

METHYL A TERROR.

(Continued on Page 3, column 1.)

record achievement in speed. The utmost secrecy surrounded the efforts. It was forbidden to officers and men to divulge the nature of the product or even the existence of the plant. Mail was censored. A Cleveland postoffice lock drawer was used, and letters were mailed and received there, for the very name of Willoughby was verboten in correspondence. Telegrams were sent through the headquarters at Nela Park. The experimental plant, as it was called, was conducted as an army post and the men were not permitted to visit Cleveland. The work was hard and there was no reaction. But patriotic men and women of the neighborhood, who knew something was being done for the country but not what was being done, supplied the men with reading matter, a Victrola, fruit, and pies, and even a grand piano!

Klaxon horns were installed and an alarm system agreed upon, and the men in the plant worked always with their masks in the "alert" position. A fire and gas brigade was organized and alarms were given at intervals, sometimes "for cause." But none of the men were lost from poisoning. The only death at the experimental station was from influenza.

The methyl was packed partly in 115-millimeter shells, each carrying about 10 pounds of liquid, and partly in drums carrying from 350 to 400 pounds to be dropped from airplanes. It is estimated that 50 of these drums, judiciously dropped about Manhattan Island, would kill its population.

In this connection it is pertinent to reveal some facts, until now not known to the public, about the manufacture of mustard gas. The chlorhydrin process for making this poison was unsuited to quantity production, and it was not until February, 1918, that an English professor's discovery of a new method was cabled to America. The cablegram anticipated by just two days a discovery of the same reaction at George Washington University in Washington, where experimental tests were under way.

In March a smaller experimental station was established at Taft avenue and East 131st street in Cleveland, with Colonel Dorsey (then Mr. Dorsey of the National Lamp Works) as technical director. The little two-story office building of the Great Lakes Refining company became, in August, the offense section of the development division, with Colonel Dorsey in charge. It was connected with a large single-story structure suitable for plant operations.

This plant, within six miles of the Cleveland public square, was in a congested district, and great precautions were necessary to avoid gassing the neighbors, who did not suspect the deadly material being prepared within. But few outsiders ever became aware of the nature of the work being done in East 131st street, and no serious trouble was caused by it. The second-story room was converted into a control and research laboratory, and was equipped with 10 well-ventilated hoods and all the other necessary equipment. The rapid assembly of the materials was made possible through the co-operation of Cleveland manufacturing concerns, whose attitude throughout the war has been thus expressed: "If we have it, the government can have it; if we haven't we'll get it."

At this plant no barracks nor mess hall was provided, and the men ate and slept wherever they could in the neighborhood. As each arrived, he was told what was being done and its importance was explained to him; and the officers in charge report that the workers performed eagerly and thoroughly the tasks assigned to them, although often they were tedious and hazardous.

The results at this plant were immediately transmitted to the Edge-wood arsenal (Hastings-on-Hudson) plant, to the National Aniline and Chemical company plant at Buffalo, and to the Dow Chemical company at Midland, Mich. At each of these places mustard gas was made in quantities. Nela Park, so named from the initial letters of the National Electric Lamp association, forerunner of the National Lamp Works, was the hub from which these spokes radiated. At Nela Park investigations were made of two other poison gasses, before the methyl work was undertaken, but the war department stopped the other inquiries before they were completed. The main result of the 131st street plant was the development of mustard; the main result at Willoughby was the production of the death-dealing methyl.

It may be seen with what caution and energy the United States set about meeting German ingenuity in cruelty and destruction, and how successfully American chemists surpassed the enemy chemists. The visible death-dealing evidence of their technical skill has been destroyed.

France and England and Italy are continuing their chemical warfare services unimpaired. The United States has disbanded her personnel and dismantled her plants.

To the chemical warfare service was assigned the bureau of mines. Dr. W. K. Lewis representing the bureau, went to Cleveland on April 28, 1917, to enlist the aid of the National Carbon company and the National Lamp Works of the General Electric company. At that time mustard gas was the main goal, and electric power was required for the electrodes. Moreover, expert knowledge about charcoal was required on the defensive side of the work, in devising gas masks and other protective apparatus. For example, tests at Nela Park proved that coconut hulls were the best raw material for making absorbent charcoal, and so that material became the standard. The plant of the Great Lakes Refining company in Cleveland was taken over for mustard gas research, and its personnel of 35 was increased to 175 officers and enlisted men. That was a microscopic but typical example of the methods adopted to meet the greatest emergency in America's military history.

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Trolley Car Drives to Curb For Passengers.

The trackless trolley car is now being adopted in a number of small New England towns, says the June Popular Mechanics Magazine. It resembles a long auto bus, travels on wide, solid-rubber tires, and is heated, lighted, and propelled by electricity supplied through two trolleys to an ordinary street car motor. In cost of installation and operation, the trackless trolley is said to be much cheaper than its predecessor, as expensive rails, switches, and signals are all unnecessary. It is claimed to be more satisfactory in performance, also, as the swinging trolleys permit divergence to any part of a 25-foot roadway, thus allowing the car to pass slower vehicles, avoid ruts, and even drive to the sidewalk to take on and discharge passengers.

Electric Bulb Rivals X-ray in Bone Photography.

A physician has contrived a simple camera, illustrated in the June Popular Mechanics Magazine, that seems to rival the X-ray in a limited field. Into a light-proof box, containing the member to be examined, he admits light from a tungsten lamp, filtered to pass only red rays. Passing through the hand or foot the red light strikes, at the bottom of the box, a photographic plate highly sensitized with an easin solution. An exposure of one-half second makes the shadow picture.

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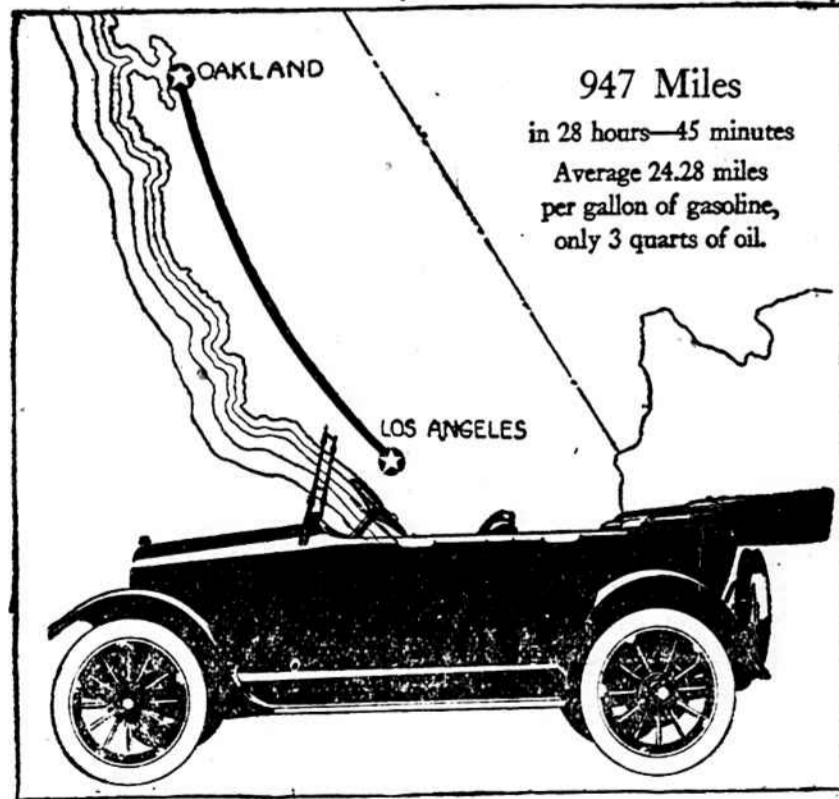
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