

**BULLETIN OF THE LLOYD
LIBRARY OF BOTANY,
PHARMACY AND
MATERIA MEDICA; NO. 6, 1903,
REPRODUCTION SERIES NO. 3**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649406074

Bulletin of the Lloyd Library of Botany, Pharmacy and Materia Medica; No. 6, 1903,
Reproduction Series No. 3 by Edward Kremers

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EDWARD KREMERS

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of the
LLOYD LIBRARY
of
BOTANY, PHARMACY AND
MATERIA MEDICA

J. U. & C. G. LLOYD
CINCINNATI, OHIO

REPRODUCTION SERIES. No. 3

MATERIA
MEDICA
AMERICANA
POTISSIMUM
REGNI VEGETABILIS
ERLANGAE

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JOHANN DAVID SCHÖPF.

By EDWARD KREMERS, for this Lloyd Library Bulletin.

The author of the "Materia Medica," reproduced in this number of the "Bulletin of the Lloyd Library," was born March 8, 1752, in Wunsiedel, a small town in Bavaria, but then belonging to the independent margraviate Baireuth, the same village which eleven years later became the birthplace of one of Germany's great men of letters, Jean Paul Richter. His early education he received in Wunsiedel and in the gymnasium at Hof. At the age of eighteen he matriculated in the University at Erlangen, which had been founded by the Margrave Carl Friedrich Wilhelm of Ansbach in 1743. In addition to medical studies he pursued the natural sciences, more particularly botany, zoology, and mineralogy. Johann Christian Daniel Schreber, known as the second Linneus, who was Professor of Medicine and Director of the Botanical Garden, was his teacher. After the completion of the triennium he was given the doctor's degree, in 1773, the title of his dissertation being: "De medicamentorum mutatione in corpore humano praecepue a fluidis."

He was not content, however, to settle down to the practice of medicine, but continued his studies at the University at Berlin. Among other studies, he attended a course of lectures on forestry. In order to supplement his university studies, he undertook, in 1774, a lengthy tour through the "Erzgebirge," Bohemia, to Prague, Vienna, Idria, Trieste, Venice, and Padua. At all times and places he endeavored to increase his knowledge of medicine and the natural sciences, and to make the acquaintance of scientific men. The return voyage was made through Switzerland. At the age of twenty-five he settled down at Ansbach, but his heart's desire was to see still more of the world, and we find him planning a trip to India, when an event occurred that caused him to change his plans, and, fortunately for our early American materia medica, directed his steps to the new world.

The Declaration of Independence struck no responsive cord in the hearts of some of the rulers of the petty principalities of that geographic conception then known as Germany. Some of these, "fathers" of their countries sold their subjects to England to be sent to this country for the purpose of subjecting the rebellious colonists. On this side of the Atlantic they are commonly known as the Hessians. Of the 30,000 mercenaries thus sold, Christian Friedrich Carl Alexander, Margrave of Ansbach, who was sorely in debt, contracted to supply 1,285 men. This was early in 1777, at the time Schöpf was planning his trip to India.

These soulless transactions were not only denounced by the people of Germany, but were made a stench in the nostrils of the guilty petty princess by the

greatest ruler in Germany during the eighteenth century, Frederick the Great, of Prussia. Later this same monarch was the first to recognize the new government of the thirteen colonies. It is a moment of satisfaction therefore, to the German pharmaceutical historian,* to be able to offset, in part at least, this mercenary transaction, by the fact that it brought to the shores of the new world so well prepared a natural scientist as Schöpf, to whose writings we are indebted, as possibly to no others, for a scientific knowledge of our flora and the early uses of our medicinal and economic plants.

The contract of his Margrave with the English ambassador caused Schöpf to change his plans. Instead of going to India he applied for the position of field surgeon with the Ansbach troops. The contract had been signed February 1, 1777. The troops were hurried down the Rhine, were shipped from Dortrecht to Portsmouth, England, and thence to America, arriving at Staten Island June 4th.

For six long years Schöpf attended to his duties as army surgeon. As he himself relates, he had seen, in addition to a small portion of Staten Island, only Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Philadelphia. Though by no means idle, even as naturalist, his curiosity as traveler and student of nature was by no means satisfied. So, when the war ended in 1783, he obtained permission to remain for the purpose of travel and study.

In the company of an Englishman, named Hairs, he began his travels July 22, 1783. From New York they crossed Jersey to Philadelphia, thence they went via Bethlehem into the Alleghanies, to Pittsburg, the country on the Ohio River, and to Kentucky. In October, when his companion left him, he returned via Sheppardstown, Baltimore, and Annapolis to Philadelphia.

During the next month he started on his southern tour through Virginia, North and South Carolina to Charleston. Here he remained two months and then went to eastern Florida. After a stay of several weeks at St. Augustine he sailed to the Bahama Islands. He visited several of these islands, making Nassau, on the island of Providence, his principal stopping place. He left for Europe, June 4, 1784, on the small vessel *Hero*, laden with mahogany, brasiletto, guaiac wood, pineapples, and live turtles. After a thirty days' trip, not without danger, the little craft arrived in English waters, and several days later sailed up the Thames. Schöpf continued his home journey leisurely through southern England and France, arriving in Baireuth in October, 1784, after an absence of almost eight years.

In the following year he was appointed court and military physician. When in 1791, Ansbach-Baireuth was ceded to Prussia, he continued to hold offices under the new government. Among the several positions which he filled was that of first Inspector of the "Hofapotheke," at Ansbach. He died before he had reached the age of fifty, September 10, 1800, after a protracted throat trouble. Though early lost to science, he was himself spared the experience of

*Hermann Peters: Johann David Schöpf. Ein deutscher Naturforscher des vorigen Jahrhunderts in Nordamerika.—*Pharm. Rundschau*, XIII, p. 151.

living through the darkest days of Prussia, when Germany was overrun by French troops, and when Napoleon played havoc with the petty princes and potentates.

After his return from America, between the years 1785 and 1800, Schöpf made two trips, one to Italy, the other to Holland, but his leisure hours were devoted primarily to literary scientific activities. The number of prints left by him are considerable. While yet in America he had sent essays to his scientific friends, which were published in several German periodicals. As soon as he had settled down quietly in Baireuth, he began to work over his studies and observations. It is but natural that, as a medical man, he should first take up that phase of his work which most appealed to him as physician. The result was a list of North American medicaments published in the Latin language under the title: "*Materia medica americana potissimum regni vegetabilis. Erlangae; sumtibus Joh. Jac. Palmii, 1787.*" which is reproduced in this number of the "Bulletin."

The concise form of the "*Materia Medica Americana*" prevented Schöpf from making extended comment on the drugs yielded by the plants enumerated. Such details are to be found in his book on travel, which was published a year later under the title: "*Reise durch einige der mittleren und südlichen vereinigten nordamerikanischen Staaten nach Ost Florida und den Bahama Inseln, unternommen in den Jahren 1783 und 1784. Erlangen, 1788.*" This work, which is unquestionably the most interesting of his literary productions, was published in two volumes, and comprises 1,200 pages.

A brief sketch of the life and work of Schöpf is not the place for the analysis of this work, interesting though it might prove to the historical student of American materia medica.* Suffice it here to call attention to the fact that Schöpf's view of nature was not a narrow one, and that his scientific studies are everywhere permeated with an interest in man, the ruler of the natural world. As a result, his work has become a source of information on all matters pertaining to the history of civilization of the original thirteen states of the Union.

Schöpf also published other books, among them one on the mineralogy and geology of the new world so far as visited by him, and another on turtles. The stimulus for such an undertaking he probably received on his homeward voyage on the "Hero," partly laden with live turtles from Bahama for the London market.

Whatever opinion Europeans may hold concerning the rank or importance of Schöpf as a natural scientist, this much is unquestionably true, that as far as our knowledge of the natural sciences, of medicine and pharmacy in America during the close of the eighteenth century is concerned, his work is one of the prime sources of information for the historical student of to-day.

Professor J. U. Lloyd has honored the writer with the request to prepare a brief sketch of the life and work of Schöpf as a preface to the "Bulletin of the

* An account of Schöpf's two volumes on travels, from the pen of Dr. Fr. Hoffmann, will be found in Vol. XVI, p. 298, of the *Pharmaceutical Review*.

Lloyd Library" in which his "Materia Medica Americana" is to be reproduced for the benefit of students of early American pharmacy and medicine. The writer has gladly undertaken this honorable task and desires to express his indebtedness to a more detailed article by Dr. Hermann Peters published in Vol. XIII of the *Pharmaceutische Rundschau*; also to a manuscript prepared by Prof. Lloyd a year previous to the publication of Dr. Peters's article. This manuscript was prepared by Prof. Lloyd at the request of Dr. Fr. Hoffmann, editor of the *Pharmaceutische Rundschau*, and led to the preparation of the more extended account from German sources by Dr. Peters. Other references to the work and travels of Schöpf will be found in an article by Prof. J. M. Maisch on "G. H. E. Mühlenberg als Botaniker" also published in the *Pharm. Rundschau*, Vol. IV, p. 123, and in an article by Dr. Fr. Hoffmann entitled "Fragmentary notes from the reports of two early naturalists in North America" in the *Pharm. Review*, Vol. XVI, pp. 260 and 296.

HISTORY OF THIS VOLUME.

The writings of the early students of American Materia Medica, such as Barton, Cutler, and Rafinesque, refer constantly to the "Materia Medica Americana" of David Schöpf.

This book was not, however, to be found in America, and finally Dr. Charles Rice borrowed for us the copy in the library of Erlangen, Germany. This book was pen copied, the copy being retained. Afterward, Dr. Rice found a copy in Italy, which he purchased and presented our library. This is the original of the *fac-simile* herein presented. We consider Schöpf's "Materia Medica Americana" to be the rarest of American works bearing on the subject of our medicinal plants.

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