

• New Machines and Gadgets •

For addresses where you can get more information on the new things described here, send a three-cent stamp to SCIENCE NEWS LETTER, 1719 N St., Washington 6, D. C., and ask for Gadget Bulletin 655. To receive this Gadget Bulletin without special request each week, remit \$1.50 for one year's subscription.

⚙️ **HOBBY KIT** permits amateurs to preserve baby shoes and other keepsake items in brilliant copper, porcelain, ceramic or transparent finishes. All materials needed to do the job are included in the kit. No baking or firing is necessary.

Science News Letter, January 3, 1953

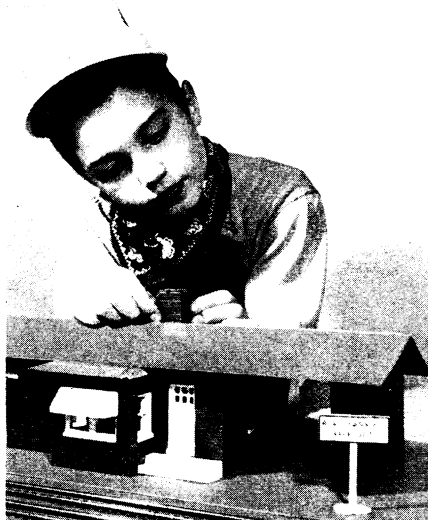
⚙️ **COMBINATION TV antenna** handles new UHF channels as well as the present VHF ones, except in "far-fringe" areas. Made of aluminum, the antenna combines a UHF and VHF video antenna into a single unit, each element helping the other to give a better video picture. The antenna feeds a single 300-ohm lead-in to the set.

Science News Letter, January 3, 1953

⚙️ **SILVERWARE CLEANER** is a magnesium alloy stamped into the decorative form of a leaf. Placed in a dishpan with warm water and a good detergent, the leaf removes tarnish in a matter of seconds from any silverware touching it, leaving the silverware gleaming and bright.

Science News Letter, January 3, 1953

⚙️ **MINIATURE BRICKS**, accurately scaled to the same proportions of standard building bricks, come in a set that includes such accessories as windows, doors, awnings, railings and roofing material. The bricks, made of plastic and which interlock, can be



used by hobbyists, architects and contractors in the construction of models, such as shown in the photograph.

Science News Letter, January 3, 1953

⚙️ **SNOW DETECTOR** turns on electric de-icing equipment in railroad switches, microwave antennas and sidewalks as soon as it detects snow. Placed outdoors, the

automatic unit consumes no power as long as the temperature remains above 37 degrees Fahrenheit, the normal borderline temperature for snow.

Science News Letter, January 3, 1953

⚙️ **PHOTOFLASH EXPOSURE guide** fits the palm of the hand and gives accurate exposure settings for cameras using flash attachments, regardless of the distance from the flashbulb to the subject. The device works no matter what combinations of flashbulb and film are used.

Science News Letter, January 3, 1953

⚙️ **PLASTIC GLOBE** with a map of the world printed on it in five colors is helpful to children studying geography. Blown up like a balloon, the 16-inch sphere is made of a rugged vinyl plastic that withstands wear and tear if the globe also is used as a beach ball or bounced like a basketball.

Science News Letter, January 3, 1953

⚙️ **PAPER PUNCH** prepares standard 8½-by-11-inch sheets of paper for three-ring note binders. But by snapping a button on the device, the operator can punch two ¼-inch holes 2¾ inches apart in papers to go on popular types of arch boards. Hand operated, the unit is lightweight, yet sturdily constructed.

Science News Letter, January 3, 1953

• Nature Ramblings •

➤ **ISN'T IT** odd how human beings enjoy poisoning themselves!

Not all the way, of course. There's no fun in being dead; and the final stages of dying do not seem to be very enjoyable, either. But slight poisonings, that dull the senses, impair mental and muscular coordination, release conventional inhibitions and in general give a holiday from the strain of acting like a human being, seem to be welcomed by a very large proportion of the human race.

Drugging one's self into a temporary escape from one's troubles is, psychologically speaking, a mild form of partial suicide, differing from the drastic last resort of the actual self-murderer mainly in degree—and also in the important fact that the process is a reversible one.

Ever since Noah's misadventure with the grape-juice that was left standing too long and got spoiled, with scandalous results, ethyl alcohol has been the most widely used of these intoxicating drugs—though it is far from being the only one.

This is probably due mainly to the fact that it is the easiest to produce—indeed, it

Partial Suicide



produces itself even by inadvertence or accident, whenever any sugar-containing liquid is exposed to the chance fall of air-borne yeasts. Or, as in Noah's case aforementioned, the yeasts are already clinging to the skins of the grapes or other fruit, ready to begin working as soon as the juice has been squeezed out.

Another factor in favor of alcohol (if anything can be said to be in its favor) is its relative mildness. Except when concentrated from the natural fermented products

by distilling, a quite recent sophistication, it takes an appreciable time to act; and unless the consumer is more than making a hog of himself, the after-effects, though perhaps extremely disagreeable, are not likely to be fatal. This cannot be said for most other drugs used for the purpose of intentional intoxication.

Whatever may be the cause or causes, alcoholic beverages were practically worldwide in their use even before the great geographic expansion of the hard-drinking white race 500 years ago. The only really considerable "dry" areas on the world map in pre-Columbian days were North America above the Rio Grande and the islands of the Pacific.

Other social intoxicants have been limited geographically in their original distribution, primarily because of the limited range of the plants that produce them. Tobacco is strictly American, and so is coca, source of cocaine; opium is of Asia; hemp, as hasheesh or bhang, started in India and has only lately been spreading in North America as marihuana.

Science News Letter, January 3, 1953