

## CHEMISTRY

# Chemists Seek To Synthesize Bone Marrow Substance

## Isolation of "Mother" of White Blood Cells That Fight Disease Is First Step Toward Synthesis

CHEMISTS of Oberlin College are on the trail of the bone marrow substance which is the "mother" of the body's white blood cells that fight disease.

Prof. Harry N. Holmes, with Ruth E. Corbet and W. B. Geiger, told the American Association for the Advancement of Science at Columbus of their success in concentrating crystalline substances from the bone marrow of cows after the high fatty fraction (85%) has been extracted by saponification.

Among these nearly pure crystalline substances, it is believed, is the mother substance which creates the white blood cells, the granulocytes.

"It is important to medicine," said the scientists' report, "that this mother substance be isolated in pure form so that formulas and structures can be determined as a step on the way to the synthesis of this material. It is already known that the white cells are closely related to the non-saponifiable fraction of marrow."

The current report describes the microanalysis and the chemical properties of the crystalline bone marrow products. Biochemical testing with animals is now in progress.

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## Fats from Paraffin

ALSO at the scientific sessions was the report of Dr. Willy Lange of the University of Cincinnati on the methods of producing fatty acids—from which can be made edible fats and soaps—from paraffin wax, a petroleum product.

Large-scale production of what corresponds to a synthetic lard is now in operation in Germany, Dr. Lange reported.

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## Universities Get Patents

PROTECTION of the public and the proper commercial development of inventions constitute the only interest of leading American universities in patent-

ing discoveries made by scientists in their laboratories, Prof. A. A. Potter, dean of engineering, Purdue University, told the Association.

Dean Potter said it has become increasingly apparent that the altruistic method of dedicating patents to the "free use of the public" is one of the surest ways of assuring that the patent and invention will not be developed.

Sixteen of the nation's leading schools, which have created a patent policy to control the inventions which their staff members may make, cooperated with Dean Potter in his survey of applied research in academic institutions. These universities and schools own 380 patents and 114 of them are in active use, he disclosed. Only five universities report income from patents.

The aim of universities is to create an unexploitative commercialization of a patent which has value to the public.

"The fact that the income accruing to educational institutions from patents is insignificant," said Dean Potter, "indicates that the incentive for discovery and invention in colleges and universities is not financial reward but is involved in the fair and equitable recognition of creative genius and of aid given by industry to research."

*Science News Letter, January 6, 1940*

## SOCIOLOGY

## Cultural New Deal Urged to Bring Order

A NEW way of looking at the universe and man's place in it was urged upon the scientific world by Lawrence K. Frank, of the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation, New York, before the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Such a cultural new deal is needed to bring order into our society and personal lives. Until we have such new formulation of our motivating ideas, we must continue to live anxiously and contingently, he contended.

Mr. Frank, considering the essential concepts and beliefs that make up what

we call "culture," finds that recent scientific knowledge has not been utilized adequately in shaping our motivating ideas suitable for living in a dynamic, changing world.

Four great problems that men at all times have had to face need new interpretation, in his opinion. These are:

1. How the universe arose or was created, how it operates, who or what makes things happen and why.

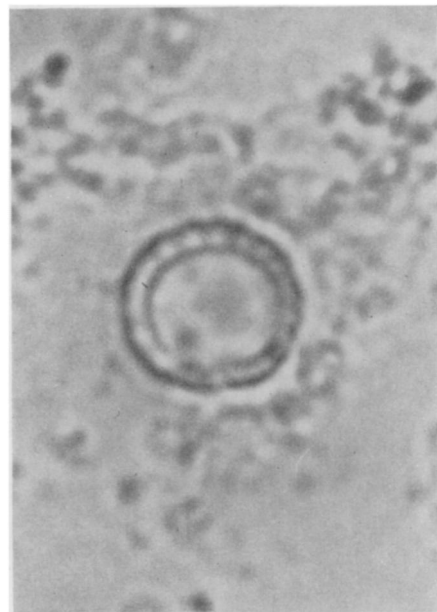
2. Man's origin, nature and destiny, his relation to the world, and whether he is a part of nature or outside it.

3. The relation of the individual to the group, who must be sacrificed for whom, the individual's rights and obligations.

4. What man wants and what he should have, human nature, human conduct, human motives, how he should be educated and made a part of the community.

Science has given new answers to all these problems in recent years but most of the people do not know them. And those who know, often do not feel them. For this reason, Mr. Frank considers the rebuilding of our culture the most insistent task before us.

"The task of constructing a new framework of concepts and beliefs to give order, meaning, and significance to life becomes ever more insistent," he



COTTON FIBER

This photomicrograph taken by Dr. Wanda K. Farr, of the Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research, shows "native" cellulose particle formation in living colorless plastids.

said. "But it must be clearly recognized that this is essentially an artistic task, of creating a consistent picture of the universe and of man that will not only satisfy our new criteria of credibility, but also express the new aspirations and

sensibilities through which we seek to attain the enduring human values."

Mr. Frank predicted that in coming years the discovery of origin of man and man's development of culture will be recognized as the greatest of discoveries.

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## BIOLOGY

## Woman Scientist Discovers How Plants Make Cellulose

Under Powerful Microscopes, Dr. Wanda K. Farr Saw And Photographed the Formation From Concentric Rings

**D**ISCOVERY of how the living plant makes cellulose, one of the fundamental materials of our civilization, was reported to the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Columbus.

Dr. Wanda K. Farr, director, Cellulose Laboratory sponsored by the Chemical Foundation at the Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research at Yonkers, N. Y., is the discoverer. At the age of 44, she has added to previous achievements this identification of the origin of elusive cellulose in the cotton plant.

Cellulose is the structural stuff out of which all plant "skyscrapers" are built. All of us use it daily because it is the principal stuff out of which nature makes wood, cotton fibers, and almost every other plant structure. This paper you are reading is largely cellulose. And cellulose from cotton or wood is used in the manufacture of rayon, explosives, the transparent stuff your cigarettes are wrapped in, movie film, and hundreds of other things. Even coal, fossil sunshine of past ages, is basically cellulose.

Dr. Farr observed the formation of cellulose particles in colorless disc-like structures within the plant, called plastids. Five years ago tiny cellulose crystals, barely visible egg-shaped particles, four by six hundred-thousandths of an inch, were discovered by Dr. Farr in many kinds of living cells.

This sudden appearance of cellulose crystals in living plant cells was a mystery until the new discovery now reported. Under powerful microscopes, at magnifications of 2200 and 4500 diameters, Dr. Farr was able to both observe and photograph the formation of cellulose particles.

Concentric rings of varying diameter but equal thickness are formed within

the plastids. Then these rings disintegrate into the cellulose particles of uniform size. These travel to the wall of the cells and help build it.

New impetus will be given by Dr. Farr's discovery to the attack on the many difficult problems concerned with the synthesis of carbohydrates in the living cell. This matter of how the living plant uses the energy of the sunshine to build food and other materials out of carbon, oxygen and hydrogen of soil, air and water might be called the green earth's most important manufacturing operation.

For almost a century microscopists have observed the formation of starch, the food reserve of plants, in the plastids of living cells. Starch is one of the most common and most conspicuous constituents of living protoplasm.

But cellulose, important constituent of the plant framework, was found by Dr. Farr to be formed in a way quite different from the manner in which starch is made.

The formation of cellulose was first found by Dr. Farr in the protoplasm or jelly of the large, single-celled, green algae that live in the ocean. In specimens of this plant named *Halicystis*, obtained from Bermuda, she detected the cellulose crystals being formed in its green chloroplasts. This kind of cellulose was not the normal sort, but it was mercerized cellulose, the same as produced industrially by the treatment of ordinary cotton fibers with solutions of strong sodium hydroxide.

Since the discovery of mercerization of cotton by John Mercer in 1844 this shiny cotton has been produced and worn without any inkling that it was being produced naturally in any living plant.

From this first indication of the way cellulose is manufactured in nature, Dr.



DR. WANDA K. FARR

Farr proceeded to investigate the cotton plant and in it identified the normal or unmercerized kind of cellulose in the process of creation.

*Science News Letter, January 6, 1940*

## PHYSICS

## Manufacture Radium By Atom Smashing

**M**AN-MADE radium has been produced by transmutation of the common element, bismuth, with the University of Michigan cyclotron. Drs. J. M. Cork, J. Halpern, and H. Tatel reported to the American Physical Society at Columbus.

Deuteron particles, that is, ions of heavy hydrogen of atomic mass 2, were driven at high energy by the cyclotron against the heavy element bismuth. Out of the bombardment came Radium E and Radium F, the latter discovered by Madame Marie Curie and known as polonium.

Radium E and Radium F occur in nature, are radioactive and emit alpha particles. These particles, too, were found to be emitted by the man-made radium.

The transmutation of bismuth into Radium E appeared more easily accomplished than the transmutation into polonium. Four atoms of Radium E were created for every one of the polonium, Radium F.

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Attempts to accustom elk and wild pigs to the climate near Moscow is being made at a Soviet research farm.

A new cotton twine developed by a government chemist is pronounced satisfactory for use in postoffices.