

Book Reviews

Recent Advances in Analytical Chemistry, edited by J. M. Thomas, R. Belcher and T. S. West. The Royal Society, London, 1982. pp. 219, ISBN 0–85403–191–X.

In December 1981 the Royal Society organized a Discussion Meeting in London with the title "Recent Advances in Analytical Chemistry". In the context of the long-standing neglect of analytical chemistry in British academic life, and the low esteem in which analysts are generally held in British industry, the meeting was an occasion of great importance. It was very well attended, and the generally excellent lectures, many of them given by eminent scientists from outside the United Kingdom, were matched by the stimulating formal and informal discussions which followed them. The lectures were supported by a number of poster presentations, mostly by British chemists: the volume under review does full justice to the lectures but does not refer to the posters at all.

All the sessions of the meeting were organized in terms of techniques; atomic spectrometry, molecular spectrometry, and so on. It may be doubted whether this format gave a fair representation of modern analytical chemistry. For readers of this *Journal* at any rate, the astonishing advances in various areas of biomedical analysis are of paramount importance. Such topics receive relatively little attention, though the excellent papers by Purnell (on chromatography) and Růžička (flow injection analysis) will be of great interest. The editors freely confess to having been selective in their choice of topics, and the potential reader should indeed be warned that many widely used and rapidly developing methods are neglected in this book.

Inevitably the written-up versions of the lectures are variable in the depth of treatment of their topics, but many of the papers are outstanding. Apart from those already mentioned, particular attention must be drawn to the masterly survey of surface analysis by J. C. Riviere. This paper makes up almost 20% of the book and, even allowing for the rapid growth of its field, must surely be a standard review for some time. The erudite introductory lecture by the late Professor Ronald Belcher should also be mandatory reading for all those who have the interests of analytical chemistry at heart. Ron worked tirelessly for the proper recognition of his subject (witness his substantial contribution to the organization of this Royal Society meeting), and he was also a superb lecturer. His professional devotion and his entertaining and stimulating style are perfectly reflected in his paper. Every worker in the field of elemental analysis will wish to read the survey of atomic absorption and atomic fluorescence methods by Sir Alan Walsh: the clarity of his style and his critical assessments of recent developments make this another most valuable contribution to the literature.

The book is immaculately produced in the slightly quaint and old-fashioned style of the Royal Society. No index is provided. Whether it is studied as an introduction to previously unfamiliar methods, or used as a source of authoritative reviews in familiar areas, it cannot fail to stimulate and inform the reader.

J. N. Miller