

# • New Machines and Gadgets •

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⚙️ **SAFETY STEPLADDER**, for use in the home, has three sturdy hinged platforms at three convenient levels instead of the conventional treads used in most ladders. The user literally stands within the ladder, close to the job, and directly over the center of gravity. Platforms not in use swing easily out of the way.

Science News Letter, October 30, 1948

⚙️ **SLIDE RULE**, pocket-size and made of a white plastic, consists of three parts, the rule proper with overturned edges to hold the slide in place, the slide itself, and an indicator with a hairline in the center. The six-inch device can be used for mathematical problems from multiplication to cube roots.

Science News Letter, October 30, 1948

⚙️ **SILICONE-TREATED tissues**, for cleaning the lenses of eyeglasses, leave an invisible film of silicone on the surface of the glass which improves clarity and protects the lenses from minor surface scratches. They are recommended also for cleaning the surface of women's compact mirrors.

Science News Letter, October 30, 1948



⚙️ **COFFEE BREWER**, that makes a single cup at a time, consists of an aluminum drip-top, a plastic cover to hold the heat during dripping, and a half-pint glass cup encased in a non-breakable plastic holder with a handle. The picture shows the assembly in use.

Science News Letter, October 30, 1948

⚙️ **PASTRY CLOTH** for pie-making is a plastic sheet to which the dough does not stick. In use, dough is placed between two sheets, rolled to the proper size and thickness, the top film peeled off, the dough inverted into the baking pan, and the other film removed. The dough never touches the rolling pin or the pastry board.

Science News Letter, October 30, 1948

⚙️ **MOTORCYCLE COVER**, tailor-made of water-proof nylon, fits snugly over the machine in storage and protects it against weather, rust, dust and grime. When not in use, the cover is folded to occupy a space 10 inches long, six wide and two thick.

Science News Letter, October 30, 1948

⚙️ **INDIVIDUAL CORRUGATED paper packets** for salt are intended to replace the use of salt shakers in hospitals and railway diners and on airplanes. Each unit, about the size of a package of paper matches, contains four cells to hold the salt; the corrugations provide a sprinkling action similar to that of a regular shaker.

Science News Letter, October 30, 1948

# • Nature Ramblings by Frank Thone •

► HALLOWE'EN, as probably everybody knows without needing to be told again, is a contraction of All Hallows' Even, which means the eve or vigil of the Feast of All Saints, long ago appointed by the Church to be observed on the first day of November. Like the vigils of all the major feasts, it is liturgically a day of fasting and prayer; but stubborn sinners have persistently balked at this and turned the evening into a time of merrymaking within doors and of mischiefmaking without.

The carnival nature of present-day Halloween observance is said to be a survival of the pagan saturnalia, a harvest-home festival observed in ancient Latium even before the founding of Rome. After their hard labor in getting in the crops, slaves and hired field hands were rewarded with a week of license, when they could get as drunk as they pleased and raise hob gen-

## Old Gods Return



erally. It was supposed to represent a return of the reign of Saturn, banished father of the gods—a legendary golden age of prosperity and plenty, of all play and no work.

When all the old pagan gods followed Saturn into banishment after the triumph of Christianity, they were regarded as

devils. Saturn shared with Satan the kingdom of the dark, and his roistering followers naturally acquired familiars and pets from among the nocturnal fauna—bats and owls and black tomcats. Since slavery no longer exists, it is children and adolescents who take advantage of an evening of relaxed discipline, and disguise themselves as imps and ghosts, warlocks and witches.

The one distinctively American element that has been added to the Halloween ritual is the use of hollowed-out pumpkin shells as the foundation of the fiery face of the mock Saturn—or Satan, if you prefer. Pumpkins and hard-shelled squashes were unknown in Europe before the discovery of America, but their obvious suitability for making grotesque scare-heads brought about their adoption into the carnival paraphernalia even in Colonial times.

Science News Letter, October 30, 1948