

specific instant before he can be arrested.

Other states, such as Michigan, have no speed limit, the law providing that how well a person drives under certain circumstances, not how fast, is the test of legal driving. The possibilities of inaccuracy due to mechanical failure or tampering would probably prevent its

use as evidence, just as the "lie detector" is barred in murder trials.

The main use of such a device will probably be in studies and surveys of average speeds on highways, curves and at intersections, to provide a much needed statistical background for more sensible speed laws.

Science News Letter, July 27, 1935

MEDICINE

Find New Way to Attack Disease of Muscle Weakness

A NEW attack has been launched in the fight against the strange disease of muscle weakness known as "myasthenia gravis."

This distressing and usually fatal, but fortunately rare, illness comes on gradually. The first symptom is usually general tiredness. This may be followed by trouble in walking or in lifting the arms or in grasping things. In a later stage the facial muscles often become so weak that the jaw cannot be kept shut or the eyes properly open.

Various physicians in London have lately been giving special attention to the search for an adequate remedy for the disease, and not long ago a possible way for checking it with complex chemicals called eserine or prostigmin was reported.

Eserine is believed to act by delaying the abnormally high rate of destruction, in myasthenic patients, of acetylcholine—the chemical "transmitter" which forms the link between a muscle and the nerve-ending which should control it. Another way of achieving the same result would be to stimulate the production or, at any rate, the utilization of the acetylcholine.

This latter method has now been tried by Drs. L. P. E. Laurent and W. W. Walther, who report their results in *The Lancet*. (June 22).

Had Worked With Cats

It was known that similar stimulation could be produced in cats by means of potassium chloride, and the London physicians decided to try this substance for the human sufferers from myasthenia. The temporary results from this treatment were striking. Strengthening of the facial muscles was particularly marked, the appearance of a patient frequently changing remarkably from the wasting look of starvation to relative vitality in less than an hour after administration of the drug.

Six patients have received the potassium chloride daily for a period of two

months, six doses being given daily. The treatment is stated to have proved valuable in conjunction with prostigmin. Several of the patients have found that a dose of potassium chloride, taken before the action of the prostigmin has ended, relieves the trying exhaustion which often followed the earlier treatment.

Many more experiments will have to be made, however, before any finality can be reached in the relief of the illness.

Science News Letter, July 27, 1935

ORNITHOLOGY

Sound Recording Methods Preserve Bird Calls

THE JOINT expedition of Cornell University and the American Museum of Natural History of New York City, which has just returned from recording the calls of almost extinct species of birds for posterity, had its amusing as well as its difficult experiences.

In the ten miles of film record and sound recording brought back by the expedition's director, Prof. A. A. Allen of Cornell, are the calls of the rare Ivory-billed Woodpecker, the Limpkin, the Sandhill Crane, the Wild Turkey, the Bald Eagle, the Golden Eagle, the Prairie Falcon and the Trumpeter Swan.

In Florida a Carolina Wren insisted on building its nest in the sound truck while the scientists were trying to record its voice. In Colorado a Golden Eagle tried to swallow the microphone which had been lowered 700 feet over a cliff to reach the ledge on which the eagle's nest was built. In Florida, again, a mockingbird recognized the sounds of a rival when one of the films was being tested. It dashed at the window of the room trying to drive the rival away.

In recording the bird records, which eventually may be transferred to phonograph records and distributed through



FOSSIL TREE'S STRUCTURE

How the microscope viewed the wood of the petrified tree shown on the opposite page. A tangential section.

the schools of the nation, the expedition met its technical difficulties.

How, for example, would you record the sound of the rare Water Ouzel, which lives only near water falls? Dr. Allen's party solved the problem by getting the microphone within two inches of the bird's beak so that the sound was much louder than the crash of water in the background. How long it took them to achieve this feat is not revealed.

Then, too, it was no easy task to record the "dance" of the bird known as the Lesser Prairie Chicken, but patience finally yielded the sound, caused by the pattering of the bird's feet on the ground with extraneous sounds muffled as background noise.

Freak weather followed the expedition's entire journey. There was frost in Florida, dust-storms in Oklahoma, cloud-bursts in Colorado, July snow storms in Montana, and to cap it all, when Prof. Allen was safely home in Ithaca, along came the recent New York flood, which swept around his home and carried off his outdoor runs and captive birds.

Science News Letter, July 27, 1935

A crossed-eye, if not given competent medical attention, may decrease in seeing power through non-use, while the good eye is overworked.

Cornell scientists are studying the production of onions, in the hope that New York State may grow mild varieties such as those from Italy and Bermuda.