SCIENCE

NEW SERIES
VOL. 93, No. 2418

FRIDAY, MAY 2, 1941

SUBSCRIPTION, $6.00
SINGLE COPIES, .15

Science: published weekly by The Science Press, Lancaster, Pa.
Entered as second-class matter July 18, 1923, at the Post Office at Lancaster, Pa., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

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Certain Aspects of the Chemistry of Infectious Diseases: DR. M. L. CROSSLEY ... 409

The Importance of Microorganisms in Vitamin Research: PROFESSOR ROGER J. WILLIAMS ... 412

Obituary:

Herbert Freundlich: PROFESSOR ROSS AIKEN GORTNER and KARL SOLLNER ... 414

Scientific Events:

The Institute of Geo-Biology in Peking; The Ellen H. Richards Institute; Exchange of Astronomical Papers with Foreign Countries; Army Service of Medical Students and Interns; The American Philosophical Society ... 416

Scientific Notes and News ... 418

Discussion:

The Rate of Performance of Osmotic Work on the Chloride Ion during Active Intestinal Absorption: DR. H. C. PETERS. *The Mouse Antialopecia Factor:* PROFESSOR GUSTAV J. MARTIN. *Need for the Preservation of Natural Areas Exemplifying Vegetation Types:* DR. WILLARD G. VAN NAME. *Research in Tropical America:* PROFESSOR LAURENCE IRVING ... 421

Scientific Books:

Recent Books on the History of Medicine: PROFESSOR CHAUNCEY D. LEAKE ... 424

Special Articles:

Acetyl and Phenylureido Derivatives of Tobacco Mosaic Virus: DR. GAIL L. MILLER and DR. W. M. STANLEY. *Leucocyte Level and Longevity in Rats:* DR. CARL REICH and DR. W. F. DUNNING. *On the Size of the Litter and the Gestation Period of Procavia capensis:* PROFESSOR C. J. VAN DER HORST 428

Scientific Apparatus and Laboratory Methods:

An Improved Cell for Optical Diffusion Measurements on Solutions: DR. HANS NEURATH. *A Simple, Thin Aquarium:* DR. LORUS J. MILNE ... 431

Science News ... 8

SCIENCE: A Weekly Journal devoted to the Advancement of Science, edited by J. MCKEEN CATTELL and published every Friday by

THE SCIENCE PRESS

Lancaster, Pa. Garrison, N. Y.

New York City: Grand Central Terminal

Annual Subscription, $6.00 Single Copies, 15 Cts.

SCIENCE is the official organ of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Information regarding membership in the Association may be secured from the office of the permanent secretary in the Smithsonian Institution Building, Washington, D. C.

CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE CHEMISTRY OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES[1]

By Dr. M. L. CROSSLEY

DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH, CALCO CHEMICAL DIVISION, AMERICAN CYANAMID COMPANY

THE discovery of microorganisms as the causative agents in infectious diseases introduced a new problem of relating the specific characteristics of a disease to the nature and behavior of the particular type of organism responsible for the pathological condition. It seemed reasonable to expect that the infecting agent would change the normal course of certain physical and chemical processes essential to the regular functions of the healthy state of the animal. A knowledge of the mechanism of the cycle of events involved would lead to a rational basis of treating the disease to eliminate the difficulties and reestablish normal conditions. Obviously, it was of prime importance to learn as much as possible about microorganisms and their pathogenicity before a comprehensive study of their rôle in disease would be instructive and profitable. Just how the infecting agent causes a specific disease, what changes occur, where these changes are initiated, the nature of the resulting products and their influence on the physical and chemical process underlying the normal cellular activity of the animal; are questions which must be answered before chemotherapy can be highly effective in relieving man of the many ills that now reduce his efficiency, limit his usefulness and endanger his life.

All these questions involve difficult problems. The infecting agents are themselves complex organisms, whose metabolic processes are poorly understood. The animal organism is much more complex and its

[1] Address delivered before the general meeting of the American Chemical Society at the Detroit meeting September 9, 1940.

rod F leads to an attachment by which the cell is mounted in the constant temperature bath. I and II are cylindrical openings through which the cell is filled. By sliding the lower block to the left until its slit is in line with tube I, the lower compartment is completely shut off from the upper one. This part of the cell can be filled with solution through tube I, which connects through a one-eighth inch hole drilled through the upper block. The upper compartment is filled with the solvent through tube II. After the cell has been placed in the constant temperature bath, the screw K is loosened slightly, and the lower block, together with the glass plates, is moved slowly to the right until the upper and lower compartments are in alignment. Then the screw K is tightened again and diffusion proceeds.

A very thin layer of stop-cock grease is applied to the steel surfaces before the glass windows are set in place. In order to prevent grease from soiling the glass forming the windows of the upper half of the cell, a quarter-inch wide area to the left of the upper rectangular slot is left free of grease. For greater refraction power, the thickness of the cell has been increased, in comparison with the Lamm cell, from 1 to 1.7 cm. All parts with the exception of the stainless steel blocks, A and A_1, are made of chromium-plated brass.

From an experimental viewpoint the cell has been found to offer the following advantages: 1. Smooth boundary formation and immediate visibility of the boundary at the position of formation. 2. Small volume capacity, *i.e.,* 2 cc of solution and solvent each being sufficient for a diffusion experiment. 3. Greater refractive power due to the increased thickness of the cell; this allows the diffusion rate of protein solutions to be measured in concentrations of 0.2 per cent. and less. 4. Easy dismantling and reassembling for cleaning purposes.

The cell has proved to be suitable for diffusion measurements with solutions of proteins as well as of low molecular weight substances, the results of which will be published elsewhere.

HANS NEURATH
DUKE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

A SIMPLE, THIN AQUARIUM

A SATISFACTORY, water-tight, live chamber can be built easily with two sheets of clear window glass, a length of heavy-walled "pressure" rubber tubing, two wooden rectangles of the same size as the glass and four C-clamps. The figure shows the separate parts and the assembly in end view. This unit will hold water, can be made in any size or shape needed, and, for photographic work with artificial backgrounds placed behind the assembly, is excellent, since it does not distort the backgrounds or cause lack of uniformity in illumination.

If a thicker cell is wanted and rubber tubing of the largest size not adequate, a still broader unit can be made by adding a flat wooden rectangle and another U of tubing to the sandwich. Thus the thick cell will consist of rectangle—glass—tubing—rectangle—tubing—glass—rectangle. Smaller tubing can then be used and the flat rectangle made any thickness needed.

With this type of thin aquarium, all sorts of interesting lighting can be employed and many scenic backgrounds provided. Yet the organisms can not get far enough away from the front glass to escape a hand lens or dissecting binocular used horizontally.

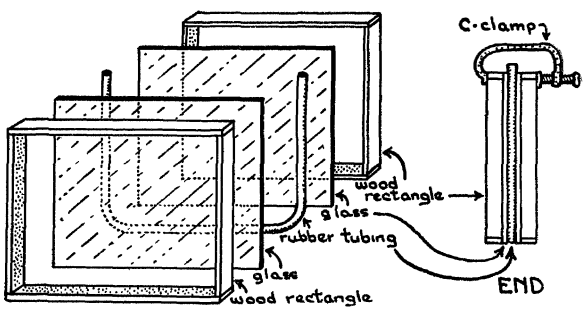

FIG. 1

For study of water insects, salamanders or fish, this type of equipment is much preferable to the commonly used thin museum jars, since it lacks distortion and can be made of any dimensions desired.

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BOOKS RECEIVED

CHAMPION, F. C. *University Physics: Part I, General Physics.* Pp. 157. Illustrated. $1.50. *Part II, Heat.* Pp. 148. Illustrated. $1.50. Interscience.

COLEMAN, A. P. *The Last Million Years. A History of the Pleistocene in North America.* Pp. xii + 216. Illustrated. University of Toronto Press. $3.50.

ELDER, ALBERT L. *Textbook of Chemistry.* Pp. viii + 751. Illustrated. Harper. $3.75.

HAMILTON, BURTON E. and K. JEFFERSON THOMSON. *The Heart in Pregnancy and the Childbearing Age.* Pp. viii + 402. Illustrated. Little, Brown. $5.00.

HOBBS, WILLIAM H., Editor. *Reports of the Greenland Expeditions of the University of Michigan. Part II, Meteorology, Physiography and Botany.* Pp. vii + 287. Illustrated. University of Michigan Press. $5.00.

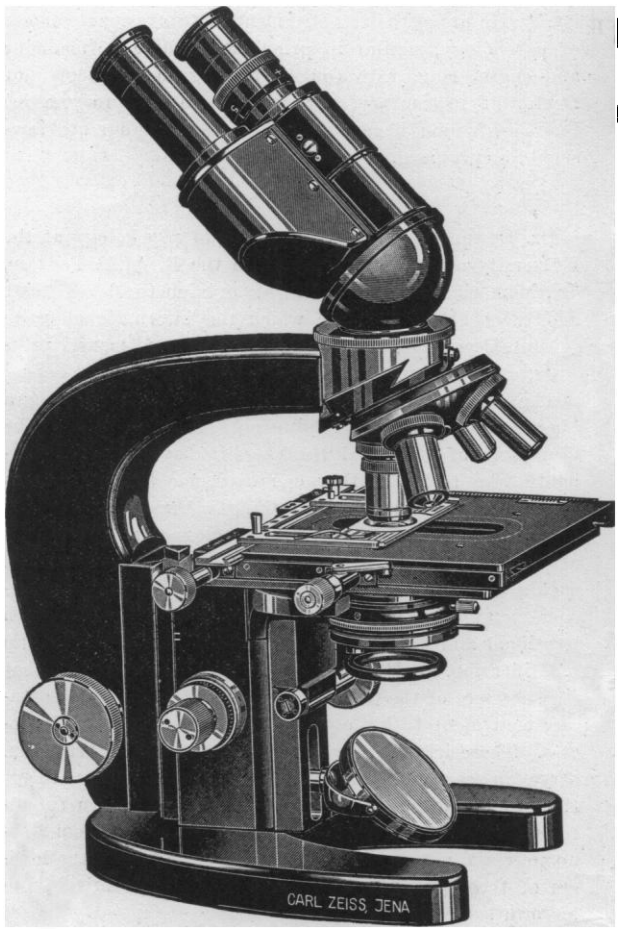
HOSKINS, R. G. *Endocrinology; the Glands and their Functions.* Pp. 388. Illustrated. Norton. $4.00.

MOORE, E. S. *American Influence in Canadian Mining.* Pp. xx + 144. University of Toronto Press. $2.25.

PERLA, DAVID and JESSIE MARMORSTON. *Natural Resistance and Clinical Medicine.* Pp. xx + 1344. 15 figures. Little, Brown.

ROBERTS, J. K. *Heat and Thermodynamics.* Third edition. Pp. xvi + 488. Illustrated. Interscience. $5.50.

TAYLOR, LLOYD W. *Physics, the Pioneer Science.* Pp. xii + 847 + xliv. Houghton Mifflin. $4.00.



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