

SCIENCE

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NOTE ON THE AGE OF BASIL VALENTINE.

BASIL VALENTINE is usually reckoned as the earliest of the scientific chemists and a great light of human culture.* He is supposed to have lived nearly a hundred years before Paracelsus, or at some time in the 15th century. One of the works which bears his name certainly embodies a tolerably correct conception of the behavior of antimony. Popular writers erroneously attribute to him the discovery and the name of that metal,† together with some of the most elementary and ancient operations of the chemist. But Hermann Kopp, the least unsatisfactory of the historians of Western alchemy,‡ has emphasized certain doubts

* Thus, one historian, Schmieder, opens his chapter on Valentine with the words: "Ein Nordlicht lodert in farbigen Strahlen an Deutschlands Horizont empor."

† Even accepting the works attributed to him as authentic, it remains true that antimony had been used in type-founding before Basil Valentine's book on that metal was written. Berthelot finds the name applied to the same metal by Greek alchemists, to say nothing of its occurrence in the same sense in the encyclopedia of Vincentius Bellovacensis.

‡ Berthelot confines himself to Egyptian, Greek, and Arabian authors. The work of Dr. Latz, himself a 19th century alchemist, affords some insight into the matter of alchemy. Kopp's book is of great value, although he does not pretend to have penetrated deep below the surface. Hoefler's history never had a high critical value. Schmieder and Gmelin are quite superseded. In his earlier *Beiträge* Kopp disbelieves in a real 15th Century Basil Valentine. In his *Geschichte der Alchemie* he admits the existence of such a chemist.

MSS. intended for publication and books, etc., intended for review should be sent to the responsible editor, Professor J. McKeen Cattell, Garrison-ou-Hudson, N. Y.