

Organic Chemistry for Medical, Intermediate Science, and Pharmaceutical Students. By Dr. A. Killen Macbeth. Pp. xi+235. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1920.) Price 6s. 6d. net.

As an introductory text-book for the classes of students indicated in the title, this should be very useful. It is clearly written, and provided with exercises. One might have wished for a little more experimental detail; beginners in organic chemistry are liable to get into the habit of "removing hydroxyl groups," or "adding halogen atoms to double-bonds," or similar hypothetical operations, when they are asked to describe some simple laboratory operation. Chap. xviii., on "Schematic Representation," should be found helpful by students, as the subject is not usually dealt with in text-books. Slight weakness in physico-chemical theory is sometimes detected—e.g. on p. 5, with reference to fractional distillation, one finds only the misleading statement that "the more volatile vapour passes on to the condenser, and a sharp separation is effected." The elementary facts of fractional distillation are not often explained in text-books on organic chemistry.

Lead: Including Lead Pigments and the Desilverisation of Lead. By Dr. J. A. Smythe. (Pitman's Common Commodities and Industries.) Pp. vii+120. (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, Ltd., n.d.) Price 3s. net.

DR. SMYTHE'S interesting account of the mining, extraction, and uses of lead should be found useful by teachers and students of chemistry, as well as entertaining by the general reader. The illustrations, partly reproductions of old cuts from *Agricola* and partly of modern plant, add considerably to the interest and value of the book. A good description is given of the manufacture of white lead, and of the methods of separating silver from argentiferous lead.

Letters to the Editor.

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"Momiai."

IN Gen. Alexander Cunningham's "Ladak," 1854, p. 237, we have probably the first mention of this substance among the mineral productions of that country. Gen. Cunningham says: "The common *momiai* of Indian medicine is, of course, a manufactured article; although not made, as generally asserted, of the melted fat of Abyssinian boys who have been roasted for the purpose. . . . The original *momiai* was only mummy, which at one time was held in much repute in Europe."

It is interesting to note that the extraction from young children still finds belief in India; further, that it is made again a strong lever in the hands of dangerous agitators to disturb and rouse the feelings of the people and set them against their rulers.

I am led to write on this because in the *Morning Post* of September 29 there is a communication from

its Calcutta correspondent (dated September 3) which is worth reading just at present, when all is not going well in India, events taking place which recall the days before the Mutiny of 1857. "A crazy rumour and its effects" is the subject I especially notice, a part of which I must quote; it is so similar to what was in circulation in the Mutiny year:

"At Khargpur, the Swindon of one of the largest railways in India, the ignorant people, including some of the workmen in the railway workshops, had been for some time much excited over a ridiculous and false rumour which still obtains currency all over the country wherever large building works are in contemplation, to the effect that the Government wanted a number of children for sacrifice, without which the buildings of the new district headquarters could not stand. In this instance the people believed that several men had been authorised by the District Magistrate to wander throughout the district kidnapping children. The rumour obtained such wide currency that the District Magistrate went to Khargpur several times, and both the executive and the railway authorities did their best to remove the superstitious belief. The District Magistrate also issued notices in the vernaculars contradicting the rumour."

History is repeating itself. In April, 1857, I was on my way to join the Kashmir Survey Party at Rawul Pindi; there the first rumblings of the coming Mutiny were heard by me. Very few Europeans then had a notion that such a conflagration was soon to come. Warnings were not taken seriously, and were more often received with ridicule. There was unrest in many forms, not so widespread as it is now. To give an idea of the reports then in circulation, one of my servants, on returning from the city where he had gone to make purchases, came at once to ask me whether it was true that the Queen of England was sending out to India an army of several lakhs of men to force the population of India to be Christians. I told him it was nonsense, and asked where he had heard it. He said two Faqirs (religious mendicants) were preaching on the invasion in the streets of the city. The story had evidently made an impression on him, and it led to my having a conversation with another native, in which I heard for the first time of *momiai*, and was told that we sahibs made it. He gave me a very circumstantial account: that children were kidnapped, hung up by the heels, head downwards, and an incision made in the breast from which flowed the wonderful substance which gave us so much power. To prove his words, my informant, who was a Kashmiri resident in Rawul Pindi, said he could show me the very bungalow in which all this was done. It turned out to be the Masonic Lodge—"The Star in the East," I think it is called—situated in the cantonment of Rawul Pindi—the "Jadu Ghur," or mystery house, as it is always called by the natives. In my wanderings in the Kashmir Himalaya up to 1863 the story of the "Jadu Ghur" would crop up. It was thoroughly known in Kashmir, on into Ladak, and extended, I believe, into Central Asia, wherever Kashmir merchants are to be found.

I much fear my explanation of what is done in a masonic lodge, and of what its use is, did little to alter whatever was in the mind of my informant. I do know that these impossible tales carry enormous weight for evil among the mass of the people, both male and female. Their dissemination should be watched and met. "The Viceroy's suggestion that a dangerous agitation in India can be allowed to take its own course unguided and unimpeded by those in authority" is folly, and shows utter ignorance of the people he has been sent to rule.

H. H. GODWIN-AUSTEN.

Nore, Godalming, October 3.