

BOOK REVIEW

The Development of Organic Phosphorus Chemistry: Discoveries of the Nineteenth Century

Authors: Louis DuBose Quin (Duke Univ. and Univ. of Massachusetts, US)

The book by Louis DuBose Quin is a first of its kind in presenting the early development of phosphorus chemistry. It does so by considering the discoveries of the three chemists that introduced the world to organic phosphorus chemistry. These are the French chemist, Paul Thenard, who discovered the first organic phosphorus compound in 1845, trimethylphosphine. This was followed by the brilliant experimentalists August Wilhelm Hoffman and August Michaelis. The detailed documentation of their work covers the first 55 pages of the 92 paged book.

The last 20 or so pages treat later workers in the field and their discoveries, principally in the period 1880 to 1900. By this time, more modern methods and instrumentation had developed that allowed experimentation to proceed with reduced hazards that confronted the earlier workers. In fact, it is somewhat surprising to this reviewer that the earlier workers cited above lived as long as they did, about 70 years of age.

The coverage of experimentation is written in such interesting detail that at times one feels that you are actually in the laboratory assisting these brilliant scientists in dealing with the problems that they repeatedly encountered in discovery. I wholeheartedly enjoyed Dr Quin's presentation and highly recommend it for your consideration. There are abundant references to the earlier workers (63) and 69 for the subsequent workers.

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