

THURSDAY, JUNE 4, 1914.

MEDIEVAL TECHNOLOGY.

The Art of Dying. In two parts. Pp. 356. (Stratford-on-Avon: The Tapestry Studio, n.d.) Price 3s. 6d. net.

THIS is not a medical or theological disquisition on the most desirable route to Valhalla, but a reprint, in the original spelling, of a book first published in 1705, on the methods then in vogue for colouring textile materials.

It was written for the instruction "of the lovers of the Noble Art of Dying," and the "Ingenious Reader" is informed that the anonymous author was a "Jealous Votary to Physical and Experimental Knowledge" who "purchased the Receipts at a very dear Rate." By means of the book "the Candid Peruser is cheaply obliged with the Select Practical Secrets of several Nations."

In all probability the receipts here collected really represent the best practice of the times, but they now appear very quaint, and a large number of the ingredients were obviously useless. For example, a black on silk was dyed in a vat containing no fewer than twenty-one ingredients, including senna, gentian, marjoram, honey, brandy, antimony, silver, gold, verdigris, copperas, and locksmith's filings. On the other hand (p. 93), "The manner of making a Fatt and preparing hot Suds to dye Woolen blew" gives a description of setting an indigo vat, which would almost stand good for a fermentation vat of the present day.

The second part of the book gives "A Perfect Description of Pot and Weed Ashes," with instructions "how to chuse the best sorts." In this portion there is some very quaint information for the "lovers of Mathematicks" and others: e.g. "Take two Fatts, take them to Pieces and of the Planks make one Fatt and it will be found to make four of the other Fatts" (in capacity).

Shipwreck of the vessels in which barrels of ashes were imported was evidently a common experience, as the art of fishing up the barrels with poles made for the purpose is fully described. Possibly, however, the poles were to be borrowed from the smugglers who had frequent occasion to use them for the purpose of recovering the casks of brandy sunk on the approach of the preventive men.

The recrudescence of handicrafts is due to a healthy revolt from present-day industrial conditions and results, but nothing would really be gained, either from the artistic or the economic point of view, by reverting to the old natural

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colouring matters. As well might we go back to burnt swallows or desiccated snakes for our medicines. The old-world charm of the stage-coach should not prevent us from making use of the convenience of the motor car, and a refusal to make use of modern scientific products would be an unnecessary limitation of the artistic possibilities of hand-made fabrics or other materials.

The book is, however, an interesting historical record.

WALTER M. GARDNER.

TAXONOMIC ZOOLOGY.

- (1) *Catalogue of the British Species of Pisidium (Recent and Fossil) in the Collections of the British Museum (Natural History).* With Notes on those of Western Europe. By B. B. Woodward. Pp. ix + 144 + xxx plates. (London: British Museum (Natural History); Longmans, Green and Co., 1913.) Price 10s. 6d.
- (2) *The Coleoptera of the British Islands.* By Dr. W. Warde Fowler and H. St. J. Donisthorpe. Pp. xiii + 351 + plates. Vol. vi. (Supplement). (London: Lovell Reeve and Co., Ltd., 1913.) Price 18s. net.
- (3) *A Revision of the Ichneumonidae.* Based on the Collection in the British Museum (Natural History). Part ii., Tribes Rhyssides, Echtermorphismes, Anomalides and Paniscides. By Claude Morley. Pp. x + 140. (London: British Museum (Natural History); Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1913.) Price 5s. 6d.
- (4) *Catalogue of the Heads and Horns of Indian Big Game. Bequeathed by A. O. Hume, C.B., to the British Museum (Natural History).* By R. Lydekker. Pp. xvi + 45. (London: British Museum (Natural History); Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1913.) Price 2s.
- (5) *The Fauna of British India.* Including Ceylon and Burma. Hymenoptera Vol. iii., Ichneumonidae: 1. Ichneumonines Deltoidei. By Claude Morley. Pp. xxxvi + 531. (London: Taylor and Francis, 1913.) Price 20s.
- (6) *Catalogue of the Lepidoptera Phalaenae in the British Museum.* Vol. xiii. By Sir George F. Hampson, Bart. Pp. xiv + 609 + xviii plates. (London: British Museum (Natural History); Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1913.) Price 16s.

(1) THIS excellent monograph deserves a niche to itself; not, indeed, because of the inherent splendour of its raw material, for it embodies only the exuviae of a few species of small fresh-water Mollusca, but by reason of its form, its style, and its finished technique. Its quality and dignity are enhanced by the fact that it takes in not only the present condition and past history

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