

between 90 and 500 k.c. In both cases the reproducibility of the measurements has proved to be 0.05%. A wall-correction has been evaluated and applied.

The correspondence between measured velocities at zero frequency and those calculated from Einstein's equations is excellent at 260 mm., and indicates that the assumptions underlying the theoretical reasoning may be applied with confidence to the interpretation of these measurements. Since the absorption coefficient is not found to increase noticeably even at 500 k.c., similar reasoning appears legitimate over the entire frequency range which has been studied. Granting this, a straightforward picture of the kinetics of dissociation emerges. The velocity constant at 25° and 260 mm. is approximately  $4.8 \times 10^4$ , and the activation energy of dissociation approximates closely to the heat of dissociation of nitrogen tetroxide. It may be assumed, therefore, that the velocity of association of nitrogen dioxide has little if any temperature coefficient. The velocity of dissociation decreases with decreasing pressure. These conclusions are independent of unavoidable uncertainties concerning the heat capacities of the dioxide and tetroxide molecules, the exact value of the heat of dissociation, and the exact absolute values of the velocity of sound in nitrogen tetroxide at zero frequency.

Recent evidence that the vibrational specific heat terms in carbon dioxide may become inactive at high frequencies of sound [Kneser, *Ann. Physik*, [V] 11, 777 (1931)] has suggested the possibility that a similar effect may appear in nitrogen tetroxide, and has caused a delay of some months in the publication of the conclusions outlined above. It is hoped that the temperature coefficient of the divergence between high and low frequency velocities of sound will provide a means to differentiate between this effect and that discussed by Einstein. When an experimental distinction between the two has been established, the measurements on nitrogen tetroxide will be submitted in detail for publication.

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#### THE INVERSION OF CRISTOBALITE

*Sir:*

Supplementing the foregoing note by Dr. J. W. Greig (p. 2846), I may be permitted to quote from a letter received recently from Dr. K. Endell, one of the observers referred to in my discussion of the inversion of cristobalite. Dr. Endell says (in translation): "It appears to me very improbable that this inversion can be delayed. My early observations are probably not entirely conclusive. In recent years I have tested hundreds

of silica brick, and also ceramic bodies which contain cristobalite, for their thermal dilatation upon heating and cooling. The result has invariably been that upon cooling the volume contraction associated with the alpha-beta cristobalite inversion takes place without a time lag. The cases observed by Greig in glass and by Levin and Ott in opals are not known to me. As you correctly state, however, this is different from the delay of the inversion by quenching."

Dr. Olaf Andersen and I have tried several ways of quenching free cristobalite from a temperature above its high-low inversion point, but it has always inverted without delay. The inhibition of the inversion in crystals embedded in a glassy matrix, as observed by Greig and by Levin and Ott, deserves further study for the light it may throw on the atomic mechanism of such inversions.

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## NEW BOOKS

**Von Davy und Döbereiner bis Deacon, ein halbes Jahrhundert Grenzflächenkatalyse.**  
(From Davy and Döbereiner to Deacon; A Half Century of Contact Catalysis.)  
By ALWIN MITTASCH, Director of the Oppau Research Laboratories of the I. G. Farbenindustrie A.-G., and ERICH THEIS. Verlag Chemie G. m. b. H., Corneliusstrasse 3, Berlin W 10, Germany, 1932. 278 pp. 14 Figures and 16 Portrait Inserts. 17 × 23.5 cm. Price, Mk. 18.50.

In the study of a phenomenon such as catalysis, which is still the object of intensive investigation and which makes its appearance in every branch of chemistry, it is important to attain an historical perspective. This will be greatly facilitated by the present volume which is an historical study of the earlier stages in the development of our knowledge of heterogeneous catalysis. It presents meticulously and sympathetically the work of scores of investigators; for instance, the discoveries of Davy, Thénard, Döbereiner and Schönbein, and the theoretical contributions of Berzelius, Liebig and the less widely known Bellani, Mercer and Playfair.

In addition, there are special chapters on the beginnings of the sulfuric acid contact process, and of the processes for the catalytic synthesis and oxidation of ammonia.

The authors have also succeeded, by means of many footnotes and excellent portraits, in maintaining that connection between personalities and ideas which is so advantageous in an historical treatise.

ARTHUR B. LAMB