

Sława i zniesławienie. O życiu i pracach Augustyna Wróblewskiego

The life and works of Augustyn Wóblewski

SUMMARY

Augustyn Wróblewski (1866-?) was an outstanding Polish biochemist of the end of the 19th century. He was born in Wilno, in the family deeply engaged in the Polish independence movement. Because of Russian persecutions he could not finish his chemical studies at the Riga Polytechnical Institute. In 1894 he obtained his PhD degree at the Bern University (Switzerland). Later he worked as a chemistry assistant at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. At the same time he also held the position of inspector in the Laboratory for the Chemical Examination of Food in the same city. In 1903 he lost both these positions because of misunderstandings with university authorities. Since that time he was active as organizer of different civil ethical societies, editor of ethical journals, and propagator of anti-alcoholism. In last years of his stay in Kraków he was also a very active member of atheistic Society of Monists. In the years 1912-1913 he was liable in Kraków to judicial procedures because of his activities in anarcho-syndicalistic movement.

The years 1894-1901 constituted a period of the greatest scientific activity of Wróblewski. In opposition to the common view of that time, Wróblewski considered enzymes to be proteins. He used the results of his own investigations on glycolitic enzymes, like diastase, to support such opinion. Wróblewski is known as the author of a new classification of proteins (1897). Enzymes were included into this classification as a special class of proteins, and divided into sub-classes according to the type of chemical reaction catalysed by them. He was also one of the first scientists who confirmed Buchner's finding of alcoholic extracellular fermentation, and found that the presence of phosphate ions strongly enhances this process. It was the first observation of this kind in scientific writing. Wróblewski was also the pioneer of research on brain enzymes, and the author of a textbook (in Polish) of practical exercises in chemical physiology (1897).

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