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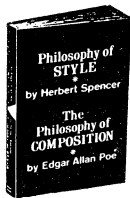
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Photosynthesis

(Continued from p. 203)

carbon dioxide, the plant's chief food, while our factories throw away great amounts of the gas daily. In Germany and the United States, factory fumes have been piped into greenhouses to speed plant growth. It has been found, however, that there is a limit to the amount of the gas a plant can use. Complete knowledge of the plant's mechanism may show what limits its use, and whether the limitation can be overcome to cause faster growth. There are speculations about tank farms of fast-growing algae located near factories to use their fumes. The algae could be processed into vitamin-rich foods, or the crop might be fermented to make fuel gas.

Knowledge of what happens in a blade of grass may some day help man to reach distant planets. When the manned Apollo plunges toward the moon, much of its thrust will come from the explosive combination of hydrogen and oxygen, one of the most powerful energy sources known. Every hour the world's plants produce vast quantities of these gases by splitting water. Full knowledge of their mechanism may lead to a cheaper hydrogen fuel, not only for space, but for surface industries.

The crews of these spacecraft may some

day breathe air and eat food made possible by today's explorers of photosynthesis. The government is deeply involved in programs for growing algae in small tanks, utilizing exhaled carbon dioxide and other wastes from the crew to provide oxygen and edible proteins. The green plant's recipe may make this possible.

There are many other informed speculations, but the results of a quest of such magnitude can never be fully foreseen. Biochemists are confident that just as decades of obscure research by nuclear physicists led to atom bombs and power plants, new knowledge of the life-supporting green factory will yield incalculable and unexpected dividends.

Writes Nobel Laureate Albert Szent-Gyorgyi: "All agriculture seems to me a primitive, medieval, if not archaic process. To wait until plants grow and develop their chlorophyll and accumulate the energy seems ridiculously primitive and slow at our present rate of scientific potential. Why cannot we construct a 'chlorophyll bomb' to blow up need and poverty?"

This article was prepared for SCIENCE NEWS LETTER in cooperation with the READER'S DIGEST. It will appear shortly in that magazine.

• Science News Letter, 83:202 March 30, 1963

GENERAL SCIENCE

News From Science Clubs

➤ THESE SCIENCE CLUB activities have recently been reported to Science Clubs of America's National Headquarters, 1719 N Street, N.W., Washington 6, D. C.

THE REGIS HIGH SCHOOL SCIENCE CLUB, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, holds weekly science seminars giving the members an opportunity to share experiments and articles read on current science problems.

The goals of THE SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS CLUB of the Roger Junior-Senior High School, Canton, Miss., are to increase oral and written expression, improve scholarship and stimulate science interest within the school.

Of 600 applicants, 180 students were selected as delegates for the General Seminars and 60 for Seminars in Depth on the basis of tests conducted by the admissions committee for the third annual Baltimore City-County Science Seminars, Feb. 9 to April 30.

Science club members from Craig High School, Craig, Alaska, assisted by U.S. Forest Service personnel, have established the Craig Arboretum for study of botanical features of native trees and shrubs. The arboretum is located behind the school and the whole area is in the Tongass National Forest.

Science Clinic Night, sponsored by the BLADENSBURG SCIENCE CLUB of Bladensburg High School, Bladensburg, Md., presented an opportunity for students working on science projects to talk to specialists about any problems they might have encountered. The fields of interest represented were agriculture, biology, botany, chemistry,

earth and astronomical sciences, electronics, mathematics, medical sciences, physics and zoology.

BSA TROOP 106 SCIENCE CLUB of St. Philip Neri Church, New York, N. Y., prepares a science show each year for the Exposition of the Greater New York Council of Boy Scouts of America. A science demonstration display window is prepared by the Troop for Boy Scout Week.

THE BIO-CHEM CLUB, Jackson High School, Jonesboro, La., has entries in the Research Paper Writing Contest and their State Science Fair.

• Science News Letter, 83:206 March 30, 1963

Do You Know?

More than 2600 organic compounds in trees have been identified.

Plutonium refined by an electro-refining process has been declared the nation's standard for pure plutonium.

A new technique for measuring neutron absorption in gold has provided scientists with an accurate "radiation yardstick."

A seven-pound ring of pure plutonium is worth more than \$95,000.

Research on the electrical and magnetic properties of riboflavin, vitamin B-2, has given information on how the body derives energy from foodstuffs.

• Science News Letter, 83:206 March 30, 1963