

Book Review

Works intended for notice in this column should be sent direct to the Book-Review Editor (J. H. Robertson, School of Chemistry, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT, England). As far as practicable books will be reviewed in a country different from that of publication.

The development of X-ray analysis. By Sir LAWRENCE BRAGG. Pp.viii + 270, Figs. 151. London: Bell, 1975. Price £ 6.50.

The scope and aim of this beautiful book is best expressed by quoting the first paragraph of the Introduction which W. L. Bragg wrote shortly before his death on July 1st, 1971:

'This book does not claim to be a complete and up-to-date account of all the progress now being made in X-ray analysis in laboratories over the world. It is of a more historical and reminiscent nature. In describing each new advance I have chosen my examples and illustrations from the first work which broke new ground, rather than from the latest achievements. I have tried to see these advances in perspective, and recall the excitement and enthusiasm at the time as each new insight into the structure of matter was achieved, over the sixty years since X-ray analysis started.'

It is sad to think that W. L. B. did not live to enjoy the acclaim that this work of love and pride will undoubtedly receive by those familiar with the subject as well as by students who approach it for the first time.

Like his father W. H. Bragg (Sir William), W. L. B. is a master of simplified presentation of subjects which could easily be blurred by a mass of scientific detail or an attempt at being encyclopedic. His style is concise, yet clear. He stresses the essential steps in the development of crystal structure analysis from the first deciphering of the ZnS and

NaCl structures, *via* the silicates and metals to the full analysis of protein structures like hemoglobin. In each of these steps W. L. B. has been a tenacious pioneer against great odds, clearing the way for a host of workers following in his path. The various chapters show up the principal ideas that brought about the sudden advances in the decoding of the information hidden in the X-ray diagrams. All the freshness of discovery is recalled in the examples of actual structure determinations which the author uses in his discussion. Introductory chapters on X-rays, on the principles of optical interference, and on symmetry prepare the reader for a course covering all the standard (non-algebraic) methods of crystal structure analysis. Mathematical derivations and formulae are replaced by a qualitative inspection into the physical causes leading up to the results. Any teacher offering a course on X-ray diffraction would do well to read this book carefully and to extract its physical argumentation. This is all the more advisable at a time when so often thinking is prone to be dominated by the computer.

The manuscript was practically finished only two weeks before Bragg's death, according to the foreword by his son. W. L. B.'s co-workers and friends, Henry Lipson and David Phillips, carried out the final editing. The book is a worthy legacy from a great scientist whose life's work opened up new continents.

P. P. EWALD

Ithaca
N.Y. 14850
U.S.A.