

young expanding blades of the spindle cluster plus the blade of the topmost dewlap constitute the principal sensitive organ for the perception of photoperiodic stimulus; the sensitivity however extends to some extent to the next lower three or four leaves also. Apparently, there is a sensitivity gradient in the leaves; this is being investigated in further experiments.

The results indicate a clear possibility of keeping sugarcane crops in the vegetative condition by adopting a cultural practice which is obviously adoptable under Indian conditions, even though in Hawaii it has not been found practicable on a plantation scale.

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INTERNATIONAL CONTROL OF INVESTIGATIONS OF RARE METEORITES

IN recent years the study of meteorites has rapidly increased and, in the hands of investigators such as Urey, Anders, Wiik, Vinogradov and others, has thrown much light on the composition and origin of the solar system and of the planets. Last year, through the work of Mason on hydrous silicates in meteorites, interest has concentrated on the rarest form of meteorites, those which contain carbonaceous material. It follows from Mason's results, as well as from the earlier analyses of material by G. Mueller, that carbonaceous meteorites, unlike all other types, had never been subjected to high temperatures since their formation and that they might well contain samples of the raw materials from which life may have been formed on larger planets. On March 16, this hypothesis was given a new turn by the announcement at the meeting of the New York Academy of Sciences that Prof. B. Nagy, Dr. W. Meinschein and Dr. Hennessy had, by using mass spectroscopic and X-ray methods, found in the carbonaceous material from the meteorite which fell near Orgeuil in France on May 14, 1864, paraffinoid hydrocarbons characteristic of living organisms and hence had, in the opinions of these investigators, provided proof for the existence of life on its presumed parent body. This view is unlikely to go unchallenged, but whatever the final consensus of opinion, the crucial importance of this study of the carbonaceous meteorites¹ is now evident (see also *Science Notes*, p. 245)

The great publicity deservedly given to these observations and deductions has focused the attention of scientists in many countries on the carbonaceous meteorites. Paradoxically, the result may well be, unless appropriate steps are taken in time, to bring the researches to a rapid end by destroying the irreplaceable material on which they are based. There is known to be only some 30 kg. of well-attested carbonaceous meteorites in museums. More, but not much more, may be in the hands of dealers or may be brought to light in other ways. Already these rare bodies are being examined in a dozen or more laboratories, each with a different objective and by methods which render the material useless for further study. This can only result in the exhaustion of the stock unless prompt measures are taken to ensure international co-operation similar to that in the various sections of the International Geophysical Year in the analysis of meteorites by different but complementary methods. The appropriate body for this is clearly the Committee on Space Research of the International Council of Scientific Unions, which, by a slight extension of its terms of reference, might cover *bodies coming in from outer space as well as those going out into it*. It is hoped that at the forthcoming meeting of the Committee at Florence, the matter can be discussed and appropriate measures taken in time to secure that the maximum of information is obtained from meteorites with the minimum of destruction. —(*Nature*, 1961, 189, 967.)