In the sudden death on September 6, 1940, of Phoebus Aaron Theodor Levene, American biochemistry lost a colleague who contributed beyond measure to the upbuilding of our science. He was one of those who in the early years of the century brought to America the best traditions of Europe to stimulate the sound development of science in this country. And in that development his own contributions played a brilliant part.

He was born in Russia, and graduated at the Imperial Military Medical Academy at St. Petersburg. Settling in New York in 1892, he practiced medicine until 1896, when his career was interrupted by tuberculosis. After recuperating at Saranac and Davos in Switzerland, he decided to devote his life to biochemistry. He therefore remained in Europe to study under the great masters of the day, Kossel, Drechsel, and Emil Fischer. Returning to America, he worked at Saranac in 1901–02 on the chemistry of the tubercle bacillus, and then entered the new laboratory of the State Pathological Institute. In 1905 Dr. Simon Flexner invited him to join the staff of the newly created Rockefeller Institute, and there he continued the extraordinary series of contributions to science which never slackened through all the rest of his life.

In 1920 Dr. Levene married Anna M. Erickson of Montana. Their home was a welcome center for a wide circle of friends, scientific, artistic, and literary, who found a congenial atmosphere in the hospitality of their versatile and sympathetic hosts.

Dr. Levene's publications, largely shared by his coworkers, have numbered over seven hundred. The fields that he explored included the following: the chemistry of the nucleic acids; of proteins and amino acids; of lipids; of carbohydrates and conjugated carbohydrates; of glycoproteins, which included especially a study of the chemistry of amino sugars; an investigation of the stereochemistry of natural products, which led to extensive studies on...
stereochemical configurations and interrelationships of a wide range of simpler synthetic substances; the study of the mechanism and nature of the Walden rearrangement; studies on the isolation of the vitamin B complex; and, finally, during the last few years of his life, the chemistry of the gums and pectins.

To estimate his part in the advancement of science one must add to these fruitful studies his influence in developing young men. No one could work with him without being fired by his spirit, and a significant part of the growth of biochemistry in America is to be attributed to men who were trained and inspired in his laboratory. And he gave to his men not only scientific leadership, but warm personal interest; so that all who worked with him hold his memory in affection.

WALTER A. JACOBS
DONALD D. VAN SLYKE
PHOEBUS AARON THEODOR LEVENE: 1869–1940
Walter A. Jacobs and Donald D. Van Slyke