

# Wilhelm Ostwald Dead; Chemist Won Nobel Prize

German Originated Physical  
Theory in His Science;  
Gained Fame at Leipzig

Head of Monist League

Exchange Professor at Co-  
lumbia and Harvard in '05

By The Associated Press

GROSSBOTHEN, Germany, April 4.—  
Professor Wilhelm Ostwald, winner of the  
Nobel prize for chemistry in 1909 and  
creator of the modern science of physical  
chemistry, died today in this little town  
near Lelpsic. He was seventy-eight years  
old.

### Exchange Professor in U. S. in 1905

Professor Ostwald's was one of the  
most familiar of all names to students of  
chemistry, and he had a world-wide rep-  
utation as one of the most important  
scientists of recent times. He was ex-  
change professor at Harvard and Colum-  
bia Universities in 1905, held honorary  
degrees from several universities, and was  
a prolific writer on technical and even  
somewhat metaphysical subjects.

He was born in September, 1853, at  
Riga, Latvia; studied chemistry and  
physics at Dorpat University, the intel-  
lectual center of Livonia, and became a  
lecturer in chemistry there in 1878 and  
professor four years later. It was here  
that he first became known—a poor sci-  
entist in an out-of-the-way corner of  
Europe who had written a huge book on  
general chemistry. The book brought  
him his call to the chair of physical  
chemistry at Leipzig University, where  
his life's work was done.

At Leipzig Dr. Ostwald had his own  
laboratory, and here began fifteen years  
of tremendous activity. He wrote thou-  
sands of pages on technical subjects,  
reviewed hundreds of scientific books  
and papers in the "Zeitscheift fur Physi-  
kalishe Chemie," which he had founded,  
conducted extensive researches, some of  
them of great importance, and at the  
same time lectured to students and  
headed the most-active laboratory in the  
world at that time.

### Writings Noted for Clarity

Tired and longing for an opportunity  
to work out his theories more fully, he  
bought a country home, Villa Energie, at  
Grossbothen and tried to retire. It took  
him three years to extricate himself  
from the university world with the title  
of emeritus professor in 1906. At Villa  
Energie he worked ten hours a day on  
his books and did some fairly good  
painting, and was as proud of one  
phase of his work as of the other. His  
books were remarkable not only for  
their statements but for their perfect  
scientific style. It was said no one ever  
wrote science more clearly than he.  
Three years after his retirement he re-  
ceived the Nobel prize for chemistry.

The chief interest in Dr. Ostwald lies  
in his work as the originator of a uni-  
form theory of physical chemistry. It  
was he who first showed specialists that  
there were universal chemical proper-  
ties and processes. Before he began his  
work, specialists laid most stress on de-  
scriptive or synthetical chemistry, but  
he turned their attention to the pro-  
cesses by which electrolytic dissocia-  
tion takes place.

Dr. Ostwald also became conspicuous  
as a thinker and controversialist. He  
became the leader in Germany of the  
Monist movement. He was president of  
the German Monist League, and was  
called by his opponents the "Monistic  
Pope."

### Saw Happiness in Energy

His energetic theory of the universe  
contrasted with the mechanical theory  
which had been held by many meta-  
physicians and which depended upon  
the fundamental equation that energy  
equals mass times velocity. Dr. Ostwald  
concluded that all matter was but one  
phase or another of energy, that the liv-  
ing organism was nothing but a system  
of energies and a phase of a far greater  
system of enrgies constituting the uni-  
verse. He went further afield and pro-  
pounded the theory that the successful  
display of energy meant happiness, that  
memory was but the recording of sensa-  
tions, and that science had to explain  
every possible relation of life.

Some years before the World War he  
started an organization which was then  
called "Die Brücke" (The Bridge), which  
aimed at getting rid of the waste of en-  
ergy in modern economic life by stand-  
ardizing all articles in common use, such  
as envelopes, periodicals, etc. This body  
succumbed to the war, but the idea it-  
self is now making rapid progress in  
Germany.

One of Dr. Ostwald's most recent ac-  
tivities was the development of a new  
theory of colors, in connection with  
which he brought to light some hitherto  
unknown laws. In one of his books,  
"Great Men," he discussed how signs of  
genius are to be detected and devel-  
oped. He also prophesied that within  
a century or less science would be cre-  
ating a form of life as advanced as our  
domestic animals.

Among his numerous works are "Text-  
book of General Chemistry," 1885-'87;  
"Thermodynamical Studies," "Founda-  
tions of Analytical Chemistry," which  
was translated into sixteen languages;  
"The Overcoming of Scientific Materi-  
alism," "Development of Electrochem-  
istry," "Christianity as the Threshold  
of Monism," "Modern Natural Philoso-  
phy," several books on his color re-  
searches and "The World of Forms."

Dr. Ostwald was an honorary doctor of  
the Universities of Cambridge, Toronto,  
Liverpool, Halle and Geneva, honorary  
member of the Polytechnic in Riga, and  
foreign member of the Danish, Russian,  
Austrian, Dutch and American Acad-  
emies of Science.

In 1880 he married Helene von Reyher.  
They had three sons and two daughters.