These facts explain the reason for disposing of the present books. It is my hope that this catalogue will not only help in bringing them to the attention of interested collectors, librarians and scholars, but that it may also prove a reference tool of lasting value.

D.I.D.

New York, April 1953.