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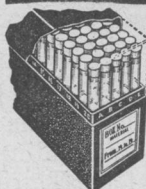


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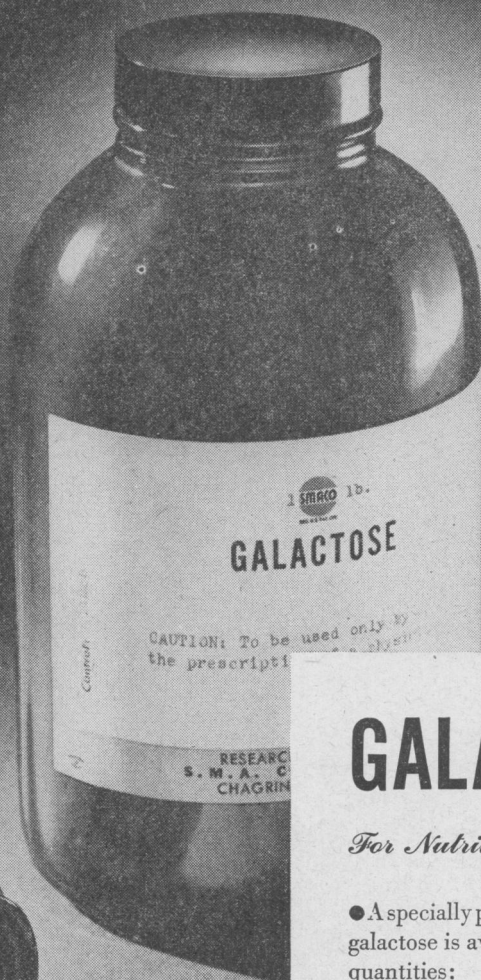
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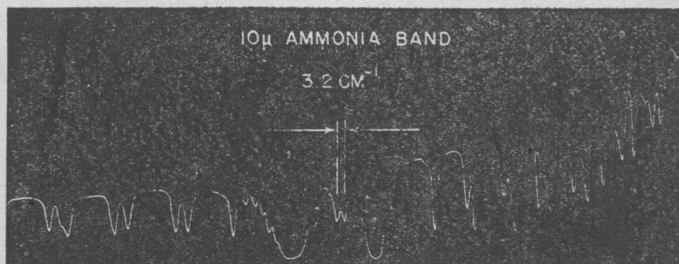
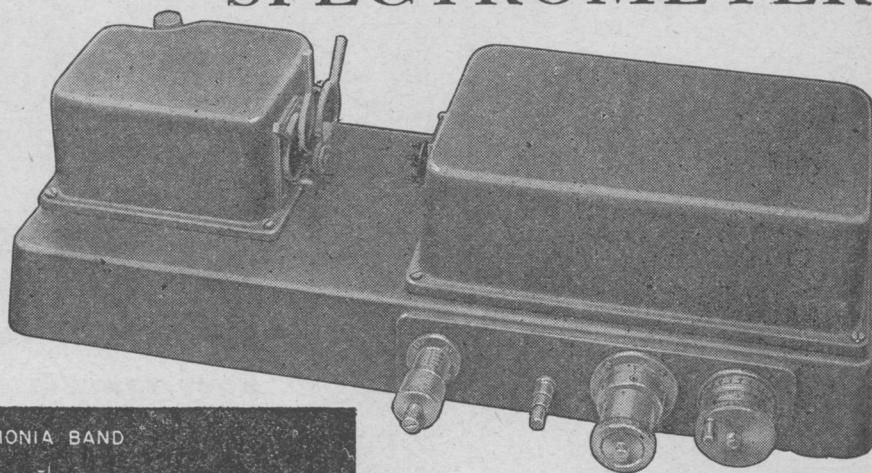
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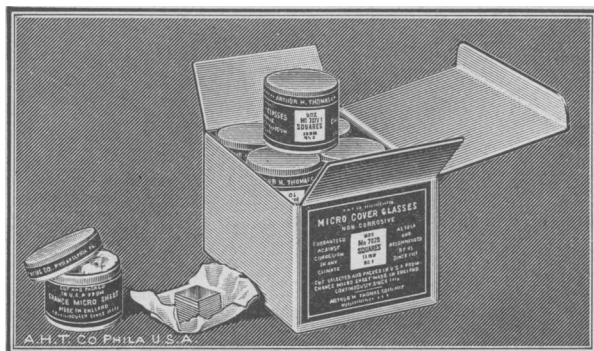
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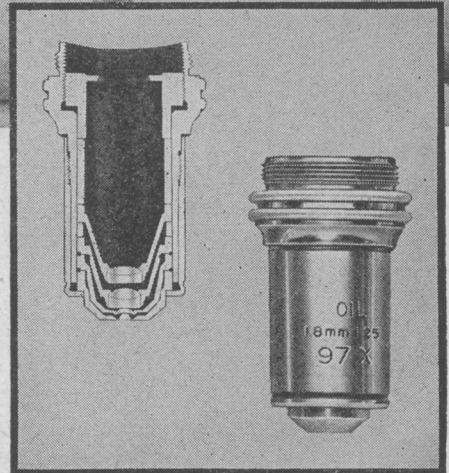


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BRAIN MECHANISM¹

By Dr. EDGAR DOUGLAS ADRIAN, F.R.S.

TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY

I CAN think of no better way of beginning than by recalling another function due to the Pilgrim Trust at which I was present six months ago. I recall it in gratitude to a foundation which has preserved so much that is worth preserving in Great Britain, and because this particular occasion concerned a scientist who might be claimed from both sides of the Atlantic, since he belongs to the period of our common ancestry. The occasion was the presentation by the Trust to Trinity College, Cambridge, of some of the private library of Sir Isaac Newton, scholar and fellow of the college and afterwards president of the Royal Society. The presentation was made in the great library built by Christopher Wren at the request of Isaac Barrow, the master of Trinity who recognized the genius of Newton and did all he could to foster it, and the books

are now in the shelves at the south end of the library near the Newtonian telescope and the statue of Lord Byron.

The war has prevented an international celebration of three famous men who were born or died 400, 300 and 200 years ago, Copernicus, Newton and Lavoisier, and the Royal Society has been forced to honor its greatest president without the ample banquet which would normally have shown our devotion to science. But the meetings in his honor have made us more aware of those aspects of Newton's work which are overshadowed by the "Principia" and the "Optics." As far as mathematical physics was concerned Newton had only to be and all was light. But there is also the less triumphant figure, Newton the student of the occult, the interpreter of the book of Daniel, the half-believer in Hermetic secrets, who could scarcely bear to be distracted from these things by the mathematical problems which he could not resist solving, who spent the best years of his life in chemical experiments which have had no result. His

¹ The second Pilgrim Trust Lecture to be given in the United States. This address was delivered at the United States National Museum, Washington, D. C., under the auspices of the National Academy of Sciences, on April 24, 1944.