

## Book Reviews

*Works intended for notice in this column should be sent direct to the Book-Review Editor (M.M. Woolfson, Physics Department, University of York, Heslington, York YO1 5DD, England). As far as practicable books will be reviewed in a country different from that of publication.*

**The prodomus of Nicolaus Steno's dissertation concerning a solid body. Contributions to the history of geology. Volume 4.** Edited by GEORGE W. WHITE  
Pp. vii + 115. New York: Hafner, 1968. Price \$ 12.50.

This edition of a geological classic first published in 1669 will appeal to crystallographers with a historical bent primarily for its discussion on the shapes of crystals. The author had noticed that although crystals of a particular material (*e.g.* quartz or haematite) came in a great variety of shapes and sizes, the same interfacial angles recurred in every specimen. He went on to discuss the growth of crystals in a fluid medium, but for him, this was only a special case illustrating the main problem of the book: how are solids of all kinds formed in nature?

The answer given was that 'if a solid body has been produced according to the laws of nature, it has been produced from a fluid . . . either immediately from an external fluid, or through one or more mediating internal fluids'. Internal fluids accounted for the growth of animals and plants; sedimentation, incrustation or crystallization from external fluids explained the formation of rocks and minerals. Parallels between animal or plant growth and the formation of minerals can be found in most studies of geology made in this period. Fossils might be taken as evidence that rocks were of a quasi-organic nature, but Nicolaus Steno, the author of this book, had found fossils with exactly the same form as living creatures. He was thus among the first to recognize that fossils were the remains of dead animals.

For Steno, then, the parallels between biology and geology were of a more subtle kind, based on his notion of the formation of solids from liquids. In this he probably owed something to a theory of mineral-bearing fluids which originated with Agricola in 1546, as well as to the contemporary Cartesian idea of an 'attenuated fluid pervading all things' which he mentioned. But the reader is offered little guidance on these matters by the editors of the present volume. John Garrett Winter, the translator of Steno's Latin, has provided a competent biography of the author, but little in the way of historical background, while William H. Hobbs, in a foreword, is content to see the book as a modern text-book before its time. But in fairness, it should be said that this material was written for an earlier edition of the work, in 1916. The editor of this 1968 reprint, George W. White, has seen fit to provide only a two-page outline of more recent historical researches. The value of the new edition would have been greatly enhanced if a new introduction had been provided, relating Steno's ideas more clearly to those of his predecessors and contemporaries,

and giving proper documentation for his influence on the later development of geology and crystallography.

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**Structure reports for 1958. Vol. 22.** General Editor W. B. PEARSON. Section Editors A. TAYLOR, J. S. KASPER AND A. MCL. MATHIESON. Pp. viii + 890. Utrecht: Published for the International Union of Crystallography by N.V. A. Oosthoek's Uitgevers Mij, 1968. Price Dfl. 140

This volume continues the very well known series which has become such an important part of the reference library of crystallographers. All the crystallographic studies published in 1958 which have reported new cell sizes, space group or optical information and atomic positions, are critically abstracted. Included also are reports of polymorphism and such phenomena as low angle scattering in glass and epitaxy. Information reported is in very large part derived from X-ray diffraction but a number of neutron diffraction studies are also included.

As in previous volumes of this series new information is compared with any earlier related work and any differences discussed. Structure determinations are fully reported giving, besides the atomic positions, the isostructural relationships and interatomic distances and angles. Thermal factors are considered in the calculated interatomic distances in some cases but are not directly reported. Line drawings of structures and of phase relations and cell sizes are often included. The source of material, methods used, calibration controls and other pertinent information is briefly but fully recorded.

As in the past this volume contains excellent subject, formula and author indexes, as well as a separate one for carbon compounds. This series continues to be a necessity to the crystal structure worker, therefore as structure studies expand in wider fields and to more complex compounds it is increasingly desirable that the present time lag in the preparation of these essential reviews be reduced. There is evidence that this is being done.

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