

## CHEMISTRY

# Water Purifying Tablets

► A NEW type of water purification tablet will soon be issued to soldiers in Korea. The new tablet contains iodine instead of chlorine and is said to be more effective against amoebic and other dysentery and diarrhea. It will also taste better.

A large order of about 3,000,000 bottles of the new pills are "in the pipeline" now, the Army says, and more will go into production soon.

Development of the new tablet was first announced back in November, 1946, by the Army's Quartermaster Corps. However, world-wide tests had first to be taken before the iodine pill proved out.

Scientists, both outside the Army and in,

say that while the new pill will be better, no chemical can be expected to rid all of the water which combat soldiers run up against of all dysentery and diarrhea-producing factors.

However, the new iodine tablets are expected to be somewhat more effective, especially against the cysts which produce amoebic dysentery, than are the presently-used Halazone tablets containing chlorine. This is mainly a matter of taste.

Enough Halazone tablets added to unsafe water to be effective against cysts will give an unpleasant taste to the water. Soldiers are sometimes reluctant to drink this purer, but unpleasant-tasting water. The iodine pills, however, in effective amounts, will not be so unpleasant.

The Army's Surgeon-General's office believes that its record against dysentery and diarrhea in the Korean war is much better than during World War II. Between June, 1950, and February, 1951, the rate for these two diseases was 47 soldiers per 1,000 per year. For troops in Asia in 1943, the rate was 181 per 1,000, and in 1944, 93 per 1,000. They attribute this decrease to three reasons: Halazone was not in general use until 1945, Army engineers have pushed their water purification units closer to the front lines, and more is known about preventive medicine today.

However, front line troops cannot depend on engineer purification units. In areas where water is very highly contaminated, even if they follow directions, some dysentery and diarrhea will get through. The new iodine pills were first developed by Dr. Gordon M. Fair, of Harvard. They contain triglycine hydro-periodide.

Science News Letter, May 12, 1951

## MILITARY SCIENCE

## Army Makes Better Use Of Technical Enlisted Men

► THE ARMY is making much better use of enlisted scientific and technical personnel than it is of officers with these capabilities.

A new, generally efficient system has been set up since World War II to make it as certain as possible that draftees with scientific, engineering or other professional education will be used in jobs fitted to their ability. On the other hand, the system used for reserve officers reporting to duty does not guarantee that their capabilities will be most efficiently used.

It is now mandatory that all men with scientific or professional capabilities entering the Army in an enlisted status—draftees, from the enlisted reserves or through the National Guard—be reported to Washington. Formerly, these men were then transferred to Fort Myer, Va., given a job classi-

fication which suited their education and abilities, and then assigned to jobs where they could do the most for the Army.

Now, so many of them are coming into the Army that the classification and assignment is done by mail. More than 1,000 draftees have been handled by this remote control method during the first month of its operation, just ended.

In some cases a draftee has capabilities too high for any enlisted grade jobs in the Army. However, he has the opportunity to receive officer training, provided he qualifies physically.

Science News Letter, May 12, 1951

## On This Week's Cover

► A GIANT centipede, approximately seven inches long, displays its antennae in the picture on the cover of this week's SCIENCE NEWS LETTER. Its bite is poisonous. This specimen came from Colombia.

## PHYSICS

## Find Positive Electron Exists For Very Short Time as Gas

► EXISTENCE OF one of the fundamental particles of nature, the positron or positive electron, as a gas was presented to the American Physical Society meeting in Washington, D. C. by Dr. Martin Deutsch of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

"Positronium" is the name given to this atom which can be considered a new chemical element. Free positronium atoms exist for about ten millionths of a second before they become annihilated. The positronium atoms were identified in nitrogen gas.

The positron was first found in 1932 and it is rated as a stable particle in the same class with the electron and the proton. It has the same mass as the electron, which is one in mass on the scale used to measure the elementary particles of matter.

Science News Letter, May 12, 1951

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