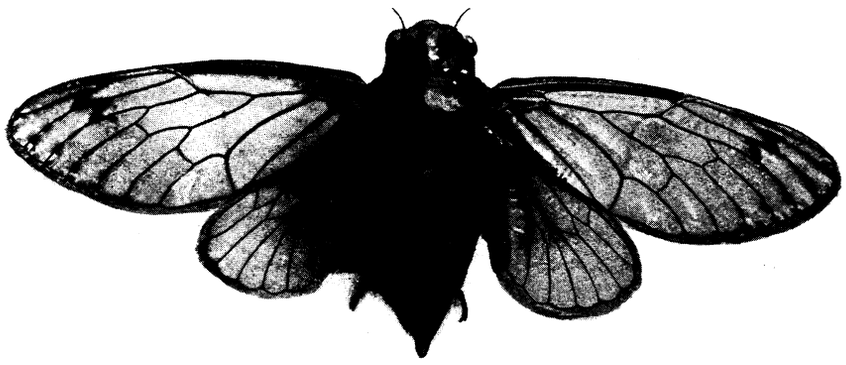

W FOR WAR?

The marking on the wings of the 17-year "locust" is traditionally a portent of wars to come. They do not, however, even foretell a battle waged by entomologists, for the creature is relatively harmless.

ENTOMOLOGY

17-Year "Locusts" Soon To Appear in Pennsylvania

Insect Which is Really a Cicada, Not Locust, Does Not Forebode Tragedy or do Great Damage

WAR prophets over a large part of the country will within a few days have a natural portent and a sign, to which they can point as sure evidence that their direful prognostications are about to come true. Great swarms of big, thin-winged insects, each with a strongly-marked black W near the tip of each of its forward pair of wings, will appear out of the earth. They will cover the underbrush and trees, and will fill the air with their dry shrilling.

"Ancestral voices, prophesying War" —for is that not what the ominous letters on their wings signify? And are not these the dread Seventeen-Year Locusts, which are never seen except once in seventeen years, and always before some great world disaster? So the local wise men will be telling us.

These inauspicious insects will be especially thick in a limited area across the eastern edge of Ohio and the western end of Pennsylvania. There will be more of them, though more thinly scattered, over a wide area of the South, through most of northern Missouri and the southern half of Illinois, through Arkansas and thence eastward to the Southern Appalachians. Millions upon millions of them, and each with that foreboding W on both its wing-tips.

The local wise men, who will be making these head-shaking prophecies about the middle of this month, will be wrong in all except one particular. The insects are not locusts; they are cicadas, capable of very little real damage. They do not prophecy war; the W on each wing-tip is a natural marking, that appears on the wings of every generation of the insects, whether there is a war in the making or not. If war comes, these innocent helpless insects will have had nothing to do with bringing it on: human politicians and munitions manufacturers are quite capable of attending to that by themselves.

It is true, however, that the insects appear in a given locality only once in seventeen years. For the seventeen-year cicada is the longest-lived of all insects. It lives in an immature form underground for seventeen years, and then emerges, winged, to live for a short time in the upper world, mate, produce its eggs and die. The young cicadas, little ant-like things, burrow into the ground shortly after they hatch, to repeat their parents' long life cycle.

And even at that, the seventeen-year part of the story is true only for the Pittsburgh block of territory. The outbreak in the South will be of the related but shorter-lived species, the thirteen-year cicada. It cannot be told from the seventeen-year kind in appearance; the only difference is its shorter life.

Science News Letter, June 9, 1934

PHYSICS

Pitot Not Pistol

A LINOTYPER making a correction just before press time, in the photograph caption in SNL June 2, '34, p. 339, evidently thought he would correct an obvious error. Who ever heard of a *pitot* tube? It must be a *pistol* tube. So it was in last week's SNL. Alas, the linotyper was wrong and the editor was right. So we are taking this means of writing a little note to the linotyper:

Dear L.: There *is* a pitot tube, named after Henri Pitot who was the first to suggest the use of pressure tube anemometers. The official National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics' definition is: "A cylindrical tube with an open end pointed upstream, used in measuring impact pressure." The pitot tube is a part of the speed indicating device used on airplanes in flight or in windtunnels where airplanes are tested. With it is used a closed tube to measure the static or still pressure, and from the difference in pressure between the pitot and static pressure tubes the air velocity can be determined. Just to be sure that you read this, we are having it set in type and having the type we might as well use it in the SNL.

Science News Letter, June 9, 1934

ZOOLOGY-MEDICINE

Cats Refuse Cream in Study of Epilepsy Diet

CATS are popularly supposed to like cream, but Dr. Frederick H. Pike and Sarah R. Riedman of Columbia University have reason for thinking the popular idea of a cat's taste is all wrong.

When they tried to feed cats a ketogenic diet which contains a very large proportion of fat such as cream, the cats stubbornly refused the diet even for short periods and ate so little that they lost weight precipitately.

The ketogenic diet has been used recently as a treatment for epileptic convulsions. The Columbia scientists were planning to study the effect of this diet on convulsions in animals. The cat was selected because of her supposed fondness for cream.

Science News Letter, June 9, 1934