these extracts and experiments initiated to test its potency just as the report of the findings of Underwood and Filmer with this element were received. Successful treatment of bush sickness with small amounts of cobalt were reported by Askew and Dixon as mentioned above and later by Wall.[8] Since that time a considerable volume of work on the relation of cobalt to the incidence and control of bush sickness has been carried out by the New Zealand workers, not the least important of which is the development of a chemical method capable of determining as little as 0.2 gamma cobalt.[9]

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A POSSIBLE SOURCE OF LABORATORY FIRES[1]

THE conditions necessary for the observation of the phenomenon described herein are common to most laboratories, and the possibilities they have for causing laboratory fires may be already generally known. However, since there is apparently no record in the literature it seems advisable to describe an experience that might well have resulted more disastrously than it did.

On opening the laboratory after a week-end the room was found to contain smoke and there was an odor of burnt wood. The source of the smoke and odor was found to be a smouldering area on a laboratory table top near a two-liter florence flask filled with benzene. The flask and its contents were quite warm, but fortunately the flask was not stoppered, being, instead, covered with an inverted beaker. The burned place in the table was curved in shape and a defect of about one half inch had been made. It was found that what had happened was that the round flask filled with perfectly clear fluid had acted as an efficient sun glass and brought the sun rays to a focus on the table. The laboratory had been closed for a period of one and a half days, during which time the sun shone brightly. The laboratory table was on the south side of the room near a large window, and sunlight was able to enter for a considerable portion of the day. The table top was black, and it was easy to demonstrate that in a few moments the flask placed in bright sunshine caused the wood to smoke. A hole was burned in a piece of black paper almost immediately. Inflammable liquids (ether, benzene, carbon disulfide) poured on the table evaporated before they could be ignited.

It is quite certain that had the flask been tightly stoppered the increased temperature would have burst the flask and brought the highly inflammable benzene in contact with the glowing embers to cause a fire. Also had the table top been of softer wood, as for example pine, the focused sun rays may have induced a flame.

It seems a worthwhile precaution to avoid storing clear fluids in globular glass vessels where they are exposed to direct sun rays, unless they are placed on a white table covering. It may be that the nature of the fluid in the flask, its color and the amount in proportion to the capacity of the flask influence the possibility of the sun glass effect.

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"HYPOTHECATE" VERSUS "ASSUME"

IN a recent proof of the Proceedings of the American Physiological Society appears the phrase: "Each hypothecated element in the nerve." This misuse of the word hypothecate in scientific literature is not infrequent. The dictionary defines "hypothecate" as "give or pledge as security; pawn or mortgage." I am myself to blame for the introduction of finance into physiology through the term "oxygen debt." I should be sorry, however, to have it go too far, or to see my friends, on both sides of the Atlantic, reduced to pawning the elements either of their nerves, or of their hypotheses. Let them "assume" these elements, not "hypothecate" them.

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WILLIAM MORTON WHEELER AND THE CLASSICS

No friend of William Morton Wheeler can read unmoved the beautiful appreciation of him in SCIENCE. May I add a word on a point barely noticed?

The reader of Wheeler's great monograph on the ant will not fail to see how intimate he was with Vergil's "Georgics." But very few of his friends and pupils are aware that a commanding knowledge of the Greek and Latin classics made part of the superb intellectual equipment of this self-taught man. He read them as we read French or German. One day last summer he said to me: "I have just read Aeschylus, Sophocles and Thucydides, and Tacitus." Of course it was Greek that he cared for most. When a boy he picked up a speaking knowledge of the modern lingo from Greek fruit sellers in the streets of Milwaukee. From that he worked backward, and it was not long before he was carrying a Greek classic in his pocket.

HENRY OSBORN TAYLOR

[7] *N. Z. Jour. Agr.*, 50: 267, 1935; Askew and Dixon, *N. Z. Jour. Sc. and Tech.*, 18: 73, 1936.

[8] *N. Z. Jour. Sc. and Tech.*, 18: 642, 1937.

[9] Kidson, Askew and Dixon, *N. Z. Jour. Sc. and Tech.*, 18: 601, 1936.

[1] From the Otho S. A. Sprague Memorial Institute and the Department of Pathology, University of Chicago.