

ON THE SPOROPHORE OF THE NATIVE BREAD
(*POLYPORUS MYLITTA*).

By

H. STUART-DOVE.

(Communicated by L. Rodway, C.M.G.)

Plate IV.

(Read 12th May, 1930.)

Early in the present month (March, 1930), two specimens of the subterranean fungus called "Native Bread" were received from a settler on the N.W. Coast of Tasmania. They were of an irregular rounded shape, dark-brown on the exterior, but white where the thin rind had been rubbed off. Each weighed about 1½ lb. It was the 3rd of the month when they came to hand. They were placed in an open box in my museum-room, and on 9th inst. one of them exhibited two white knobs, close together, on the upper surface. They much resembled the button-stage of the ordinary mushroom. Each measured slightly over one inch across the top, by $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in height. By the morning of 12th inst., they had grown to 1½ inches high, the upper surface having changed from white to pale yellow; the underside of the pileus had become wrinkled, but was still closed.

On 14th March the enclosing membrane (velum) had ruptured, and the beautiful yellow tint which had suffused the upper surface of the pileus had become broken by the spreading of the cap; a slight ridge (annulus) stood out about 1-16th inch round the stem at 1 inch from the base, where the velum had ruptured. On the white undersurface of the pileus hundreds of minute tubes (pores) could be observed; these extended out to the edge of the cap, and downward to the annulus. The larger cap now measured 2½ inches across in one direction by 2 inches in the other; the smaller cap 1½ inches x 1 inch. Each was 2 inches in height, and from being $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch apart when first observed on 9th inst., they had now become joined along one edge.

On 16th March the yellow tint had mostly disappeared from the top of the larger cap, although a patch of deeper yellow or orange was exhibited in the centre, and a very pale yellow band near the circumference. This cap had a frilled appearance at the edge, extending in towards the

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Fig. 1. "Native Bread" (*Polyporus mylitta*), exhibiting sporophores joined at part of circumference.

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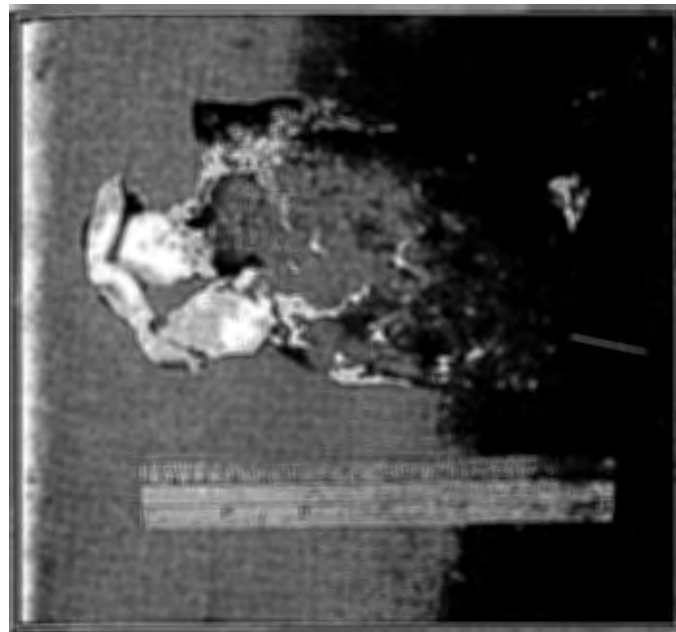


Fig. 2. Another aspect of same.

centre about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch, and the smaller pileus began to show the same. The pores on the undersurface of the latter were now well developed, while those on the larger cap exhibited a more open appearance. The stems in both cases measured 1 inch in diameter. A strong mushroomy odour was observable.

On 18th inst. the pores had greatly developed, and showed well right down to the annulus; the stem thence to the base was quite smooth. The upper surface of the larger cap was now almost white again, there remaining only a yellow tinge where the orange patch had been, and traces of yellow near the circumference; the smaller cap was still of a pale yellow. The undersurfaces and stems of both are pure white.

It was noticed on the 22nd of the month that the pores were breaking down just above the annulus and falling on the "loaf" (sclerotium), no doubt carrying the spores with them. On the 28th this disintegration of the pores continued; those right under the surface of the cap have opened so much as to appear like a miniature honeycomb. Otherwise the sporophore has ceased to change, and the peculiar odour has almost disappeared. The sclerotium remains firm to the touch.

When these were first received on 3rd March, they had a distinct earthy odour.