COMMENT AND RESPONSE

Review of *Organic Chemistry Principles in Context: A Story Telling Historical Approach*

The last issue of the *Bulletin* included a review of *Organic Chemistry Principles in Context: A Story Telling Historical Approach*. The book is unusual among those routinely reviewed in this journal because it is not primarily a work of history but a textbook of organic chemistry or a supplement to such a textbook. In its own field the book is also noteworthy in its pedagogical approach—not least in its abundance of historical content, which is what makes it relevant to readers of the *Bulletin*.

The following pages contain, at my invitation, a comment on the review from the book's author, Mark M. Green, and a response by the reviewer, Peter J. Ramberg.

—Editor

Comment by Prof. Green

Dear Editor,

There are several corrections necessary in the review of *Organic Chemistry Principles in Context: A Story Telling Historical Approach*, concerning the historical material, which follows below. The review appeared on page 99 of the latest issue of the *Bulletin for the History of Chemistry*, volume 39, number 1. I've reproduced the contested remarks in the review in the order they appeared. Each is followed by the proposed corrections taken from the quoted historical texts and also, when appropriate, notes to the editor concerning the particular points made.

In a second section of this note, I have made further comments, following this section, about, what I consider to be unjustified more general criticisms of the book by the reviewer. Thank you for the opportunity of responding to the review in this manner.

Historical Accuracy

From the review:

> There are also some errors in the history. It repeats, for example, the myth that Friedrich Wöhler sounded the "death knell" for vitalism when he made urea in 1828…

In *A History of Chemistry* volume IV by J. R. Partington is found a description of Wöhler's work on the synthesis of urea (1):

> Dumas (1830) said: "all chemists have applauded Wöhler's brilliant discovery of the artificial production of urea, …." … Liebig (1831) regarded the discovery of Wöhler and the work of Berzelius on racemic acid as "the first beginning of a truly scientific organic chemistry". Liebig (1843) spoke of urea as "composed in a so-called artificial way almost immediately from its elements", and thus "the natural barrier (die natürliche Scheidewand)