

Caricatures of Men of Science

by E. C. WATSON



Louis Pasteur

THERE IS NO GREATER CHARM for the investigator than to make new discoveries," said Louis Pasteur, "but his pleasure is heightened when he sees that they have a direct application to practical life."

Pasteur's discoveries must have given him great pleasure indeed. His studies in fermentation revitalized the brewing and the wine-making industries. His investigations into the epidemic which ruined France's silk producers in the middle of the nineteenth century brought the industry back to prosperity. His researches on chicken cholera, the cattle scourge, anthrax and—most important of all—hydrophobia, resulted in preventives which reduced the high death rates of these diseases to almost one per cent.

The *Vanity Fair* caricature of Pasteur on this page has been often reproduced, but to the best of my knowledge the written account that accompanied it has not. It appeared on January 8, 1887, more than a year before the founding of the Institut Pasteur in Paris, for the treatment of hydrophobia. Subsequently, similar institutes were established in many other cities of the world. M. Pasteur's reputation—as a destroyer of hydrophobia, as a chemist, and as a scientist—has grown, rather than diminished, since this tart account appeared in 1887.

"Louis Pasteur was born four-and-sixty years ago at Dole, the son of a tanner who had been a soldier, went to school at Besancon, and soon displayed a bent for

chemistry and plunged into juvenile experiments. He became learned in tartrates and paratartrates, he investigated molecular dissymmetry, fermentation, and putrefaction, and finally gave himself up to the microscopic organisms, which led him up to the further development of inoculation as a protective and curative agent in disease.

"He became famous throughout Europe as one of the first chemists of the age, and was already known to every man of science in the world, when he became also known to men in general as the inventor of the vaccinal treatment of the dreaded malady Hydrophobia. No sooner was this known than the great chemist was invaded by men of every condition and every country, and some thousands of patients, the victims of bites from dogs either mad or supposed to be mad, have now passed before the operating-table of the Rue d'Ulm.

"It cannot be said that the treatment has proved itself successful, for many of those subjected to it have subsequently died. This, however, though it may diminish M. Pasteur's reputation as a destroyer of hydrophobia, does not detract from his ability as a chemist, and there is no doubt that he is a very great man indeed. He has worked incredibly hard, and once brought on himself, by work, an attack of paralysis. He is a vivisector, yet fond of animals, and a very humane and kindly man, who, though he is greatly denounced by his opponents is beloved by all his friends."

This is one of a series of articles devoted to reproductions of prints, drawings and paintings that mark highlights and sidelights in the history of science—drawn from the famous collection of E. C. Watson, Professor of Physics and Dean of the Faculty at the California Institute.