

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Enzymes*

## Benchmark Papers in Biochemistry 1

Edited by H. C. Friedmann  
Hutchinson Ross; Stroudsburg, PA, 1981  
xx + 716 pages. \$68.00

The Editor of this volume has selected 71 pages written between 1761 and 1974, which are supposed to represent the cornerstones of the classical literature in Enzymology. I am afraid that during this process two objectives did get mixed up: the presentation of historical curiosities and of the fundamental ideas of modern enzymology. I find the history of ideas on physical principles (including those applied to biological systems) fascinating reading, but I must declare myself a philistine with respect to any interest in the origins of physiological chemistry described in the first 150 pages of this volume. Therefore, I do not wish to judge the inclusion of the papers which precede those of Kühne (1877). The remaining 500 pages contain in excess of fifty papers. Many of these should be read by every biochemist. All too often are classical papers quoted in current publications without the author, or even his informant, having consulted the original source. This can lead to much misinterpretation. Students will also benefit from the easy access to papers by some of the founders of the study of enzymes, although they may be confused by Dr Friedmann's priorities.

The Editor apologises by saying that:

'many names and papers have had to be omitted because of the strictures of time, of space and of the editor's ignorance'.

This, alas, resulted in some serious shortcomings. One might ask the question: is it possible or justifiable to compile such a selection without inclusion of papers by, for instance Michaelis, Warburg, Theorell, Chance and Dixon? Papers by these authors will be read, or at least quoted, a lot longer than some of the recent ones included in Dr Friedmann's collection.

The more recent history of the subject is not well presented since the selection of papers dealing with the elucidation of enzyme mechanisms deserved a more varied approach. The choice of papers by any Editor is bound to be subjective, but Dr Friedmann could have avoided his preference of well-known, over-scholarly papers by consulting a wider range of experts.

The price of the book is, in any case, going to restrict it to libraries. However, any library well stocked with common biochemical journals could just as well provide students with a reading list.

H. Gutfreund

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Professor H. R. V. Arnstein, Department of Biochemistry, King's College, Strand,  
London WC2R 2LS, England