

## Imaginary Spies ■ Illusory Rays ■ Erroneous Statistics

### FEBRUARY 1954

**RED FEAR**—"The Fort Monmouth spy story fizzled out last month. Senator Joseph R. McCarthy concluded a series of public hearings, which he had said would 'show that there was espionage' in the Fort Monmouth radar laboratory. His parade of witnesses has failed to develop any testimony on spying. Of some 30 Signal Corps scientists suspended by the Army as a result of the McCarthy investigation, none was accused of espionage. The *New York Herald Tribune* writer Walter Millis reported in his column: 'This really vital and sensitive military installation has been wrecked—more thoroughly than any Soviet saboteur could have dreamed of doing it ... [through] the processes of witch-hunting, sheer bigotry, cowardice, race prejudice and sheer incompetence.'"

**RABBIT PLAGUE**—"It is with diametrically opposite feelings that different parts of the world now look upon the two-edged phenomenon which is the subject of this article—the deadly infectious disease of rabbits called myxomatosis. Introduced deliberately in Australia three years ago, it has swept rapidly over immense areas, causing great epizootics among rabbits. In Australia the disease is hailed as a measure of salvation which is ridding the continent of its major pest; in Europe, where it broke out in 1952, it is viewed as a malevolent killer which threatens to wipe out a favorite food, game, pet and laboratory animal. To check the disease in Europe, investigators are searching for a vaccine against the myxoma virus."

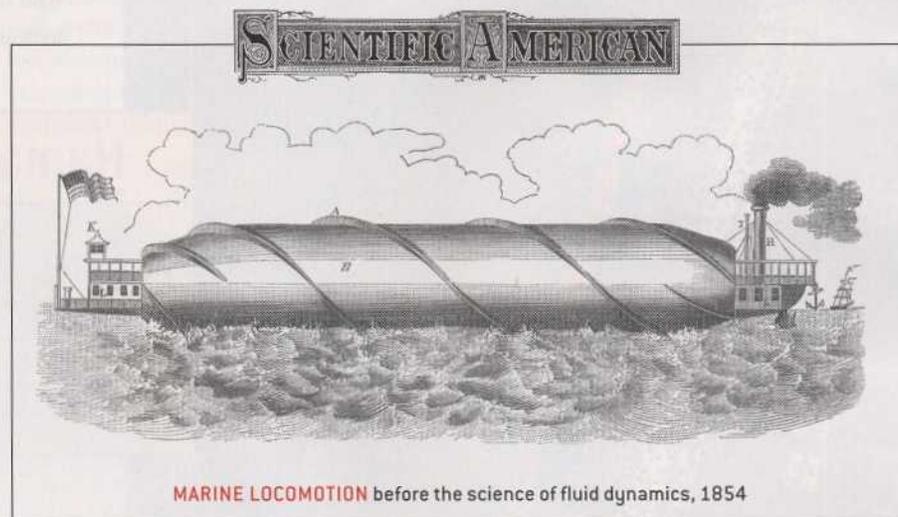
### FEBRUARY 1904

**CHIMERICAL RAYS**—"M. Aug. Charpentier brings out the interesting point that the rays given out by living organisms differ from the N-rays discovered by M. René Prosper Blondlot, and he thinks they are formed of N-rays and another new form of radiation. This is especially

true of the rays from the nerve centers or nerves, whose striking characteristic is that they are partially cut off by an aluminum screen. A sheet  $\frac{1}{50}$ th of an inch is sufficient to cut down considerably the rays emitted by a point of the brain. On the contrary, the rays from the heart, diaphragm, and different muscles are scarcely modified by the aluminum screen. This forms a characteristic distinction between the muscular and the

preservation of the structure, and vouched for its scientific utility."

**AND NOW THE BAD GNU**—"There seems to be no doubt that the wild grotesqueness of the appearance of the gnu is a provision of nature to protect the animal. When frightened or disturbed, these remarkable antelopes go through a series of strange evolutions and extraordinary postures, in order to enhance the oddity



nerve radiations. The effect from the nerves is strongly increased by compression; that of the muscles is much less so." [Editors' note: Both these forms of radiation were eventually disproved.]

**EIFFEL'S TOWER**—"In the *Scientific American* of December 26th it was announced that the famous Eiffel Tower was about to be razed to the ground, for the reason that it displayed a marked toppling tendency. M. Eiffel denies the statement and refers to the report of M. Mascart, president of the Academy of Sciences, in which it is said that 'the tower is in a perfect state of preservation, and that no change of position has been noted either in the foundation or in the framework.' Every competent commission that has ever studied the tower has advocated the

and hideousness of their appearance, and to frighten away intruders."

### FEBRUARY 1854

**OCEAN PERIL**—"The annexed engraving is of a Marine Locomotive, invented by Henry A. Frost of Worcester, Mass. To the outer hull are attached the screw blades. The inner cylinder being loaded at the bottom, will continually maintain the same position. It has a saloon running the full length of the vessel. The inventor is very confident that he is creating a complete revolution in ocean traveling."

**STATISTICAL ERROR**—"There are on the earth 1,000,000,000 inhabitants; of these 33,333,333 die every year, or one every second. These losses are about balanced by an equal number of births."