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Reply / Réponse

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Reply / Réponse

Dear editor

I was surprised at the superficial review of my book *Chemistry and Metallurgy in the Great Empires* published in the latest issue of your journal *Scientia Canadensis* 34, 1 (2011): 108-9.

It seems that the reviewer did not find an Index at the end of the book then he hurried and concluded that the book is useless. Definitely an Index for a book is essential but this was not possible because the book is a collection of previously published articles put together in an accessible form.

At one point, the reviewer criticizes that the book does not make connection between Thaler and Dollar. In fact this is already mentioned in the chapter on the Austrian Empire on page 76, first column. Another criticism is the lack of information concerning gunpowder. Here again he missed: in Chapter 2.12 page 7 there is a page dedicated to this topic. He then concludes that the book is “both too broadly superficial and simultaneously too tightly focused on small events to give either the specialist or the beginning student much satisfaction.” Of course! What do you expect to have the history of 26 Great Empires and a number of City States in 275 pages. This topic requires volumes to give it justice. The reviewer ignores that this is the first attempt to introduce history to engineers. To my knowledge there is no book in existence that has treated this theme. It is important to realize that the book was written by an engineer and not by a historian.

The reviewer did not comment on the introductory chapters such as “Kings, the Church, and the Unification of a Nation,” “The Rise and Fall of Empires,” or the “Epilogue.” He did not even care to comment on the structure of the book and how such a huge mass of information can be organized in such a logical way.

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[Editor's Note : Dr. Hall was offered and declined an opportunity to respond.]