ENTOMOLOGY

NATURE RAMBLINGS by Frank Thone

Clothes Moth

WHENEVER furs and woolens are brought out of home storage, comes one of the regularly recurring little crises of the housewife's year. Each piece must be anxiously inspected for holes or chewed places, and for the tell-tale little pupa cases in which the hungry marauders have lived. And woe to any small moth, whatever be its species, that flutters across the sight of the zealous guardian of the family's wearables. With a frantic swoop and a smacking of hands she encompasses the luckless insect's annihilation.

As a matter of fact, however, it doesn't do much good to kill flying moths. Most of them are not clothes moths anyway, and even those that are clothes moths are not themselves cloth-eaters. They only lay the eggs that hatch into wool-hungry "worms" or larvae.

According to investigators of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, many of the "moth-proofing" sprays are somewhat over-recommended by their manufacturers. The compounds used really will make things moth-proof, but in order to do so the fabrics or furs must be either soaked or steamed with them; mere spraying will not stop the attacks completely though it will in many cases reduce the likelihood of moth attack very materially. But the advertisers should not claim full moth-proofing from a sprayed application, say the government entomologists.

Science News Letter, January 21, 1933

CHEMISTRY

Chemical Award Recognizes Synthesis of Alcohol

THE CHANDLER MEDAL for 1933 has been awarded to Dr. George Oliver Curme, Jr., research director of the Carbide and Carbon Chemicals Corporation, New York, in recognition of his synthesis and large-scale production of many aliphatic chemical compounds, such as fatty acids, hydrocarbons, alcohols, esters and ethers.

Most striking was Dr. Curme's manufacture of synthetic ethyl alcohol, put into large scale production in 1930, thus competing seriously with the ancient process of making this ordinary alcohol from fermentation of grain or molasses.

The prize committee chairman, Prof. Arthur W. Hixson of Columbia, termed Dr. Curme "one of the greatest living exponents of aliphatic chemistry" and he declared that Dr. Curme "perhaps heads the list of those who have brought the leadership in organic chemistry from Germany, where they hold incontestable lead in the aromatic field, to the United States, where the abundance of raw materials and independence of thought has permitted American chemists to strike out in entirely new directions."

Dr. Curme's original work, done in 1915-16, involved the production of acetylene, the thermo-decomposition of mineral oil inducted by striking an electric arc beneath the surface of the oil.

Subsequently he has worked out practical methods for the production of ethylene glycol, ethylene dichloride, ethylene chlorhydrin, ethylene oxide, diethyl sulfate, dichlor ethyl ether and many other compounds. Most of this work has been patented and the company with which he is connected was organized to exploit it.

Dr. Curme's greatest achievement has not been solely the working out of laboratory methods for making these compounds, but in translating these laboratory applications to large scale manufacturing processes. Today the production of ethylene glycol, ethylene dichloride, ethylene chlorhydrin and some of the other compounds mentioned runs into many millions of pounds annually.

More recently his early work in connection with the production of synthetic isopropyl alcohol and acetone has been commercialized and these products are now available on a large scale.

Science News Letter, January 21, 1933

ENGINEERING-ECONOMICS

What to Read to Learn More About "Technocracy"

NOW THAT MOST members of the reading public are using the word "technocracy" in daily conversation, some of them may wish to dig into the book literature and make up their own minds about the menace or benefit of the machine age in relation to economics.

First there might be mentioned the new flock of books, some grinding through the presses, some on the bookshop shelves, that deal with "Technocracy" as advanced by the New York group of engineers and architects. Among these are: "The A.B.C. of Technocracy" by Frank Arkright (Harpers), "Towards Technocracy" by Graham A. Laing (Angelus Press), "Life in a Technocracy" by Harold Loeb (Viking Press), "Technocracy, An Interpretation" by Stuart Chase (John Day), "The Truth About Technocracy" by Walter B. Pitkin (Simon and Schuster), "What is Technocracy?" by Allen Raymond (Whittlesey House), "An Outline of Technocracy" by Wayne W. Parrish (Farrar and Rinehart).

For the background of Technocracy, and some say the source of its economic ideas, see: "The Engineers and the Price System" by Thorstein Veblen (Viking Press, 1921); "Wealth, Virtual Wealth and Debt" by Frederick Soddy (E. P. Dutton and Co. 1926).

For facts, figures and interpretations of the economic consequences of power and science in industry, read: "Recent Social Trends" by President Hoover's Committee (McGraw-Hill); "Recent Economic Changes," another Hoover