

T H E P L A N E T

Volume I

November, 1930

Number 5

Published every month by The Scienceers.

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PEERING INTO RADIO'S FUTURE

Radio is already well on the way towards becoming the force by which the world is directed, informed and entertained. If we marvel at the wonders of Radio now, what of the future when Radio emerges from the experimental period and really gets its stride!

Universal sending and receiving, the use of short waves, directional radio, the transmission of power without wires, television, and many as yet unthought-of discoveries will undoubtedly make many changes in the life of the not-so-far-off future.

TELEVISION

That television is beyond the laboratory stage is shown by the fact that Radio Silhouette Movies are now being enjoyed by more than 30,000 amateur television fans. Such rapid strides have been made with television that it may be only a short time until we can see as well as hear things that are going on thousands of miles away. Telephones, too, will have television attachments so we can see the person to whom we are talking -- even though that person is on the other side of the world.

If television reaches the stage of development that everyone expects of it, it will truly be the magic wand of a scientific world, a strange force which at the touch of a button will bring before you anyone whom you desire to see and talk with.

- ALLEN GLASSER.

USING THE COSMIC RAY

Professor R. A. Millikan, discoverer of the cosmic ray, has found a practical use for his discovery. Weather forecasting has depended heretofore on the barometer. Hereafter the electroscope, detecting the cosmic rays that bombard the earth from the depths of space, will serve the same end -- and better.

A less practical but more universally important postulate of Millikan's cosmic ray discovery is that the radiant energy flowing in from stellar space is continuous and compensatory for every electron broken up, thus controverting the British savants, who see the cosmos headed for dissolution through the dissipation of its energies, in case you have been worrying about it.

- A. G.

INSECTS NECESSARY TO LIFE

Three-quarters of the animal kingdom is composed of insects, declares F. E. Lutz of the American Museum of Natural History. But Dr. Lutz is not of the opinion that that is anything to be alarmed about. Of 15,000 species of insects within a fifty-mile radius of New York, he thinks that only about one half of one per cent are injurious to man.

Dr. Lutz admits that insects destroy about twenty per cent of the fruit crop each year, but says that without insects we should not be able to harvest anywhere near the amount of the other eighty per cent. The reason for this is that all fruits are dependent on insects for pollenization, and consequent maturity.

- NATHAN GREENFELD.

ANNOUNCEMENT: The columns of this paper are now open to all readers of scientific fiction. Send your contributions to the Editor, 1610 University Avenue, New York, N. Y.

MEASURING LIGHT'S VELOCITY

The method used by Professor Albert A. Michelson, of the University of Chicago, in his latest series of experiments to determine the velocity of light was as follows:

A beam of light was reflected from one of the sides of a revolving, twelve-sided block, each side of which is a mirror. This makes successive flashes of light. These rays were sent a long distance, in this case one mile, and were reflected back again from a mirror.

The distance the twelve sided or faceted mirror has moved in the time it took the flash to go to the other mirror and return is the basis for figuring the speed of light. Of course, these experiments are subject to terrestrial conditions and probably are at least ten per cent off. However, Professor Michelson's figure of 186,300 miles a second is generally accepted in the scientific world today.

— WALTER L. DENNIS.

Chicago, Ill.

(Mr. Dennis is the founder of the Science Correspondence Club, and one of its best known members. We welcome his contribution to The Planet. — Editor)

INVISIBLE LIGHT

Professor Roentgen once placed an experimental electric tube upon a book beneath which was a photographic plate holder, loaded. Some time later he used the plate in his camera and was puzzled, upon developing it, to find the outline of a key on the plate. He investigated and discovered a key between the pages of the book on which the experimental lamp had rested.

The strange "light" from the electrical discharge in the glass tube had penetrated the covers and pages of the book and the shield of the plate holder. Thus the X-ray was discovered.

— NATHAN GREENFIELD.

ASTRONOMICAL MYSTERIES (IV)

What Are the Comets?

We know superficially what they are, of course. For most of us, they are spectacular objects to be seen only once in a generation, perhaps -- such as Halley's comet -- or only once in hundreds of generations, inasmuch as some of them make their regular visit to the sun only once in several thousands of years.

Where did they come from originally? the most inquisitive astronomer asks himself; and he must admit he cannot answer.

Dr. Campbell, formerly of Lick Observatory, thinks they may be fragments from the outer portions of the great nebula or mass of primal matter from which our solar system may have been formed. It used to be thought that they were merely visitors to our system from outer space, but it is now generally agreed that every comet comes back to the sun again and again, though many of them take so long that no man living will ever see them.

Still unsolved, however, is the question as to what they really are.

— ALLEN GLASSER.

CURRENT SCIENCE FICTION

A. Merritt's latest novel, "The Snake Mother," which we have been heralding in this column for the past three months, is here at last. It is appearing serially in ARGOSY. Don't miss it!

The December issue of ASTOUNDING STORIES contains "Gray Denim," by Harl Vincent; "Slaves of the Dust," by S. W. Ellis; and Part Two of "The Pirate Planet," by Charles W. Diffin.

WONDER STORIES for December features "The Synthetic Men," by Ed Earl Repp. Other stories in the issue are "The Struggle for Venus," "The End of Time," and "The Outpost on the Moon."

Readers! -- What was your favorite science-fiction story of 1930? Let us know and the most popular choice will be announced in our next issue.

BRANCH NEWS

We have received copies of the first issue of The Planetoid, the monthly publication of the Scienceers Branch One, in Clearwater, Florida.

The paper is composed of four large pages, and contains articles, fiction and jokes. The printing and make-up are excellent, and the contents well arranged.

Carlton Abernathy is the editor, and his associates on the staff of the paper are Guy Cole, Ben Cole, and Stanley Dort. We congratulate them on the issuance of The Planetoid, and hope to have the pleasure of reading many future issues of that interesting publication.

Despite the earnest efforts of Gabriel Kirschner, of Temple, Texas, to found a branch of The Scienceers in that city, the project has not yet materialized. Nevertheless, we appreciate Mr. Kirschner's good work, and hope he will achieve his purpose in the near future.

ORIGIN OF DYNAMITE

Alfred Nobel, the Swedish chemist, unloading cans of nitroglycerine from a wagon one day in 1867, discovered that one can had sprung a seam and allowed the contents to leak out.

Fortunately the cans were packed in sawdust to prevent jarring, and the sawdust had absorbed the liquid explosive. The mixture had clotted and become a solid mass.

Nobel, with use of the principle suggested by this accident, invented dynamite, an explosive that was comparatively safe to handle.

PHILIP ROSENBLATT.

X-RAYS

"It is unlikely that the Martians have ever tried to get to this earth, although they must know a great deal about it," says an astronomer. That probably explains why they have never tried to get here.

AUDITOR - "Now, let's see your pink slips."

MISS FILING CLERK - "Sir!"

Would you call a polite locomotive-driver a "civil engineer?"

Walt Dennis, the gay wag, sends in this nifty:

The Hollywood party had just ended and the dashing young host turned to the torrid blonde and said, "Goodbye, glad to have pet you!"

NAT - "What would you suggest feeding my chickens to make them lay?"

PHIL - "Cyanide."

ARCHEOLOGIST - "We dug up a bed in Egypt twelve by twenty feet."

LISTENER - "That's a lotta bunk."

A few of the above jokes, we must admit, were pilfered from the Literary Digest. In other words, they were pre-digested. For that we deserve punishment; what?

- A. G.

NOTICE: The Scienceers now meets at 873 Whitlock Avenue, near Southern Boulevard, Bronx, New York. Meetings are held every Saturday night. Discussions, debates and lectures on scientific subjects feature these weekly gatherings. Detailed information about the club appears every Friday in the New York "Evening World" among news of the Yosian Brotherhood, a world-wide nature study society, with which it is affiliated.

