

# • 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 646. To receive this Gadget Bulletin without special request each week, remit \$1.50 for one year's subscription.

⚙️ **WALL LIGHT SWITCH** is extremely easy to turn on and off, especially by persons whose hands are full. Responding to a slight pressure from an elbow or a free finger, the switch works silently and has 12-amp silvered contacts. The cover plate is an easy-to-clean, crack-proof, ivory-colored plastic.

Science News Letter, November 1, 1952

⚙️ **UNDERWATER PUMP**, especially good when the water level is 75 or more feet below the ground, is driven by a  $\frac{3}{4}$  or a  $1\frac{1}{8}$  horsepower motor. Operating quietly from the depths of the well, the pump requires no priming and is controlled at the ground's surface by automatic instruments.

Science News Letter, November 1, 1952

⚙️ **BATHTUB BACK REST** is made of a high quality "quilted" rubber, further padded to provide a comfortable support usable in any type of tub. A matching head rest cradles the neck and is held in place by two suction cups.

Science News Letter, November 1, 1952

⚙️ **PLASTIC CONDUIT** for electric power lines now is being used by a Tennessee power company because of its flexibility, ease of installation, corrosion resistance and shatter-proof qualities. Sections of pipe 20 feet long were joined with cement (see photograph). It took 20 minutes to lay 247



feet of the connected butyrate pipe, normally a four-hour job with rigid conduits.

Science News Letter, November 1, 1952

⚙️ **NO-SNAG SINKER** for still-water fishing is made of a large wood plug with heavy metallic core. It has enough weight

to carry the line out but has enough wood to cause the hook and bait to come to the surface without snagging when reeled in.

Science News Letter, November 1, 1952

⚙️ **PORTABLE oxygen-administering apparatus** for athletes helps the heart and respiratory system return to normal 30% faster by supplying oxygen to the athlete after a hard-fought, strenuous game. The athlete puts a facepiece over his nose and mouth and opens a valve. The unit adjusts itself automatically to any breathing pattern.

Science News Letter, November 1, 1952

⚙️ **FINGER-TIP PEN** slips over the index finger like a thimble, responding freely to light writing movements of the user. Made of a pleasant-to-touch butyrate plastic, the pen has a lever that retracts its ball point into the barrel for safe carrying. When exhausted, the "ink" cylinder can be replaced in about five seconds.

Science News Letter, November 1, 1952

⚙️ **WATER-PURIFIER** unit, developed by the Army, can be flown to combat sites and set up in about 90 minutes. Operating on its own power supply, the purifier removes silt, destroys bacteria and screens out disease-causing organisms. The unit delivers 2,400 gallons of drinkable water an hour.

Science News Letter, November 1, 1952

# • Nature Ramblings •

➤ **FRINGED GENTIANS**, through most of their former range in the northeastern states, have become so rare that enthusiastic flower lovers and keen students of botany may go for years without seeing even one of their beautiful blue blossoms.

It is all a result of over-enthusiasm by flower-lovers of a former generation—our grandfathers and grandmothers, who saw no reason for letting a flower stand on its stem if they happened to fancy it and wanted to carry it home and put it in a vase. That's what happened to millions of fringed gentians back in the nineteenth century—they died in parlor vases.

It is a bitter shame that this had to happen, for of all the blue-and-gold beauty that is autumn, no one thing ever stood out with more beauty than the fringed gentian. Both in gracefulness of form and ringing clearness of color, it seems more like a spring flower than one of late autumn.

The four flaring upper ends of its petals, standing out boldly from the green calyx

## Beauty Betrayed



that offers them to the sun, are something for poets to write about. Indeed, one of the best of early American poets, William Cullen Bryant, dedicated one of his finest poems to the fringed gentian.

One reason why the fringed gentian has suffered so badly at the hands of its too-possessive friends is that it depends primarily on seed for its propagation. If you

pick the flower you pick next year's gentians, too, and those of many a year thereafter—unless there chance to be some hidden flowers that you have overlooked.

So the best thing to do, if you chance on a few survivors, is to look your fill, but let them alone—and don't tell anyone else of your discovery.

In one part of our country, fringed gentians live and flourish in great abundance. That is in the northern Rockies; in Yellowstone National Park, within easy sight of the tourist highways, there are whole alpine meadows that are blue with gentians in July and August—for these flowers, like all mountain flowers, must come into bloom early to avoid the early winter.

This gentian, of course, is not identical with the fringed gentian of the East. But allowing for its somewhat greater size and sturdiness, it passes fairly enough for a western sister of the flower that Bryant loved.

Science News Letter, November 1, 1952