

tive organisms. No difference could be found in the digestive or putrefactive actions whether the experiment was made in the presence or absence of thymol. Hence the conclusion is that thymol has no power to inhibit bacterial growth and is of no value as an antiseptic or disinfectant.

Action of Metallic Contacts on a Filings Coherer. B. SZILARD. (*Comptes rendus*, cl, 1670.)—The author finds that a filings coherer is very much more sensitive when the end of the coherer (which is earthed in the usual arrangement) is connected to one terminal of an alternating-current system, the other alternating-current terminal being connected to earth. He finds that a coherer connected in this manner is affected when a metallic rod set up as sending antenna, is simply touched by a piece of metal held in the hand. This action is obtained over 150 cm. The contact between the two pieces of metal must be very light and between points. The metals brought into contact may be the same or may differ. The maximum distance at which the effect is obtained depends upon the metals used.

Carbonization of Rubber by Mercury Vapor. W. VON BOLTON. (*Zeit. Elektrochem.*, xvi, 667.)—Mercury vapor decomposes volatile hydrocarbons, chloroform, carbon tetrachloride, carbon bisulphide, carbon dioxide and hydrogen sulphide with separation of carbon or sulphur. This reaction does not occur with liquid mercury, even at boiling temperature, but only by the monatomic vapor. Amalgams seem to produce the vapor more rapidly than pure metal, probably on account of their larger surface, but the action is noticeable in presence of mercury heated to 100°C. for about three weeks. Sulphur accelerates the action, selenium and tellurium retard it. Traces of moisture are requisite. If mercury vapor attacks pure non-vulcanized rubber, no carbon is separated but the rubber becomes hard and brittle and traces of mercury can be found in it. The carbon separated in ordinary experiments is found to contain small microscopic crystals of diamond.

The Inventor of the Black-Ash Furnace. W. RAMSAY. (*Chem. News*, cii, 69.)—In the correspondence of Dr. Joseph Black a letter to him from a Mr. George Golder was found, bearing the date of March 19, 1782, advising Dr. Black that Mr. Golder was sending him a sample of ashes made by Messrs. Collison and Co., London, with a copy of Collison's specification for making mineral and vegetable alkali, by the use of a reverberatory furnace. Dr. Black examined the ash and found it about 50 per cent. stronger than the best Alicant garilla, and about seven times the strength of kelp. The patent granted to Le Blanc for the process of manufacturing sodium carbonate and sodium hydrate was dated Sept. 23, 1791, and is therefore nine years later than Collison's patent.