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Book review

The Environmental Mercury Problem; by F.M. D'Itri, CRC Press, Cleveland, Ohio, 1972, 124 pages, $27.50.

This slim and expensive volume is based on a report concerning the environmental mercury problem submitted by F.M. D'Itri to a special committee of the Michigan House of Representatives in 1971. In nine short chapters it covers the history and historical uses of mercury, the background concentrations of mercury in the environment, the commercial uses of mercury and its compounds and the sources of mercury contamination in the environment, analytical methods for the determination of mercury, the translocation of mercury in plants and its movement through the food chain, the biological methylation of mercury in the environment, the decontamination and restoration of mercury polluted areas, epidemiology and toxicology of mercury and the chronology of the world's mercury poisoning problem.

Organomercurials have been the protagonists in the environmental mercury story as it has unfolded to date: not only because of the use of organomercurials in agriculture and other applications, but even more so because of the only recently discovered biological methylation of Hg^{II} which produces the lethal monomethylmercury species. It is this story which is a main theme of this book.

This book can serve as a useful introduction to the environmental mercury problem and as a guide to the pertinent literature. For detailed, authoritative discussions of some of the topics covered, other sources may be more useful. Thus the epidemiology and toxicology of mercury and its compounds receive coverage in greater breadth and depth in "Mercury in the Environment", by Friberg and Vostal (reviewed in this Journal[1]), and for the history, occurrence and uses of mercury and its compounds, the Gmelin volumes no doubt are the best reference source.

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1 *J. Organometal. Chem.*, 42 (1972) C111.