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The History of Chemistry



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This book is written as a result of a personal conviction of the value of incorporating historical material into the teaching of chemistry, both at school and undergraduate level. Indeed, it is highly desirable that an undergraduate course in chemistry incorporates a separate module on the history of chemistry. This book is therefore aimed at teachers and students of chemistry, and it will also appeal to practising chemists. While the last 25 years has seen the appearance of a large number of specialist scholarly publications on the history of chemistry, there has been little written in the way of an introductory overview of the subject. This book fills that gap. It incorporates some of the results of recent research, and the text is illustrated throughout. Clearly, a book of this length has to be highly selective in its coverage, but it describes the themes and personalities which in the author's opinion have been of greatest importance in the development of the subject. The famous American historian of science, Henry Guerlac, wrote: 'It is the central business of the historian of science to reconstruct the story of the acquisition of this knowledge and the refinement of its method or methods, and-perhaps above all-to study science as a human activity and learn how it arose, how it developed and expanded, and how it has influenced or been influenced by man's material, intellectual, and even spiritual aspirations' (Guerlac, 1977). This book attempts to describe the development of chemistry in these terms.

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