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AN EARLY PHYSICAL CHEMIST—M. W. LOMONOSOFF

At the present day, it seldom happens that due credit is not given to each chemist for any new facts which he may add to the sum of chemical knowledge and, conversely, it is usually an easy matter to attach to any given fact the name of the investigator who first discovered it. For reasons which, in part, at least, are obvious, these conditions are not always so easy to fulfil in the case of the fathers of the science. It is certain, at all events, that frequently recognition has here been long delayed and, even where the most fundamental facts are concerned, the determination of the parentage has had repeatedly to be revised.

At the very start, there is difficulty in settling what constitutes discovery. Scheele's preparation of oxygen undoubtedly took place a year or two before Priestley's, but his publication of the results was delayed until three years after Priestley's, and priority in discovery is generally held to require priority in publication.

Again, Paracelsus obtained what is now known as hydrogen by the action of iron filings upon vinegar, but Cavendish defined the substance by its properties, and so the discovery dates from 1766. Liebig prepared bromine, but set the sample aside, believing it to be a chloride of iodine, and Balard, who prepared the substance later, and recognized it to be a new halogen, became the discoverer. Similarly, a