

500

# THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE.

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*Ad E. A. M. R., Salutem.* The history of medicine has not as yet been written, though many writers of exemplary patience and unbounded leisure have dallied with the ample subject.

The fact, in all its seriousness, that such a history *might* be written, or ought to be written, seems first to have struck the German mind; and a large number of writers of this nationality have soberly addressed themselves to the congenial task. Probably a German scholar's ideal of earthly happiness is to be calmly engaged in writing a work, published by volumes from year to year, and of such a nature that the writer need have no apprehension of ever getting to the end. Casper Neumann's Chemistry may be taken as an example of this sort of work, which, carried on slowly, without unseemly haste, through the first half of the eighteenth century, covered eventually seven comfortable quarto volumes of about eight thousand pages, and came, only with the author's death, to a yawning termination, not unlike the mediæval notion of the edge of the earth.

And who shall have the audacity to say that Neumann's work is not eminently interesting? "Tin," he pauses to remark, "is called in the Syriac and Chaldaic languages 'Bragmanack,' that is, the kingdom of Jupiter: whence are deduced, 'Bratman,' 'Britman,' 'Britannia.'" From a reflection so flattering to the English, the deliberate author composedly passes on to a consideration of the tin-pans of various countries, and, as a digression, devotes a few pages more to an almost enthusiastic description of the proper steps one should take to infuse a dish of tea in one of these same tin cans.

A *magnum opus* of this description has a great advantage over the Encyclopædia Britannica, in that it is all on one subject, while in the Encyclopædia the enchanted reader is constantly vexed by being wrenched here and there from one subject to another. The dream of Casper Neumann was to write on through eternity on the one subject, with the same circle of readers patiently following him *in sæcula sæculorum*.

To writers of this class the history of medicine offered a field of satisfactory vastness, and presently, through the sombre penumbra cast by the subject into the limitless spaces of oblivion, a gloomy constellation of German literary men began to heavily move in slow circles.

SC 114  
Aug 1871