

A TEXT-BOOK OF ORGANIC CHEMISTRY.*

THIS book gives, within the compass of 519 pages, a very concise and yet complete view of a branch of chemistry, the modern developments of which fill student and teacher alike with despair. But Dr. Bernthsen wisely, we think, does not attempt extended descriptions of substances. He sketches in his individuals with a few bold strokes, and avoids wearisome detail, of no real value to the student, except when studied in the laboratory. In other words, he avoids the common mistake of trying to give to a class book the comprehensiveness of a dictionary. "The treatment of the theoretical matter is, especially in the first half of the book, purely inductive; the isomeric relations of the paraffins, for instance, are first referred to under butane, and no constitutional formula of any important compound is given without the grounds for it being indicated. . . . the class definitions are based, not on theoretical, but on actual relations." It is thus that the author in his preface gives the key-note to his method; and this is maintained with much harmony and consistency all the way through. A very valuable feature of the book is worthy of note, viz., the tabulated descriptions of classes of compounds. These concise descriptions make plain at a glance those serial relations in properties which obtain among organic compounds—relations which are, in many books, either stated dogmatically, or more or less hidden by extensive details. Students and teachers of organic chemistry will find Dr. Bernthsen's book a good guide.

The translator has given us a readable English edition, and has brought the text well up to date by additions and emendations which have the sanction of the author.

W. L. GOODWIN.

Queen's University, Kingston, May 6th, 1890.

THE RAMBLER.

THE question of promotion upon literary grounds is before us.

There was precious little promotion for Charles Kingsley and Keats and Charlotte Brontë, for Goldsmith and John Sterling and Emerson. Some poets are born ploughmen and some statesmen. The question in such cases should be, I think, Is the ploughman a better ploughman for being also a poet, the statesman a truer statesman? If so, promote them. But at best, the attempt must be fraught with grave difficulties. Because a lawyer writes a successful book, are you going to make of him a judge, and he, perhaps, only an indifferent lawyer? The absurdity is obvious.

Hawthorne said of Goethe: "It would be a poor compliment to a dead poet to fancy him leaning out of the sky and snuffing up the impure breath of earthly praise."

Let us see to it that we kill neither with kindness, nor with cruelty, our little band of singers. But the fact is, the great writers of the world have all had to fight their way. Poor unstable Keats, killed by the epithet, *Cockney School!* I quote Hawthorne again when I say: "He was hardly a great poet. The burden of a mighty genius would never have been imposed upon shoulders so physically frail, and a spirit so infirmly sensitive. Great poets should have iron sinews."

And to wait, and to learn to wait, must be the grand lesson of patience learnt by even the geniuses of our age. Tennyson waited for nine years between the publication of his first and second volumes. Nowadays, the modern sensitiveness of literary men closes their eyes to the real worth of much of their produce. Nine years? Nine days, nine weeks, the modern poets cry. Come, admire us; we are the new voices in the land, therefore make room for us and cherish us. Well—cry so, and no doubt we shall hear and attend, but expect not too much, O ye choristers of the Northern Dawn! For the great singers of English literature have died and are dying, and those who come after, though we would not defraud them of one pulse-beat of pleased appreciative emotion, must be content to take up their individual crosses and carry them. You remember Matthew Arnold's strong sonnet, do you not? with its picture of the fair young bride wearing a robe of sack-cloth next the smooth white skin:

Such, poets, is your bride, the Muse! young, gay,
Radiant, adorn'd outside; a hidden ground
Of thought and of austerity within.

Among local affairs demanding attention, I must not forget to say a word for the excellent afternoon's sport provided last week by the pupils and friends of Upper Canada College. The day was, to be sure, forbidding, but the young see only the "beauty of the rain," and its "useful trouble," therefore, crowds as usual thronged to the pretty green so suitable for the purpose. Principal and Mrs. Dickson were untiring in their efforts to make everyone at home, and the agility displayed by the pupils was pleasing and remarkable.

In this connection I should have long ago, only for pressure of other matter, given voice to the very great delight shared by those invited to attend the performances

by the pupils of the Toronto Church School in a similar direction. This institution, situated upon Alexander Street, is too well known to need introduction here; the roll being a very large one, and the staff of masters giving entire satisfaction, but the particular efforts expended by the Directors in placing first-class gymnastic opportunities within easy reach of all the pupils may not have received universal recognition. The instructor, Prof. Halfpenny, is a skilled expert and trained gymnast, and his method of training has been uniformly successful. I shall follow the excellent example of His Lordship, Bishop Sweatman, and repeat that I have no intention of quoting the much-worn proverb, *mens sana in corpore sano*, but simply refer to the great advantages this school possesses for refined instruction, coupled with indulgence in manly sports. Hawthorne observed that we do not send boys to school to learn Latin, Greek or mathematics, but in order to learn to shoot, run, jump, kick, and divers and sundry similar accomplishments. The great Nathaniel was pre-eminently a healthy-minded man, if he did shine best in tales of a weird and uncanny description.

Walt Whitman appears once more in the *May Century*. How dismal a poet can be when he has nothing to say and will not take the trouble to say his nothing well, only readers of Walt can know. He is not even original in these days, nor improper—simply dull.

IN SILENCE.

THERE is no stir of any living thing
To break the rapture of this holy peace,
All harsher things have found a quick release,
And with my soul I converse whispering.
Without the threshold grief may wait in gloom,
The door is locked, the key is laid away;
None but we two are in this quiet room,
In sacred silence at the close of day.
What dost thou fear, my soul, in trembling so?
We are alone, no harm can meet us now;
We need not mark the hours as they go—
Be glad, my soul, and raise thy drooping brow,
That I may stoop and press thereon a kiss,
To thrill my being with immortal bliss.

B. F. D. DUNN.

THE NAGAS OF ASSAM.

ASSAM, situated in the valley of the great river Brahmaputra, is surrounded by hills inhabited by tribes who are greatly behind the Assamese in civilization, and of whom very little is known in civilized countries. In fact, it is only when a newspaper tells of a Government expedition to punish one of them for predatory raids upon British subjects of the plains that attention is attracted towards them.

The Nagas are perhaps the least civilized of these tribes, and although of late years they have been quiet—or, rather, have confined themselves to inter-tribal fighting—yet, some fourteen years ago, the Indian Government had occasion to punish them severely for raids committed upon the peaceful inhabitants of the plains. Of these Nagas, the principal tribes, Namsangias and Bordurias, are perpetually engaged in fighting against each other. Each tribe is governed by a chief, and they are said to have a very reasonable code of laws, which are kept with strictness, severe punishments being inflicted on all transgressors. Not much is known of their internal affairs; they have no religious ceremonies, and do not practise caste.

The young men are from boyhood accustomed to the use of the "dhar," or large, heavy, knife-like hatchet, which serves chiefly for cutting through jungle, also in the use of spears; and in the handling of both of these weapons they become most expert. They are a savage race, but their ideas of warfare are confined almost entirely to attacks upon their enemies from ambush. One of their methods for defending a path against opponents is to drive pieces of bamboo into the ground, the projecting points of which they sharpen and conceal by strewing grass around, and a hostile party coming upon such a trap are rendered *hors de combat* by dreadful wounds in their bare feet. The men tattoo their bodies, but are not allowed to puncture their faces until they have killed one of their enemies and presented his head to their chief, after which they are entitled to that high privilege. It is a young man's ambition to win his tattoo, for previous to so doing he is not allowed the status of manhood, being permitted neither to marry nor to rank among the warriors. I remember a friend asking a young warrior how he had obtained his tattoo. He answered, "I knew where a well was at which our enemies, the opposing tribe, used to come for water. I went and hid myself in the jungle close to this well, and a very old woman came down to get water. When she came I jumped out at her, and cut her head off and brought it to the chief, and thus I won my tattoo."

These tribes descend into the plains in the cold season, when the rivers, which would be flooded during the rains, are mostly fordable, and the means of communication open. They come down in large bodies, in Indian file, laden with baskets, the contents of which are protected from possible rain by the leaves of the fan-palm woven into a sort of cover. These contents consist of dried ginger, chillies, and other herbs used by the natives. They also bring down chickens and bamboo mats. They sell these goods and take the money to the nearest town, where they purchase

beads for necklaces and other coveted ornaments. These baskets are carried very much as a Leith fishwife carries her creel—by a long band of cloth or bark, which passes round the head of the bearer, and each end of which is attached to the basket, which hangs behind, the weight thus being borne by the head and back. A few men of distinction usually accompany each party, occasionally a few women also, which latter have their heads shaven. This precaution is taken by their jealous husbands, who consider that they will not appear so attractive to other would-be admirers in this shaven condition. And I should imagine they are right in their opinion, for anything that could add to their forbidding appearance, and render them more hideous, their hairless heads supply. I give below a record of one of their usual visits to the bungalow of an English resident of Assam. These visits are a thing to be avoided by solitary residents; but there is ever a natural desire on the part of a young fellow fresh from home to make acquaintance with real savages for the first time.

The victim, may be, is seated in his bungalow, when a servant enters, and tells him that a band of Nagas has arrived, and that they wish to make acquaintance with the Sahib. Out goes the Sahib, and finds about forty Nagas, four or five of whom carry only spears and knives. One, who is evidently the chief, wears a helmet made of plaited pieces of cane, dyed red and yellow, and ornamented with tufts of dyed hair, from the heads of their victims, generally; having, also, a large wild boar's tusk as a centre ornament in front, and a feather from the tail of the great hornbill sticking up in the centre of its peaked top. He also wears necklaces of beads, and into the lobes of his ears are fitted richly-wrought ear ornaments; a belt of brass encircles his waist, and the usual strip of cloth and a few crimson bangles of cane adorn his legs below the knee, completing his attire. This great man is attended by an interpreter who understands Assamese, into which language he interprets the speeches of the chief, who speaks his native tongue.

The conversation is opened by the chief's saying that he is a Rajah, and that the host, also, is a Rajah, and so it is highly to be desired that the twain should become acquainted, to facilitate which he places on the verandah offerings in the form of a few eggs and a couple of fowls, or perhaps a bamboo mat or two. The chief then hints that he would like to see what sort of a present the Sahib is going to give him. He is then presented with a few cigars, a coat or an old hat, and any other articles which are thought to be suitable. He receives the presents, but with a fine contempt which is rather a damper to one's generosity. At length the Sahib hints in a gentle sort of way that he has business to attend to, other than entertaining his newly-made acquaintances. The Naga friends, however, many of whom are squatting around on the ground, look very like stopping, and as they are rather a rapacious crowd to deal with, the Sahib repeats his hints a little less gently. The Naga chief then says that he wants some rupees to purchase a few "knickknacks" in the bazaar, to which he is going. These he often gets—as the Sahib does not like the idea of his bungalow being mounted guard over by a horde of armed savages; and then the Nagas generally go off, having scored heavily by the visit.

When an Englishman knows their tricks and their manners he is not so easily led to receive these savage visitors; and there is nothing like using a distant manner with them at first, such as sending out a servant to say that the Sahib does not wish to become acquainted—for one visit of this kind is quickly followed by another from other bands who have heard of the success of their forerunners. The trait in their character which accounts for their disparagement of presents given them is that it is considered derogatory to the dignity of a chief to appear pleased or surprised at any gifts, however much he may really appreciate them. His role of a great man renders it a matter of savage etiquette to take the attitude of being agreeably impressed by nothing, as though he would say, "I have to enact the part of a chief; if I expressed pleasure at these gifts, it would appear to the Sahib and the on-lookers that I was a slave, and had never seen such presents before." One may obtain the "retort courteous" at a chief who asks for money, by saying, "Surely you don't mean what you say, when you ask for money; great men, like you and I, do not care about money; that is what slaves care for, but Rajahs are above such low cravings." I have seen a chief walk away quite nonplussed by such a retort.

The Nagas are very fond of dog flesh, and the coolies take the opportunity of their visit to get rid of some of their superfluous canines by giving these to them. They are regular scavengers, and as such may be catalogued together with the vultures and jackals, for they will eat the flesh of any animal that has died, and are partial to dead elephants and buffalos, and that, too, when they are in such a high state that one would think no human being could possibly eat them.

Many of these savages are now becoming comparatively civilized, some have settled in British territory, and are quite "tame," and their complete civilization is doubtless but a matter of a few years.

Birchton, P.Q.

HUBERT KESTELL CORNISH.

THE widespread interest in all matters relating to American history will cause a new and cheaper edition of the admirable *Life of General Greene* to be heartily welcomed. The three volumes will soon be issued at \$7.50 instead of \$12. from the Riverside Press.

* "A Text Book of Organic Chemistry," by A. Bernthsen, Ph.D., Director of the Scientific Department in the Chief Laboratory of the Baden Aniline and Alkali manufactory, Ludwigshafen-am-Rhein, formerly Professor of Chemistry in the University of Heidelberg. Translated by George McGowan, Ph.D., Demonstrator in Chemistry, University College of N. Wales, Bangor. London: Blackie and Son.