

great deluge of 1936. Ten great dams on the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers and their tributaries will hold back the freshets of late winter and early spring, not only protecting the city but regulating the flow for navigation on the Ohio and also materially abating stream pollution.

In *The Military Engineer*, (May-June) Lt.-Col. W. E. R. Covell of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers tells of the work to date. Because the Pittsburgh watershed crosses state lines into New York, West Virginia and Maryland, the whole project has been taken out of state hands and made a Federal undertaking. The dams will stretch in a long line, in mountain valleys to the north and east, like fortifications against a raiding enemy.

One dam has been completed for more than a year, four more are nearing completion, three are ready to be undertaken as soon as funds are made available, and two await legislative clarification of status before work can be started.

Blessings already flow from the one fully completed dam. Not only has it checked at least one stiff freshet, but it has released the impounded waters later in the season to maintain navigation levels during a drought period, has made it possible for sportsmen to catch big bass in waters long sterile through pollution, and has diminished the pollution problems of city water supplies along the upper Monongahela by fifty per cent.

*Science News Letter, May 20, 1939*

servatory. Thus the simple name, Hassel comet, now turns out to be Jurlof-Achmarof-Smith-Hassel. Latest reports on the JASH comet show it is rapidly leaving the earth and has dimmed from third magnitude brilliance to the fourth magnitude.

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PHYSIOLOGY

**Vitamin Alphabet Going Out of Style**

THE vitamin alphabet, that is, designation of the various vitamins by letter, is going out of style. For example, if you want to be really up-to-date, you must learn to say ascorbic acid instead of vitamin C when you are referring to the substance in orange juice, (or other citrus fruits, tomatoes and other vegetables) which prevents and cures scurvy.

This may be discouraging, especially if you pride yourself on having really learned the vitamin alphabet, or most of it. But the scientists who have most to say about vitamins, the nutritionists and biochemists, are trying their best to get the vitamins out of the alphabet. They make the point that the letters did very well for names in the early days of vitamin discoveries when only a few were known and not much was known about them. Now, however, since there are about as many vitamins as letters of the alphabet, with half-a-dozen going under the name of B, it is confusing and even leads to inaccuracy to call these essential food factors by letter.

Some of the vitamins have been identified chemically and even made synthetically. They have regular names, just as other chemicals have. Vitamin C is ascorbic acid. Thiamin is the beriberi preventing and curing substance that once went under the name of vitamin B or B<sub>1</sub>. Nicotinic acid, the stuff that is curing pellagra, is the chemical that was variously called vitamin B<sub>2</sub>, vitamin G and the P-P or pellagra preventing factor. Riboflavin is another diet essential that was once labelled vitamin B or vitamin G. Recent discoveries have shown that it is necessary for the health of both man and other animals.

The anti-sterility vitamin, formerly called E, is now known as alpha tocopherol. Vitamins A and D may keep their letter names for some time, because there is not so much confusion about them as about the B vitamins. Until the chemical composition of other vitamins is discovered, however, scientists favor calling them by descriptive names, not by letters.

*Science News Letter, May 20, 1939*

ASTRONOMY

**Hassel Comet Takes New Names As Prior Discoverers Are Found**

LIKE some of the world's famous divorcees, who pick up new names with each change of partners, the comet Hassel is adding names with each mail delivery.

Full name of the comet is now Jurlof-Achmarof-Smith-Hassel, but to avoid this hyphenated terminology astronomers are going back to their standardized forms and calling the comet 1939 d.

First knowledge of the new comet, visible to the unaided eye low in the northwestern sky in early evening, came from Oslo, Norway, with the reported discovery by observer Hassel on April 16, 1939. Prof. S. Rosseland of the Oslo Observatory cabled the news to Harvard Observatory, which distributed the news quickly through the United States.

Thus, and quite rightly, American as-

tronomers took to referring to the comet as the Hassel comet.

However, it now appears that other observers saw the comet too and did it before Hassel found it in his Norwegian observatory.

Two Russian amateurs, Jurlof and Achmarof, saw the comet on April 15, one day earlier than Hassel. They wrote of their discovery on April 16 and mailed the letter to European centers for distributing astronomical information. This slow method gave Hassel the apparent priority for a time.

Still more recently it has become apparent that a Canadian amateur astronomer, Lewis V. Smith, of Sedgewick, Alberta, saw the comet on April 15 also. Like the Russians, he announced his discovery by mail. This fact has only recently been received at Harvard Ob-

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