

Sir Reginald Patrick Linstead was a very distinguished organic Chemist. He was of small stature and the most prominent feature of his appearance was an extremely large forehead. He was always soberly dressed in a dark blue lounge suit with a narrow white stripe, white shirt and dark tie. I cannot recall that he ever wore the standard white laboratory coat which so clearly indicates the status of the organic chemist. Was it colourful with yellow acid stains and torn at the edges, or even reduced to a small jacket length, then its owner was a very active, but not necessarily a good chemist. If the lab coat was spotless and virgin white, then the opposite was true and thus one would expect the Prof to be so dressed, but not RPL. After a relatively short time he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society and he finally became the Rector of Imperial College. Sadly, I never met him again after I left College, as I liked, respected and admired him. Later he was knighted and became Sir Patrick. I also met Lady Linstead, who had her own profession, not chemistry, and was always full of charm and kindness to her husband's students.

When I was interned in Canada during the war, RPL sent me a letter dated 18 November 1940 from the Department of Chemistry, Harvard University, Oxford Street, Cambridge MA to Camp L, Base Army Post Office, Ottawa, Canada. This letter, which I have in front of me now, contained a testimonial from which I quote

Dr Michaelis showed himself to be a careful and thorough worker and he has a wide knowledge of chemistry. He is also an excellent linguist. Perhaps it is appropriate for me to add that I found Dr Michaelis a very pleasant and energetic co-worker. Also I believe him to be loyal to England and a good democrat.

It was most kind of RPL to send this testimonial to the English authorities who had interned me. He knew of my predicament, sent me a number of books to Canada and supported my application for release and for return to England.

But was RPL just polite when he called me "thorough" or ignorant of the error I made when using a catalyst during my chemical work for the Ph D? My error was simply to use too little of it, one tenth, and the expected result never occurred—but why this was so, was of course fully discussed at the time with him. He never thought that I would simply use 0.1 gram of the precious palladium catalyst, instead of 1 gram as I should have done.

Soon after I graduated, RPL was appointed to his first Chair at Sheffield University and I followed him. The year I spent there at the University was not very exciting and I was glad to return to London just before the outbreak of World War II.