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<i>Science in Britain</i> : SIR RICHARD GREGORY	213	<i>Special Articles</i> :	
<i>Correspondence in Regard to the Censorship of Scientific Journals</i>	216	<i>Absorption of Selenium by Corn from Astragalus Extracts and Solutions Containing Proteins</i> : PROFESSOR SAM F. TRELEASE, SYDNEY S. GREENFIELD and AUGUST A. DISOMMA. <i>Factors Influencing Capillary Permeability in the Vitamin E Deficient Chick</i> : DR. HENRIK DAM and JOHANNES GLAVIND. <i>Mechanism of Sulfonamide Action. Inhibition of Bacterial Respiration by Sulfanilamide and by Its Inactive Isomers</i> : DR. ORVILLE WYSS, FREDERICK B. STRANDSKOV and DR. FRANZ C. SCHMELKES	234
<i>Obituary</i> :		<i>Scientific Apparatus and Laboratory Methods</i> :	
<i>Wade Hampton Brown</i> : DR. HARRY S. N. GREENE. <i>Deaths and Memorials</i>	221	<i>Micrometer Burette</i> : DR. ROBERT B. DEAN and DR. E. S. FETCHER, JR. <i>A Stable Hydrogen Peroxide Aerosol</i> : DR. HAROLD A. ABRAMSON	237
<i>Scientific Events</i> :		<i>Science News</i>	10
<i>Military Training at the University of Michigan; Civil Service Examinations for Junior Metallurgists; Committee on the Location of New and Rare Instruments; Progress on the Construction of a Hundred Million Volt Electron Accelerator; Presentation to the Royal Society</i>	222		
<i>Scientific Notes and News</i>	225		
<i>Discussion</i> :			
<i>The Magnetic Ion</i> : PROFESSOR FELIX EHRENFHART and DR. LEO BANET. <i>New Stereoisomers of Methylbixin</i> : PROFESSOR L. ZECHMEISTER and R. B. ESCUE. <i>Seaweeds at Beaufort, North Carolina, as a Source of Agar</i> : HAROLD J. HUMM. <i>The Cause of Domestication</i> : W. L. MCATEE. <i>Offprints for the Scientific Men of Soviet Russia</i> : DR. GREGORY S. RAZRAN	228		
<i>Quotations</i> :			
<i>They Also Suffer</i>	232		
<i>Scientific Books</i> :			
<i>Astronomy</i> : CHARLES A. FEDERER, JR. <i>The Flora of Fukien Province, China</i> : PROFESSOR E. D. MERRILL	232		
<i>Reports</i> :			
<i>The National Health in Great Britain after Nearly Three Years of War</i>	233		

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SCIENCE IN BRITAIN¹

By Sir RICHARD GREGORY, Bt., F.R.S.

THE British Association for the Advancement of Science was founded in the year 1831. In the same year the world-renowned naturalist, Charles Darwin, left England in H.M.S. *Beagle* as a member of the famous expedition to the Pacific. Between 1831 and 1836 the expedition surveyed the South American coasts and adjacent islands, including the Galapagos Islands, and also the coasts of Australia and New Zealand. Darwin recorded that the voyage was the most

important event in his life and it determined his whole career. The geological and other natural history notes made by him during the voyage, especially along South America, were the basis of most of his later works.

Exactly a century ago, Darwin prepared a short account of the facts observed by him which indicated relationships between different living things and suggested a common line of descent. Also, in the year 1842, was published his great work on "The Structure and Distribution of Coral Reefs," which gave the results of his own observations of coral atolls in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and threw new light upon their structure. He suggested that cores should be obtained by borings of such reefs in order to discover how deep the coral rock extended below the limit of about thirty fathoms in which the coral organisms can live. The British Association was the first body to set

¹ From the report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. This is the English text of a broadcast recently prepared by the president of the association for a series of talks on British science given in South American programs of the British Broadcasting Corporation in Spanish and Portuguese. It outlines the peacetime activities of the association, some of which are necessarily in abeyance now; it will therefore interest especially those who have come into contact with the association only during the war period.

easily be dismantled and cleaned and even sterilized if necessary, permitting the use of several solutions in the same burette. The micrometer burette can be conveniently calibrated by titrating a dilute base with

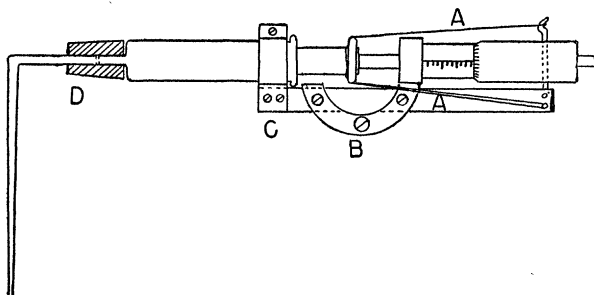


FIG. 1. A, Rubber bands; B, head of screw into boss of burette clamp; C, clamp around syringe barrel; D, rubber stopper.

constant boiling HCl. We have used cheap micrometers³ and found linear calibrations to one part in 1,000 independent of the speed of delivery. The rest of our procedures did not warrant greater accuracy, but since some micrometers are accurate to 1 part in 10,000 and at least equal accuracy can be obtained with a Krogh syringe pipette,⁴ the combination could doubtless be used with a corresponding accuracy.

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A STABLE HYDROGEN PEROXIDE AEROSOL

THE work of Twort and co-workers,¹ of others² as well as the recent work of Robertson³ and his co-workers on the effect of propylene glycol aerosols on the decontamination of virus-infected air has led us to investigate the production and stability of hydrogen peroxide aerosols. Applying principles previously described⁴ and using commercial nebulizers, hydrogen peroxide aerosols have readily been formed.

As described previously, the droplet vapor pressure was controlled by 50 per cent. glycerol. A solution of 0.1 per cent. hydrogen peroxide containing a stabilizing agent was nebulized at low pressure for forty-five minutes. During this time the weight decrease of the original solution was about 50 per cent. The

³ These can be obtained, for example, at Sears Roebuck and Company, or radio supply houses for about one dollar.

⁴ A. Krogh. *Ind. and Eng. Chem. Anal. Ed.*, 7: 130, 1935.

¹ D. C. Twort, A. H. Baker, S. R. Finn and E. O. Powell, *Jour. Hyg. Camb.*, 40: 253, 1940.

² An excellent review of the literature: A. H. Baker, *Chem. Prod.*, January, 1941, p. 25.

³ O. H. Robertson, C. G. Loosli, T. T. Puck, E. Bigg and B. F. Miller, *SCIENCE*, 94: 612, 1942.

⁴ H. A. Abramson, *Arch. Phys. Ther.*, 21: 612, 1940.

hydrogen peroxide titre of the residual solution after nebulization was more than 0.1 per cent. (the original value) in spite of the fact that the solution was filled with bubbles resulting from the aeration. This increase in peroxide content following nebulization will be subsequently explained.

A stronger solution (3 per cent.) of hydrogen peroxide was vigorously nebulized in a closed room, 10×10×15 feet, for forty-five minutes. The room was continuously filled with a fog produced by our technic of nebulization. Both normal and allergic individuals did not feel any discomfort or irritation while remaining in the room for as long as five minutes. Samples of the air were positive for peroxide. During the forty-five-minute period of nebulization, the volume of the solution decreased one half, but the peroxide content increased about 25 per cent. This increase in peroxide content was probably due to evaporation of water. In any event, it was surprising to find that the concentration of peroxide increased after nebulization. This makes the nebulization procedure practical. It is of interest that one may repeatedly breathe in dense mists of this concentration of peroxide without any irritation.

By inverting a two-liter bottle and forming a mist inside, the stability of a sample of a mist in this vessel was followed as well as the stability of the hydrogen peroxide droplets themselves. Potassium iodide starch papers were thrust quickly under the bottle at various intervals and the change in color followed. In this simple fashion it was found that hydrogen peroxide mists formed by nebulization show excellent peroxide activity (gaseous or droplet) for at least as long as one and one-half hours after the mist has been formed.

An investigation of additional biological and chemical properties of these stable hydrogen peroxide aerosols is in progress.

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BOOKS RECEIVED

- ANDERSON, W. A. D. *Synopsis of Pathology*. Illustrated. 17 plates. Pp. 661. C. V. Mosby Company.
- BLAKE, S. F., and ALICE C. ATWOOD. *Geographical Guide to the Floras of the World*. Pp. 336. U. S. Department of Agriculture.
- Contributions to American Anthropology. Vol. VII, Nos. 35 to 39*. Illustrated. Pp. vi + 262. Carnegie Institution of Washington. \$2.25.
- Proceedings of the Eighth American Scientific Congress, 1940. Vol. III: Biological Sciences*. Illustrated. Pp. 530. U. S. Department of State, Washington, D. C.
- SHERWOOD, G. E. F. and ANGUS E. TAYLOR. *Calculus*. Pp. xiv + 503. Prentice-Hall. \$3.75.
- SLEMONS, J. MORRIS. *The Prospective Mother*. Illustrated. Pp. xiii + 274. D. Appleton-Century Co. \$2.50.
- SPRAGUE, ATHERTON H. *Essentials of Plane and Spherical Trigonometry*. Pp. ix + 169. Prentice-Hall. \$1.35.

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three chapters devoted to the interrelations of organisms, the distribution of animals in time and place, and the origin and evolution of animal life. Short chapters on the history of zoology and on classification and nomenclature, which contains a synopsis of the animal kingdom by phyla and classes, are included.

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