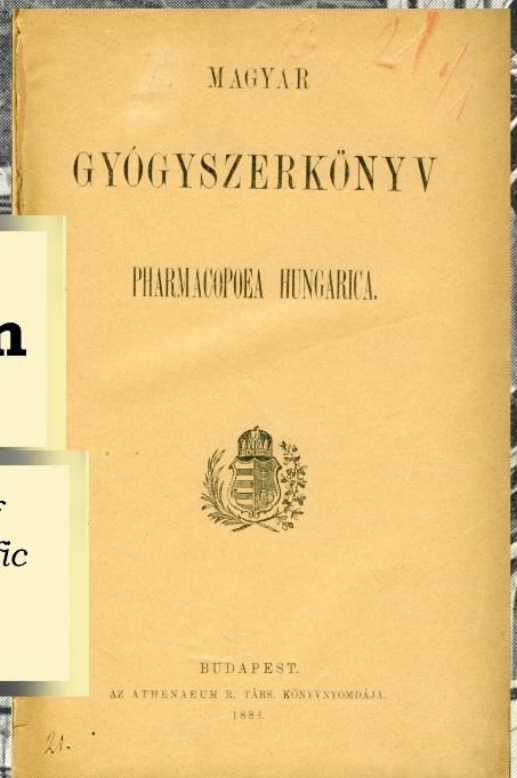
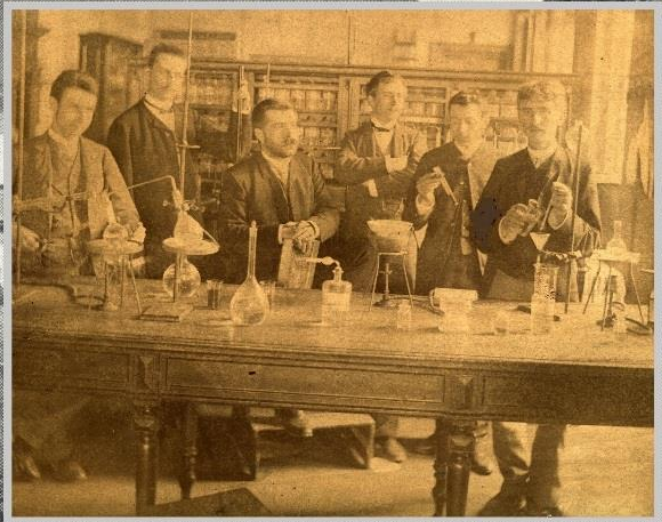




W. HÖFFERT Humboldtstr. POTSDAM.



Károly Than

The founding father of the Hungarian scientific chemistry and pharmacist education

Károly Than / (Carl von Thann) (1834-1908) is an outstanding figure of the history of chemistry, an adopter of the Western methods of university education of chemistry in Hungary at the end of the 19th century. He was born in southern Hungary (now in Serbia). His father was a royal manager of the royal estate. The Than/Thann families have a German origin and they belonged to the Hungarian nobility. Their ancestors came from Alsace in the 16th century. During Károly Than's university years in Vienna he worked as a research chemist under the leadership of prof. Josef Redtenbacher and got his doctor title in 1858. Then, he studied chemistry at the Heidelberg University in the institute of Robert Wilhelm Bunsen. He was studying under Charles Adolphe Wurtz in Paris as well. After his return to Vienna first he became a private university professor, then from November, 1860, the professor of chemistry at the Pest University. It was the time when Hungarian became the language of university education. In this way, the 25 year old Károly Than become the head of Department of Chemistry. He was a native Hungarian speaker who invented the Hungarian scientific language of chemistry. An education plan of chemistry education for secondary schools was developed by him.

Károly Than modernized the education and research of chemistry in Hungary. After the Compromise between Austria and Hungary in 1867 Károly Than founded a modern Institute of Chemistry at the University of Pest. Later his results were taken into consideration in other institutions in Europe and the USA. He raised generations of chemists, medical doctors and pharmacists. He was the chief editor of the first two Hungarian Pharmacopoeias. The National Pharmacopoeias were an important part of the 19th century's national states.

Carbon oxide sulfide (COS) was his most important discovery in inorganic chemistry. That is an interesting material in many industrially important reactions. CO, CO₂ and CS₂ had been known long before he synthesized COS.

Károly Than performed analysis of many mineral waters. Two decades before Arrhenius' theory of electrolytic dissociation Than recommended to express analytical results of mineral waters in ionic form instead of the hypothetical salts. He also defined the concept of the molar volume of gases.

He founded different Hungarian journals in German and Hungarian languages. He wrote articles in foreign languages, too, although he published most of his articles in Hungarian language because he wanted to enrich the Hungarian language scientific literature. His works in Hungarian language remained mostly unknown to the outside world. There are only a limited number of papers on his life and work in English and other languages. Hungarian and foreign scientists highly appreciated him and he was a very active person of the scientific life. Károly Than received a lot of scientific medals and awards. For example, he was appointed a member of the Upper House of Hungarian Parliament in 1892. Károly Than was also the vice-president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and president of the Hungarian Society of Natural Sciences.

He is a real role model for new generations of pharmacists. The life of Károly Than is an example of how to serve our community with knowledge.

This poster presents the role of Károly Than in the Hungarian scientific life. Recently his birth house in Óbecse /Becej (Serbia) was completely renovated and opened as a memorial house by an interstate co operation of Serbia and Hungary. This house will play an important role in the education of chemistry and natural sciences of schoolchildren, which is perhaps the most venerable way to preserve the memory of this great European scientist.

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