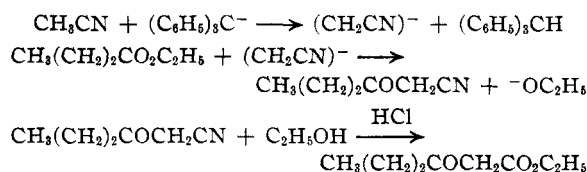


In the present investigation it is shown that acetonitrile may be acylated with ethyl *n*-butyrate by first converting the nitrile into its anion by means of sodium triphenylmethyl³ and then treating the anion with the ester; in this manner *n*-butyryl acetonitrile was obtained in 52% yield (based on the sodium triphenylmethyl). Alcoholysis of the β -ketonitrile gave a 64% yield of ethyl *n*-butyrylacetate, the over-all yield being 33%. The reactions may be represented as



To a stirred solution (1300 cc.) of 0.19 mole of sodium triphenylmethyl³ at 0° was added 7.8 g. (0.19 mole) of acetonitrile (b. p. 81.5–82.0°) dissolved in 25 cc. of dry ether. The red color of the sodium triphenylmethyl was discharged immediately yielding a light orange solution with a white precipitate. To this stirred mixture was added during five minutes 22 g. (0.19 mole) of cold ethyl *n*-butyrate (b. p. 121.0–121.5°) dissolved in 25 cc. of dry ether. The mixture was stirred for five minutes longer, removed from the ice-bath, and shaken vigorously for two minutes. Ice water (500 cc.) was then added with shaking to the mixture, the alkaline layer separated and the ether layer washed with sodium hydroxide solution followed by water. From the dried ether solution were recovered 2.5 g. of acetonitrile and 12.0 g. of ethyl *n*-butyrate. Acidification (with cold 10% sulfuric acid) of the combined alkaline solution and washings yielded an oil. The mixture was extracted three times with ether and the combined ether solutions washed with 10% sodium bicarbonate solution, dried, and the solvent distilled. On distilling the residue *in vacuo* there was obtained 5.5 g. (52% based on the sodium triphenylmethyl) of *n*-butyryl acetonitrile boiling at 104–105° at 11 mm.

*Anal.*⁴ Calcd. for $\text{C}_6\text{H}_5\text{ON}$: C, 64.8; H, 8.17. Found: C, 65.3; H, 8.21.

By allowing the reaction mixture to stand at room temperature (25°) for two days, the same yield (52%) of product was obtained, there being also formed more alkali-soluble by-product.

Treatment of the *n*-butyryl acetonitrile with dry halogen chloride in absolute alcohol^{1a} gave a 64% yield of ethyl *n*-butyrylacetate (b. p. 94–95° at 15 mm.; copper compound, m. p. 124–125°).⁵

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(3) See especially Hudson and Hauser, *THIS JOURNAL*, **63**, 3156 (1941).

(4) Analysis by S. Gottlieb, Columbia University, New York, N. Y.

(5) Moureux and Delange, *Compt. rend.*, **136**, 753 (1903); *Bull. soc. chim.*, [3] **29**, 668 (1903).

Catalytic Hydrogenation of Cystine

BY KEVIN E. KAVANAGH

The applicability and high efficiency of the recently developed palladium and platinum synthetic high polymer catalysts were described in previous papers.^{1,2,3} In an effort to determine whether these polymers are able to protect against the well-known poisoning of noble metals by sulfur, an attempt was made to hydrogenate cystine using a PVA-Pd catalyst. Bergmann and Michalis⁴ reduced cystine to cysteine using palladium black: for the almost complete reduction of 4.8 g., 2 g. of palladium black and six hours of shaking were required. Applying the Pd-PVA catalyst, partial reduction of cystine was slowly obtained using only 10 mg. of Pd. Therefore, the amount of Pd was increased to 100 mg., whereupon almost complete hydrogenation resulted.

Procedure

A catalyst containing 500 mg. of PVA, 100 mg. of Pd and 50 cc. of water was prepared. Two grams of cystine dissolved in 50 cc. of 2 *N* hydrochloric acid was introduced into the vessel and the whole shaken for forty-five hours at room temperature and ordinary pressure. At the end of this time 176 cc. of a theoretical 199 cc. of hydrogen had been absorbed. Thereupon, the still colloidal catalyst was made strongly acid with 5 cc. of 12 *N* hydrochloric acid and then flocculated by the addition of excess alcohol. The cysteine hydrochloride hydrate was isolated and air-dried. The melting point of the hydrochloride, after the molecule of water of crystallization had been removed by drying in a vacuum desiccator, was 184° decomp. The absence of cystine was ascertained by the iodometric titration of the cysteine to cystine.^{5,6} 0.4389 g. of cysteine hydrochloric acid hydrate required 25.05 cc. of 0.1004 *N* iodine. Calcd. 24.91 I_2 .

Anal. Calcd. for the cysteine hydrochloric acid hydrate: N, 7.97; H_2O , 10.25. Found: N, 7.79; H_2O , 10.49.

The repeatedly emphasized^{4,7} sensitivity of Pd catalysts to sulfur-containing proteins was smoothly overcome by using a Pd-PVA catalyst.

Acknowledgment.—This investigation was partly supported by grants of the American Philosophical Society and the Bache Fund of the National Academy of Sciences.

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