

and Synthetic Products, Ltd., for their encouragement.

Hyderabad (Dn.), M. K. SUBRAMANIAM.
July 21, 1944.

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STORAGE OF POTATOES

In your May issue (pp. 133-134) Dr. Khan A. Rahman described a method of preventing damage to stored potatoes by covering them with various materials, such as sand, chopped lantana, grass or soapnut leaves, pine needles, saw-dust or *bhusa*. The author claims that a problem which had baffled entomologists in India since 1907, yielded to his investigations and in the very first year of his work—in fact within three months, July-September—he obtained results which he describes “so striking and encouraging”, that he has shown considerable anxiety to communicate his discovery to the Indian scientists. A moment's reflection, however, will show that there is nothing very extraordinary about these results. Briefly described the experiment was that Dr. Rahman placed 43 maunds of potatoes in a room, in 56 lots. Of these he covered 48 lots with various materials and left 8 lots, weighing a little less than 5 maunds, uncovered, i.e., exposed. He then distributed 8 maunds of heavily infested potatoes, uniformly in the room, i.e., introduced the pest. The only thing that could have happened was that the moths would lay eggs on the exposed food material of the caterpillars. And this is exactly what they did. This inevitable behaviour of moths hardly necessitates any experimental proof.

The difference in the percentage of attack between different “treatments” are insignificant. The striking differences between the control and experimental potatoes, simply show that the attack got concentrated or localised, on the exposed potatoes, and these, therefore, showed unusually high percentage of infestation. Unfortunately the author cannot claim this as a striking contribution to the solution of this problem. The practice of covering potatoes with sand is an old one and a very common one. Storage under sand has also shown variable results under different conditions. The problem of storing potato safe from potato moths and fungus diseases is not so simple as the article has made it out to be. On account of the intricate nature of the prob-

lem its detailed study has been undertaken in a scheme of the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research at Sabour.

In the experiments described by Dr. Khan A. Rahman the control was not designed scientifically and this has led the author to fallacious conclusions.

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NOTE ON THE SWARMING OF THE PLANKTONIC ALGÆ *TRICHODESMIUM* *ERYTHRAEUM* IN THE PAMBAN AREA AND ITS EFFECT ON THE FAUNA

ON page 404 of *Current Science*, Vol. 4, No. 10, dated October 1942, Mr. P. I. Chacko had reported an unusual phenomena of mortality of marine fauna including 750 Holothurians and 250 fishes, which occurred in the tide pool on the southern side of Krusadai Island in May 1942. He had attributed the cause to the fact that “the fishes were slowly asphyxiated by *Trichodesmium* obstruction before being washed ashore by the high tide”.

A similar phenomenon was noticed this year on the southern coast of Pamban in the same month, when the following fishes and crabs were washed ashore dead: (1) *Gerres filamentosus*, (2) *G. abbreviatus*, (3) *Chanos chanos*, (4) *Mugil* spp., (5) *Saurus indicus*, (6) *Platycephalus insidiator*, (7) *Therapon janoua*, (8) *Sphyræna obtusata*, (9) *Lutjanus bioglossus*, (10) *Neptunus* spp., (11) *Gelasimus* spp.

Besides confirming the cause referred to by Mr. Chacko for the mortality, our recent observations showed that the mortality was also due to the putrefaction and pollution caused by the dead algæ. From 22-5-1944 onwards there was bright sunshine which was responsible for the swarming of the algæ in large patches by the acceleration of the photo-synthetic activity. On 25-5-44 when it was cloudy, the absence of sunlight, the thick layer of floating algæ and increase in temperature the water had caused the death of the algæ and polluted the waters causing the liberation of the offensive smell. So long as the algæ was in living condition, no casualty was observed. On 27-5-44 with the slight showers the dead algæ had settled down to the bottom and the “balance” in the water was restored. The clogging of the gills with the consequent asphyxiation and the related hydrological disturbances should have been supplemental factors for the heavy mortality of fishes.*

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* With the kind permission of the Director of Industries and Commerce, Madras.