Phytochemistry, 1977, Vol. 16, pp. 1863. Pergamon Press. Printed in England.

BOOK REVIEW

Marine Natural Products: edited by R. H. THOMSON. Pergamon Press, Oxford, 1977. 44 pp. £4.45.

Phytochemists picking up this book expecting to read a comprehensive review of natural products from marine organisms will be disappointed. However, they will find in this slim, handsomely produced, red volume a series of five review essays which cover in some detail recent developments in this most fascinating area of natural product chemistry. The essays are, in fact, based on plenary lectures delivered at an IUPAC symposium held in Aberdeen in 1975; they have, in fact, been previously published in the journal *Pure and Applied Chemistry*, Volume 48, no. 1. Whether their re-printing here in book form is justified is a nice question but this is, undoubtedly, an area of organic chemistry which is ripe for expansion.

These essays will at least stimulate the interest of the natural product worker who has not yet ventured into the realms of marine organisms. As Bernard Tursch puts it in the opening review on the chemistry of Alcyonaceans, the impressive results obtained to date on these marine invertebrates "are yet an hors d'oeuvre for other interesting things to come". Here, he is mainly referring to the many remarkable terpenoid structures discovered to be present in these animals. Terpenoids indeed dominate this volume and those who relish novel terpenoid structures will find a feast here. The significance of these new substances in terms of chemical ecology has yet to be established but there is already evidence that many of the terpenoids are either highly toxic to fish or inhibit algal growth. Thus they may play an important role in biochemical interactions occurring beneath the ocean.

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