

table every New England state is listed as having "reports," yet no references are cited. A thorough search of the literature fails to lend support for the listings. As with a good many other statements appearing in the book, the reader is simply misinformed. The "report" for Maine is particularly interesting because as I have shown (2), there was not even a record that the black widow had been observed or collected in Maine. What previously had been taken for a valid record was an error, presumably based upon a misidentification. However, I had remarked "the spider undoubtedly occurs there [i.e., in Maine]." It is now possible to report a valid record, for recently I examined a specimen collected at Gorham, Maine, on October 25, 1953, by Frederick Robie. This particular specimen shows no vestige of an hourglass mark, nor does it show the red spot above the anal tubercle, which is present in all other specimens of *L. mactans* I have seen. It is entirely black except for two very small spots in the mid dorsal line on the anterior half of the abdomen.

Again in 1949 further newspaper publicity was given *L. mactans*, shortly after the appearance of a paper in the *New England Journal of Medicine* entitled "Arachnidism," by Greer, a Boston physician (4). A careful perusal of the article reveals that less than one page is devoted to an account of six cases seen in a "tropical area." The remainder of the four-page paper is concerned with the symptoms of, and treatment for, black widow spider bite, as well as a rather extensive account of the life history and distribution of *L. mactans* in the U.S. Upon inquiring of the author I was informed that the six cases were those seen while he was stationed in the Philippine Islands, a fact which definitely indicates that another spider was involved, as *L. mactans* does not occur there. There are papers in the literature that describe cases of arachnidism for the Philippines, but these generally appear in journals devoted to tropical medicine. Greer did not cite any of these, but confined his discussion to American spiders. Is it any wonder that, considering the circumstances, newspaper articles based on Greer's article intimated that people in New England had been, and were being, bitten?

Finally, during the past summer the finding of a few black widows in the vicinity of Milford and Bridgeport in Connecticut set off another series of "scare" newspaper articles. Several of the accounts purported to quote an authority to the effect that since this is a rare spider the finding of several would indicate that apparently the black widows must be coming up from the South perhaps in shipments of bananas—this despite the fact that there are records for Connecticut going back to 1912 (2) and a large number of more recent ones (1, 5). It would seem more reasonable to account for the abundance in some years on the basis of other factors. For example, these could include the variation in the parasite population, and the severity of the preceding winter. Also not to be overlooked is the possibility of more people hunting for specimens when someone else in the neighborhood

has his find reported in the newspapers. After one such story, 40 spiders were brought into one laboratory although only two turned out to be black widows. Possibly, all these might have lived and died undisturbed and undiscovered had not the publicity created large numbers of new collectors.

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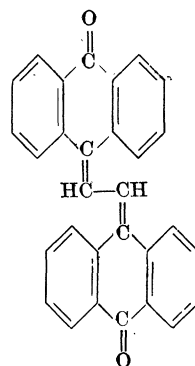
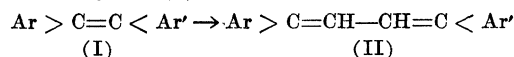
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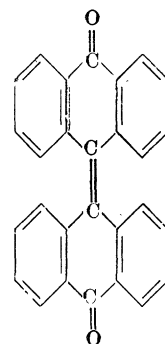
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Thermochromism and Vinylogy

It seems that the question has not yet been raised whether the vinylene homologs (I) (II) of thermochromic ethylene (I)



(III)



(IV)

are also thermochromic. We found that 1,2-bis(9,9'-anthronylidene)ethane (2) (III), the vinylene homolog of the thermochromic bianthrone (IV), is strongly thermochromic: dilute solutions of (III) in ethyl benzoate are yellow at 0° and orange at the boiling point of the solvent; the phenomenon is reversible. Strong reversible thermochromic effects also were observed with the powdered solid (III) (orange 0° → deep violet at 240°). The importance of these findings for the theory of thermochromism will be discussed in a separate paper.

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