

J.-P. MATHIEU and G. OURISSON: **Selected Constants—Optical Rotatory Power. II. Triterpenoids** Pergamon Press, London, 1958. 302 pp., £7.

THIS volume is a companion to that recently published on the rotatory power of steroids, and is an equally valuable compilation. One's confidence in the manner in which this arduous task has been carried out, inspired by the authorship, is not disappointed.

The book begins with an introduction, in English and in French, setting out clearly the way in which the tables are presented and expounding the systems of nomenclature of triterpenes that have been adopted after discussion with other experts. Then follow 160 pages of tables, which list the names of the compounds (arranged according to empirical formulae), melting point, solvent, concentration, temperature, specific rotation for the Na D line, and reference.

The coverage seems to be extraordinarily thorough: no doubt here is the most complete and up to date (end of 1957) bibliography of the literature on triterpenes. The reviewer applied the inevitable test by looking up his own name in the author index to see whether his single publication on triterpenes had been included. Of course it had, but he was surprised to find a second entry against the name, and for a moment was pleased to feel that he had detected the error without which no review is complete. However, examination showed that the entry correctly referred to the optical rotation of a triterpenoid mentioned incidently in a paper on another subject. Thus the tables were turned, and the incident must be recorded as an example of the thoroughness with which the literature has been surveyed.

In the Preface Professor Ruzicka writes that "this book will greatly contribute to promote and to stimulate further work on the triterpenes and I recommend it to all chemists interested in natural products". All readers should echo the words of the father of triterpene chemistry and will urge their librarian to buy a copy, though fewer will wish to pay for one of their own. In spite of the publication being "subsidised by the International Commission of Tables of Constants and by Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique" it costs £7.

The printing, copied by a photographic process from typescript, is sometimes indistinct and tiring to the eye. But these blemishes do not diminish our debt to the compilers of the tables, which will be invaluable to all interested in natural products.

R. C. COOKSON