

Dr. Robert W. Poindexter, cyanide chemist, indicates that a long period of industrial research has now put calcium cyanide into the commercial arena. The product as now made in southern California is prepared largely from the nitrogen of the air and from natural gas.

Recent field tests show that calcium cyanide is much more potent than pure hydrocyanic acid, or prussic acid, heretofore considered the ultimate 100 per cent. of toxic power. This unexpected result so far is not explained. After one test of calcium cyanide this winter in an orange grove, where a very resistant strain of scale insects was infesting the foliage, only two bugs were found alive among over 3000 insects actually counted. This record is especially encouraging to growers who have found the scale pests gradually developing immunity to regular doses of hydrocyanic acid. As one orchardist suggests - "the ancestors of the scale have been killed so often that their progeny don't mind it any more."

Calcium cyanide, while theoretically appearing to be a simple preparation to the ordinary chemist, is impossible to make in any ordinary way. By combining calcium carbide with hydrocyanic acid, however, a light brown powder is secured and this substance has the remarkable power of pouring out a veritable wave of poison gas when it is merely exposed to common air. Fumigators simply blow the poison in a dust cloud under the regular orchard tent; and whatever animal was living under the tent dies, regardless of whether it be a scale insect, a luckless owl or an itinerant rooster.

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#### APES AND MAN UNTANGLED BY GOVERNMENT SCIENTIST.

Just where the higher apes belong on the zoological family tree, and exactly what names we have a right to call these hairy cousins, has been the subject of an exhaustive study by Dr. C. W. Stiles of the U. S. Public Health Service, who has just completed a 150-page treatise on the subject.

"This may look like a question of interest only to zoology professors," said Dr. Stiles, "but the exact opposite is the case. The study was undertaken in the first place because of its very great practical importance. Apes and monkeys are indispensable nowadays in the experimental study of human diseases, and a great deal of confusion and some possibly dangerous mistakes can be caused in medical and bacteriological circles when the same name is given by different men to entirely distinct species of apes, one of which might be very susceptible to a given disease and the other immune. So a straightening up of the whole situation was necessary, if we are really to know what we are talking about.

"My survey of the literature on apes and monkeys took me back to the year 1551," Dr. Stiles continued. "The confusion of names began then, and it has not been straightened out yet. Not merely apes but the human species also, were involved by the earlier writers, who lived long before Darwin and so far as I know never gave a thought to evolution. Some of them listed apes as a kind of man, others considered certain types of men as apes. Even as late as 1829, a freak human being who was discovered was described and pictured as an ape.

"One interesting side-light on this situation is afforded by the name of the big East Indian ape, the orang-utan. 'Orang' is a Malay work meaning 'intelligent being'; it is applied not only to man and the orang-utan, but also to the elephant. Roughly, it may be said to mean 'man'. 'Utan' means 'of the woods'. 'Orang-utan'

therefore means 'man of the woods'. One early scientific name of the orang-utan was a literal translation of the Malay into Latin: "Homo sylvaticus". A letter but only slightly freer translation was made by P. T. Barnum; his 'wild man of Borneo' was simply an orang-utan."

In order to end the confusion of names among these animals, Dr. Stiles has decided to cut the Gordian knot, and instead of trying to determine exactly which ones among the many names that have been given to them should be applied to the various species, he will appeal to the International Committee on Zoological Nomenclature to authorize the use of names on which no conflict in use exists.

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#### GOVERNMENT GEOLOGIST SEEKS OIL IN ALASKA

Oil in the Arctic is the objective of Dr. Philip S. Smith of the U. S. Geological Survey, who has just left for Alaska to continue his survey of the Government's great oil reserve on the shores of the Arctic Ocean. According to present plans, the party will make a 700-mile trip overland with dog sledges from Nenana, the northern terminal of the Alaska Railroad, to Kotzebue, on an arm of Bering Strait, and thence northeastward across the unexplored Arctic coastal plain and adjacent regions. From April until September they will be wholly out of touch with civilization, and will have to subsist entirely on supplies which they will carry, plus what game the country affords.

"Of course there is oil there," Dr. Smith told a representative of Science Service. "There is a great deal of it, if our explorations during the past two years mean anything. But we must not immediately jump to the conclusion that the Navy is sure of fuel in unlimited supplies. If you will look at the map you will see that there are some very difficult problems to be solved before we can get the oil out.

"Even though the best indications we have found so far are near the sea, it is unlikely that tankers can be used to carry the oil. That part of the Arctic is free of ice for only about one month in the year, and not entirely free even then. Moreover, there are no harbors, and large ships have to lie at least a mile off shore. That would mean an almost impossible job of storage and loading, and would require a whole navy of tank ships.

"I am not intending to throw cold water, however. If we discover oil in large enough quantities to justify it--and that would require very large quantities--the railroad could be pushed through, or a pipe line built. But a pipe line would present problems of its own. The mean annual temperature of that region is only ten above zero, and the line would probably have to be kept heated at frequent intervals, or the oil would become too thick to flow. Fortunately, there is a good deal of bituminous coal up there, so we probably would not have to burn some of the oil to heat the rest. However, all this is speculation as to the future; what we have to do just now is first catch our oil."

According to Dr. Smith, the Arctic slope of Alaska is not a very exciting country. For seventy-five or eighty miles inland from the coast, it is flat tundra, more or less marshy and traversed by slow, meandering rivers. Then there is a rise, a sort of low piedmont, sloping up to the foot of the interior mountain range. This region more or less resembles parts of Oklahoma and eastern Colorado,