

ENTOMOLOGY—MEDICINE

Warns of Danger of Poisoning By the Puss Caterpillar

WARNING against the danger of poisoning by the puss caterpillar appears in a report by Dr. Thomas L. Lucas, Walter Reed General Hospital, Washington, D. C. (*Journal, American Medical Association*, July 11).

Poisoning, serious but not fatal, of a man who had a caterpillar drop on his neck while walking through a southern Maryland cornfield first brought the danger to Dr. Lucas' attention. Severe itching with "wheals" ranging in size from a dime to a silver dollar was followed within ten minutes by burning pain, severe muscle cramps on the side of the neck and shoulder near the poisoned spot, and severe headache. An opiate (codeine) was required for relief of the pain. The skin blistered and peeled and healed "much as a first degree

burn would be expected to heal," taking about ten days to heal completely.

Similar symptoms including nervousness, restlessness and rapid pulse rate occurred in several other cases which Dr. Lucas found had been reported in medical literature. Local treatment of the caterpillar "bite" is ineffectual, and the patient must be given an opiate or other drug with systemic effect.

Dr. Lucas believes cases occur frequently but are not reported either because the patient does not see a physician or because the caterpillar is not recognized as the cause of the poisoning symptoms.

The puss caterpillar, known technically as *Megalopyge opercularis*, is a short, bushy variety which seems to rear up on its hind legs and "make a face" at any-

one coming near it. It has straight, sharply pointed, hollow spines which can prick the skin of anyone touching it, thus letting the poison into the body. The exact toxic principle involved needs to be determined, Dr. Lucas points out.

Puss caterpillars are widely distributed in the Southeastern states and may be spreading to neighboring areas. They may be found on oak, elm, plum and sycamore trees, in flower and truck gardens, in orchards and on corn.

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ENGINEERING

Wood Pipes Carry Water For War Industry Plants

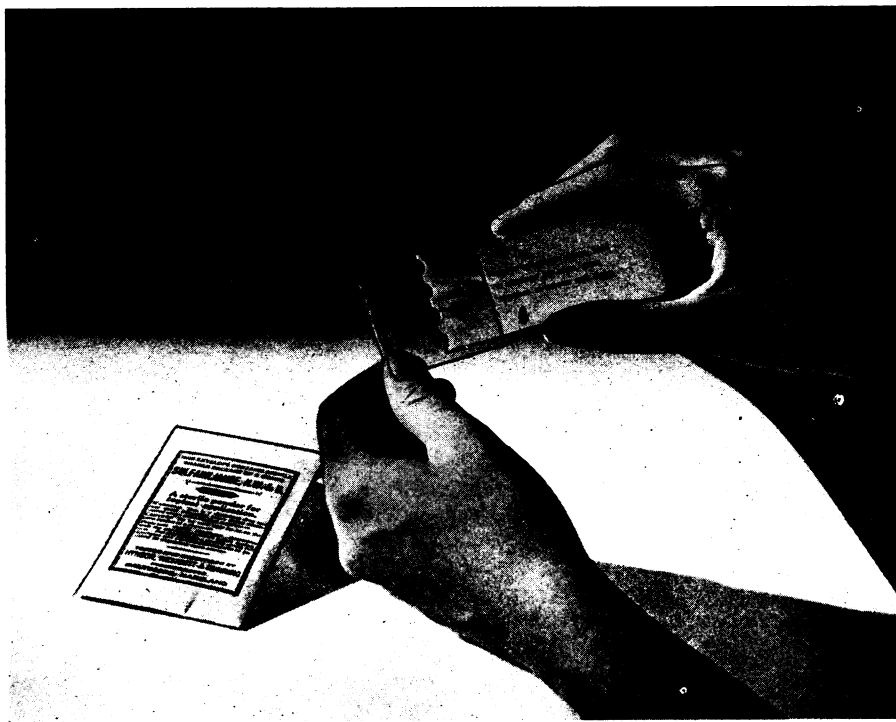
WOOD PIPE is recommended for use in cantonments and new war industry plants and their housing areas, to release steel urgently needed elsewhere, by Robert Turner in the current issue of the *Military Engineer* (June). Wood pipe, he says, has a number of real advantages of its own. It can be laid rapidly, does not rust or corrode, and its natural tendency to swell when wet makes it automatically tighten its own joints, doing away with need for calking.

Despite widespread belief that wood buried under ground decays rapidly, wood pipe kept well filled with water lasts indefinitely, Mr. Turner declares. Decay organisms and burrowing insects do not like water-soaked wood. A number of cities in the timbered areas of the West have used wood pipe in city mains for several decades; and when the first wooden water pipes laid in New Orleans, in 1793, were dug up after being in service for more than 200 years, they were found to be in good condition.

Several types of wood pipe are in use. The most common forms are stave-constructed, and strengthened with steel hoops or spiral wire wrappings. However, one large manufacturing concern has produced an emergency wood pipe that uses no critical materials at all. It is practically all-wood in its makeup.

Even newer is a recently patented kind of plywood tubing, the invention of Cyril Farny of St. Charles, Ill. In this, strips of thin plywood are wound spirally over a form and subjected to pressure and heat. The form is then slipped out of one end. Alternate strips, as many as desired, are wound over each other, each strip winding in a direction opposite to that of its neighbors, and all cemented together with a plastic glue.

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HANDY

This novel sulfa drug "shaker" is one of the latest U. S. Army weapons against infection of wounds. It is a newly developed method of sprinkling the curative powder upon a wound safely and quickly. Sulfanilamide, like everything else that touches a wound, must be sterilized. The army surgeon in the field may not have the equipment to do this. Hence the substance already sterilized is put up in little cellophane and paper packages, just enough in each for one application.