



SILENCER FOR LIGHTNING

ENGINEERING

Artificial Lightning Now Without Deafening Noise

See Front Cover

COMPLETE lightning phenomena can now be produced in comfort in the laboratory. One artificial 100,000-ampere lightning stroke produced in Westinghouse's Sharon, Pa., testing laboratories caused spectators to hold their ears to shut out the thunderous noise, as shown on the front cover of this week's SCIENCE NEWS LETTER.

Engineers have developed a muffler, however, which shuts out the noise and allows observers to stand close to the lightning current generator while it is operating.

Tests in the laboratory during the past three months showed engineers the futility of conventional protective apparatus and brought out the ability of the "deion gap," a device for "snuffing out" lightning currents, to protect against even direct strokes of lightning.

Science News Letter, August 10, 1935

MEDICINE-CRIMINOLOGY

Would Criminal Become Leper To Change His Fingerprint?

WOULD a desperate criminal be willing to contract leprosy in order to escape the law?

Dr. Leonidio Ribeiro, director of the bureau of identification in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, has made public research which raises this question for crime detectors. He gave convincing proofs, with photographs, that finger prints of persons with leprosy change so greatly from what they were before the illness that they are useless for purposes of identification.

Dr. Ribeiro's investigations were carried on in the colony for lepers in Curupaity, Jacarépaguá, Rio de Janeiro. Of two hundred cases examined for his report, 80 per cent. were found to have changed finger prints after the onset of the disease. The number examined included both men and women. In non-leprosy persons white streaks were found in 10 per cent. of those investigated. In lepers he found that 70 per cent. had these white lines. These lines so changed the papillary pattern that the prints no longer made identification by the finger print method possible.

It is estimated that there are over five million lepers in the world. In this leper population there may be many thousand criminals who, if their crimes were committed before the onset of their disease,

could never be identified by their finger prints.

Two other diseases, scleroderma, which is not contracted at will, and radio dermatitis, an industrial disease, also change the finger prints to a marked extent. These diseases have already been taken into consideration with suspects known to have these ailments.

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NEUROLOGY

New Kind of Pain Due to Chemical Tissue Changes

A NEW KIND of pain resulting from chemical changes in tissue surrounding nerves was described before the Second International Neurological Congress meeting at London by Sir Thomas Lewis, fellow of the University College, London, and member of England's Medical Research Council.

The more usual type of pain arises when the nerve endings are stimulated by direct physical contact.

Sir Thomas cited experiments showing that malnutrition or injury of tissues may cause chemical changes which stimulate the sensory nerves and bring pain.

Science News Letter, August 10, 1935

EDUCATION

Care of Blind Children Is Outlined for Parents

"A BLIND child eight years old who has had no previous training is almost hopelessly late."

Hopelessly late for what? To be started on the road to normal associations with seeing people.

This sharp warning is issued by the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, in its efforts to induce relatives of blind babies to give these children a fair start in life, and to lose no time making that start.

The printed instructions that the Institute offers to the parents of blind children are impressive, even for the casual reader to glance over. They are "common sense," and simply told. Yet, there is no doubt in the world that thousands of households with blind babies in them would never think of some of these important things to do for their handicapped children.

Giving the blind baby his good start includes such items as these, taken from the Canadian instructions:

Teach the child to walk at the same age as you would the seeing child.

As soon as possible teach the child to dress and undress; to wash himself; to comb his hair; to take care of his clothes; and, when at the table, to use properly a spoon, fork, and knife. A blind child should do all these things