

wire mesh hemispheres on the end of a handle with a metal slide to open and close them. When closed, one had a wire mesh version of the tea ball - the second idea suggested by the high school teachers. The 1937 catalog still listed the sodium basket, though it now cost 90¢, but by the time the 1967 catalog appeared, it had vanished.



The Sodium Basket

The sodium spoon wasn't the only demonstration device to come out of Hofmann's lectures. The Hofmann (universally misspelled as Hoffman) apparatus for the electrolysis of water, found in virtually every chemistry department, was also based on one of the figures in the book (4). Indeed, the same 1914 catalog of the E. H. Sargent Company listed no less than 12 items under the heading of "Hoffman Lecture Apparatus", all of them based on the devices described in Hofmann's original volume. By 1929 this list had shrunk to nine items, by 1937 to four items, and by 1967 just the standard electrolysis apparatus used today was listed. Probably no other chemist originated so many pieces of commercially manufactured lecture apparatus.

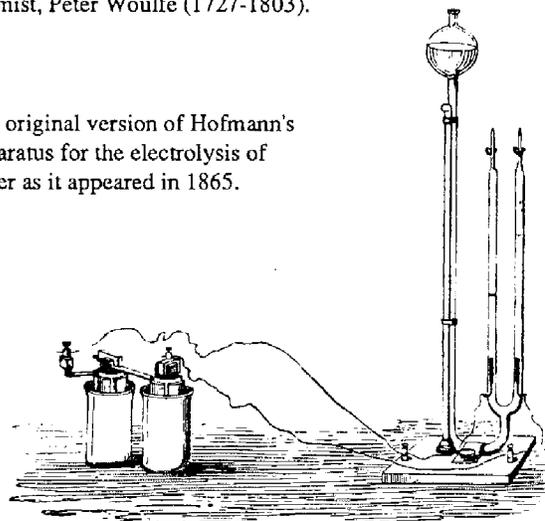
All of this has caused me to ruminate on the sad decline of the lecture demonstration as a teaching device in chemistry, though I will spare you the painful details, and to timidly suggest that the study of the history of chemistry may well have some very practical consequences for the teacher, in addition to the usual humanizing qualities which have been tradition-

ally invoked in order to justify its study.

References and Notes

1. W. B. Jensen, "Whatever Happened to the Microcrith?", *Bull. Hist. Chem.*, **1988**, 2, 16-19.
2. A. W. Hofmann, *Einleitung in die Moderne Chemie*, 2nd ed., Vieweg, Braunschweig, 1866. The 1st edition (1865) was in English.
3. *Scientific Laboratory Apparatus*, E. H. Sargent Co, Chicago, IL, 1914 (No. 20), pp. 201-202, 259; *Ibid.*, 1929 (No. 35), pp. 308, 511; *Ibid.*, 1937 (No. 50), pp. 387, 448; *Ibid.*, 1967 (No. 115), p. 406.
4. A second example of misspelling apparently propagated by laboratory supply catalogs is the name "Woulff bottle" for the multiple necked bottles named in honor of the 18th century English chemist, Peter Woulfe (1727-1803).

The original version of Hofmann's apparatus for the electrolysis of water as it appeared in 1865.



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