

Mémoire sur La Chaleur by MM. Lavoisier et De Laplace. Gauthier-Villars. 78 pp., 2 plates. 3 fr. net.

This little volume of 78 pages is one of the "Les Maîtres de la Pensée Scientifique" series. It contains four papers by Lavoisier and De Laplace, published in 1780 in the "Memoires de l'Académie des Sciences." The first three papers deal with their form of ice calorimeter and the last with combustion and respiration.

The volume will appeal to those interested in the history of science, for it gives a clear idea of the viewpoint of pioneers living a century and a half ago. One feels, however, that its value would be enhanced by the addition of a biographical sketch and a critical review of the work in the light of present-day knowledge. No indication whatsoever is given as to the contemporary state of the science at that period, and the booklet is purely in the nature of a reprint.

There is no doubt that the value of the work done by Lavoisier and De Laplace in 1780 by the aid of their melting ice calorimeter was over-estimated by their contemporaries. They gave the value 75 calories per gramme for the latent heat of ice and this was accepted without question for the next seventy years, until Regnault re-determined this constant. It is interesting to note

that the earlier determination (79·7) made in 1762 by Black of Edinburgh, is practically identical with the accepted value at the present day.—E.G.

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