



**Small Worlds Around Us**

By Lynn M. Watkins

**Ever Heard of Lichen? It Reduces Rock to Dust**  
The crust-like patches of gray, greenish, brown or yellow material found on rocks, old stumps, even on pieces of old concrete left undisturbed for a time, is a form of lichen. And it is not just sitting there idly doing nothing, it is working. It is one of the agencies of Nature, slowly, silently, but with a dedicated purpose, these lowly plants are reducing the solid rock to dust.

There are thousands of kinds of lichens. They are found growing in the cold of the Arctic, on rocks baked by the desert sun, in shady woodlands, in dark jungles, and in your own back yard.

**Algae and Fungus**  
The lichen is half plant algae and half fungus. Any rock that has been undisturbed will usually have growing on it one or more kinds of lichen. A tiny algae—which is only a stemless, leafless, flowerless plant—lands on the surface of the old rock. Here, if fortune smiles on it, a spore of some fungus carried by the wind or shaken from the feathers of a bird lands alongside the tiny algae plant. Fungus threads and algae have an affinity for one another, and they join. There is enough moisture in the fungus to encourage growth in the algae. The algae will eventually manufacture enough "food" for them both. They grow together and are lichens.

Now they are in peculiar scablike clusters, grayish-green rosettes. Let a rain fall and they become gloriously green; the algae within them shows through. Now, too, they begin the work for which Nature intended them to accomplish, that of reducing the rock to dust, preparing the way for higher type plants.

**Tiny Factory**  
Each lichen colony is a tiny factory: By the chemical action of its growth it dissolves the mineral salts of the rock. At the same time, tiny thread-like roots probe and burrow into the crevices of the rock, constantly expanding and pushing.

One lichen clump grows until it touches its neighbor. The wind—another agency of erosion—heaps dust and debris and more fungus spores on the colony. Moss spores come; decay enriches the material; higher forms of plant life find the place comfortable. Eventually great forest trees will grow where once the lichens paved the way. And all this time, tiny flakes of rock-dust, loosened by the lichens, break away from the mother rock.

Winds breathe across the old stone; dust spores and fungus are carried to other woodlots, to other rocks; the ageless process goes on—into the infinity of ageless time.

Such has been, and is, the purpose in Nature's complex plan, of the little grayish-green or yellowish crust-like irregular growths that embellish the bare rocks; these are the lichens, the tools by which Nature reduces rocks to dust; a process that has continued without interruption, for hundreds of millions of years.

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**Herbert Hoover Praised in Senate**

Washington - (UPI) - Former President Herbert Hoover, who is celebrating his 86th birthday, got praise in the Senate Wednesday from Democrats and Republicans alike.

Democrats, led by Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson, Tex., joined in paying tribute to the Republican president and hailing his long years of service.

Democratic Whip Mike Mansfield (Mont.) recalled that Hoover "was a favorite target of the Democrats in other days, but is now a revered elder statesman."

**Dog Honored for Saving Young Girl**

Chicago - (UPI) - A majestic looking German shepherd named Keg was cited Wednesday night as the most heroic dog of 1960.

Keg rescued 22-month-old Karen McMannis after she had stumbled into Kelly creek near Bozeman, Mont.

The dog jumped in after the tot, clamped his powerful jaws into her shoulder blades and towed her to safety.

Keg was the honored guest at a banquet in a Loop hotel.



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**2 LB. TIN 98c**



**CARNATION EVAPORATED MILK**  
TALL CANS

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