

• New Machines and Gadgets •

If you want 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 424. To receive this Gadget Bulletin without special request each week, remit \$1.50 for one year's subscription.

⚙️ **TOOTHBRUSH COMBINATION** has a hollow plastic handle to hold enough toothpaste for several brushings. The paste is applied to the bristles internally by pressure from a plunger contained in the handle which forces the paste through the handle and up onto the brush through a tiny capillary tube.

Science News Letter, July 24, 1948

⚙️ **HEARING AID**, for temporary use by persons with slight hearing loss or for anyone where the sound level is below ordinary conversation, is a single unit to be carried in the pocket and held to the ear only when needed. Microphone, vacuum tubes, batteries and other essentials are all within the half-pound package.

Science News Letter, July 24, 1948

⚙️ **RUBBER MAT** for the relief of fatigue from standing contains several thousands of small resilient cells which provide shock-absorbing action, without any annoying sensation of too much softness. Because of the ridged underside construction, it is safe from skidding.

Science News Letter, July 24, 1948

⚙️ **AUTOMOBILE PAINTING mitt**, shown in the picture, replaces the brush



and consists of a moisture-proof fabric to which a cotton pile fabric, with which the paint is applied, is attached with snappers. The mitt is part of kit which contains enough of a free-flowing enamel paint to cover a car twice, and also a dirt-remover, sandpaper and a crack-filler.

Science News Letter, July 24, 1948

⚙️ **VENT PLUG** for a storage battery tells the water level at a glance without removal of the plug. The device, made of clear plastic, extends down into the battery with its lower end, which is a pyramid in shape, immersed if it is at a proper level. Looking down the vent the bottom is black if immersed in water; otherwise the words "add water" are visible.

Science News Letter, July 24, 1948

⚙️ **ELECTRIC CORN POPPER**, now patented, is a covered vessel with a side handle, and a heating element enclosed in a space in its bottom somewhat similar to the arrangement in an electric coffee maker. An added feature is a wire agitator, with a crank end above the cover, which can be rotated to prevent the corn from burning.

Science News Letter, July 24, 1948

⚙️ **VENETIAN BLINDS** become a removable slat type with the use of special clips through which the ropes pass instead of through slots in the individual blades. The clips are easily fixed in place on the rear of the ladder tape by means of their piercing points. Slat may then be removed for easy cleaning.

Science News Letter, July 24, 1948

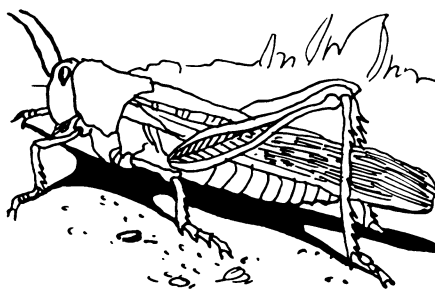
• Nature Ramblings by Frank Thone •

► **OYSTERS**, especially if served raw, are very likely to provoke that classic wisecrack about the degree of courage that must have been possessed by the first man who ever ate an oyster. There are, of course, plenty of people who haven't plucked up that much courage even yet. To whom the true ostreophile always remarks, "So much the better; it leaves more oysters for me!"

Whoever the first oyster-eater was, he must always remain nameless, for he was prehistoric. There is, however, no need for erecting a monument to his anonymous memory, for he and his numerous descendants have left plenty of monuments to their liking for oysters and other shellfish on beaches all over the world. There are shellmounds that the uninitiated easily mistake for low natural hills. These are the accumulated relics of oyster-roasts and clambakes that must have gone on continuously for centuries. There are even similar mounds of snail-shells in North Africa—the obvious witticism being that this must be the original home of Frenchmen.

But oysters and clams and snails are only

Was It Courage?



the beginning of the catalog of strange foods that people eat in various parts of the world. Insects, both as larvae and adults, are prominent items. Tastiest, probably, would be the grape-bellied honey-ants of Mexico. More widely distributed is the eating of locusts, which are simply big, fat grasshoppers: these dainties are consumed in many lands where locusts swarm, all the way from the Mediterranean basin to the Philippines. There has even been a government bulletin giving recipes for their

proper preparation and cooking.

Strange sea dainties are to be found on the menu, too: squid and sea-urchins in southern Italy, sea-cucumbers and the giant sea-worm known in its dried form as *beche-de-mer* in the South Seas, and of course the inevitable bird-nest soup and shark-fins of "real" Chinese restaurants. Raw fish is eaten just about everywhere. Mark Twain recorded, with a proper inlander's shudder, seeing native Hawaiians eating fish "raw and alive!" when he visited the islands eighty-odd years ago.

The chances are that this business of eating "queer" foods was pioneered not by any bold man but by one of our pre-human ancestors who was merely hungry and lacked the means for killing and cooking larger game. Certainly our existing simian poor relations are not too discriminating in their choice of tidbits; some species of them at least will eat insects and their grubs, eggs and young birds, centipedes, scorpions and fat spiders. It may be, after all, that oyster-eating is just an evolutionary hang-over.

Science News Letter, July 24, 1948