This is the sufficient practical ground for preserving organic chemistry as a separate science. The subject is so vast that in fact it is impossible to incorporate it with other departments of chemistry. Even the compounds of carbon and hydrogen alone are counted by hundreds, those of carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen, by thousands, and the number of possible compounds of the three elements is almost unlimited.

The mere number of organic compounds is, however, far from constituting the only distinction between the two departments of descriptive chemistry. The unique variety of compounds containing carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen, and, in a small proportion of cases a few other elements besides, must obviously rest upon the nature of the elements themselves, especially of course upon the nature of carbon, upon the properties which are peculiar to them and which mark them off from other elements, just as the properties of argon, of the metals of the alkalies, or of the halogens determine their own chemical behavior. Moreover, such characteristics must and do contribute properties to the compounds of carbon which are theirs as a class, which distinguish them from the compounds of other elements in somewhat the same way