

and the browning of acidified solutions of potassium iodide is due to the action of light in accelerating the oxidation of hydriodic acid by oxygen dissolved from the air.

In some cases the light does not merely change the rate of a reaction that would have taken place in any event, but actually reverses its direction; as in the formation of sugar and starch from carbonic acid and water in plants, where light is absorbed by the leaves and its energy stored up in the products of the reaction. Numerous attempts have recently been made—some with a measure of success—to imitate this action of the plants by inventing reactions which take place in one direction in the light and in the other in the dark. If it should prove possible to store any large fraction of the sun's energy by such means, the wastes of the Sahara might well become the seat of important industries.

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