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[Review of the book Organic chemistry: The basic reactions by Derek John Abbott (London: Arnold, 1963)]

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Organic Chemistry
Bryan J. Stokes. Edward Arnold, 1961. British price, 20/–.

Organic Chemistry: The Basic Reactions
D. J. Abbott. Edward Arnold, 1963. British price 7/6.

Mr. Stokes' book is the work of an enthusiast and a perfectionist, steeped in his subject. Working with the higher level pre-university examinations taken by scholars in the British Isles always in mind, he has written as substantial and elegant a text as such inspiration permits. In this country it would and should be considered by those entrusted with introductory university courses.

The book will be of little value to modernists who believe that the focus of the study of chemistry in all academic institutions should be the chemical bond, or would dispense with the traditional in some other way. They will however find many concessions (if not capitulation) to their point of view worked into the text with great skill and a nice sense of the appropriate, but without ostentation.

Nomenclature follows the 1960 recommendations of the Chemical Society; and there are instructions for practical work, end-of-chapter questions, appendices on the preparation of re-agents and the identification of unknowns, and an index. Drugs, dyes and synthetic fibres are adequately discussed and, most gratifying of all, electronic explanations are given for certain reactions. The last chapter (eleven pages) looks at a few organic molecules from the vantage point of wave mechanics.

Even allowing for its much slighter purpose the second book is a less inspired bit of work. Yet those who have use for a list of reactions and preparations, traditionally symbolised, with catalysts and general experimental detail given, should examine this auxiliary. Lecturers whose notes amount to something like this may want it for their pupils or themselves.

Good features are the relegation of the first (and often atypical) members of homologous series to the end of chapters and the clear identification of those preparations which are the basis of commercial production and those which may be used for laboratory preparation in that they give a reasonable yield. Less happy is the rather ponderous system of numbering each reaction. If this has any virtue at all, it will be as a mnemonic aid, not (this is claimed) as an aid to reference, since the numbers do not even occur in the index.

It would have been appropriate ~~to~~, and consistent with the purpose of the book, if the whole presentation ~~could have~~ need been ~~usefully~~ drawn together in several flow diagrams. The level again is, for South Africa, introductory university.

R. EYBERS



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