

# Notes & Queries

## HINTS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Names and Address must accompany all letters or no attention will be paid thereto. This is for our information and not for publication. References to former articles or answers should give date of paper and page or number of question. Inquiries not answered in reasonable time should be repeated; correspondents will bear in mind that some answers require not a little research, and, though we endeavor to reply to all either by letter or in this department, each must take his turn. Buyers wishing to purchase any article not advertised in our columns will be furnished with addresses of houses manufacturing or carrying the same. Special Written Information on matters of personal rather than general interest cannot be expected without remuneration. Scientific American Supplements referred to may be had at the office. Price 10 cents each. Books referred to promptly supplied on receipt of price. Minerals sent for examination should be distinctly marked or labeled.

(8098) L. J. J. writes: 1. I have a small fan motor of 52 volts,  $\frac{1}{2}$  horse power, alternating current, which I run on direct light current, 52 volts. It has a great deal of power, but sparks a great deal. Could you advise me in the next issue of your valuable paper how to prevent this? A. Your alternating-current motor, when put on a direct current, gets more current than it could get from an alternating circuit. It therefore runs faster and sparks more than it should. The brushes are perhaps not in the proper position. Slide them to and fro around the commutator, and find the position of least sparking. If this does not cure the trouble, you can add a resistance to the external circuit, so as to cut down the current which enters the motor. 2. Why will it not generate when run by an 18-inch fly-wheel? It goes very fast. A. Many of the small motors cannot excite their own fields and build them up. They cannot, for that reason, be run as generators. 3. Should telephone be grounded on house or earth side of gas meter, and why? A. It is better not to ground anything to a gas-pipe, either side of the meter. A flash of lightning or a lightning wire falling across the telephone wire might produce a spark which would set fire to the gas and to the house. Perhaps the earth side of the meter is a little better ground than the house side.

(8099) F. T. asks: 1. Can water be decomposed and the gases collected separately by an alternating electric current? A. No; the gases will be mixed at each pole in the same proportions as they are in water—hydrogen 2 parts, and oxygen 1 part. 2. What chemicals are most frequently used in a dry battery? A. Dry cells are usually modified Leclanche cells. The sal ammoniac solution is held in some absorbent material, so that it will not run out of the cell when it is upset. 3. In the preface of Tesla's "Experiments with Alternating Currents of High Potential and High Frequency" it mentions a thermo-magnetic motor he devised. What was the principle of it? A. A thermo-magnetic motor, or, as it is usually called, a pyro-magnetic motor, consists of an armature formed of a disk or ring of thin steel, which is set in motion when unequally heated by reason of the difference of force so produced. Mr. Edison invented a pyro-magnetic generator which acted on the fact that iron ceases to be magnetic at about 770 deg. C., and converted the heat energy by means of it into electric energy. He used a thin iron tube in a strong magnetic field surrounded by a coil of wire. By varying the temperature of the tube near 770 deg. he varied the magnetism passing through the coil, and thus produced a current in the coil. 4. Can a storage battery be charged by an alternating electric current? A. No. 5. What is a thermostat? A. An instrument which closes or opens an electric circuit when heated or cooled.

(8100) J. M. A. asks: 1. A condenser, i. e., a double-convex lens, will throw a focus of  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch in diameter, which gives a heat of 500 deg. F.; what will another condenser of twice the diameter, but of the same focus, give in heat? A. The area of the larger lens is a circle of twice the diameter and four times the area of the smaller. It will allow four times as much light and heat to pass through it. 2. Is the intensity of the heat as the square of the diameter? A. The quantity of heat is proportional to the square of the diameter of a lens through which it is transmitted. The intensity of heat in a focus is approximately so also. Whether a piece of metal, such as a mercury thermometer or a piece of copper, will be heated to a higher temperature, and how much higher, depends upon the specific heat of the metal and upon its condition as regards radiation. It is difficult, if not quite impossible, to determine to what degree of a thermometer a given quantity of heat will raise a piece of a given metal. 3. Will the same rules hold good for a parabolic reflector as for a condenser? A. No; a parabolic reflector sends the rays out in a parallel beam when the source of heat or light is placed in its focus. The intensity does not then diminish as the square of the distance. 4. Is there any book published on the collecting and applying heat from the sun's rays and on the storage of such heat? A. Langley's "New Astronomy," price \$3 by mail, contains a chapter on this subject. It shows pictures of the several solar engines which have been

used at various times in the effort to find a mode of utilizing the great heat of the sun. We have published several articles in the SUPPLEMENT on the subject of solar energy; No. 13, by John Ericsson, who devised a solar engine; Nos. 212, 214, 216, 217, 218, by Prof. Langley; price ten cents each.

(8101) J. E. H. writes: If a machine at a revolution of say 2,100 gives an electric current of 3 amperes at 10 volts, what is the most practical way to get a current of  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 ampere at 10 volts from it? If through coils and a reduction of speed, please give size of wire used and number of turns for each spool. A. The current a machine gives depends on the resistance of the external circuit. If you have three amperes through a certain circuit, to have one-half as much double the resistance of the external circuit. With 10 volts, the current will be 3 amperes when the resistance is 3.33 ohms. For one ampere the resistance must be 10 ohms. Now, if you have a part of the 10 ohms in the apparatus used, you will only require the rest of the resistance in a coil. No. 24 German-silver wire has a resistance of one ohm to three feet. From this you can calculate what you need.

(8102) O. M. S. asks: 1. I want to put up a telephone between my place and a neighbor's about a half a mile distant. I have two receivers, dry and bichromate batteries. Now, can I put up a telephone by connecting the receivers and battery, one at each end, to a barb-wire fence, in which the wire is fastened uninsulated to the post by staples, and use common electric alarm bells? A. Yes; if the wire is continuous, without breaks or loose joints. It must be spliced as strong as a telegraph wire. Such an arrangement will work only when the fence is dry. 2. If this can be done, please tell me how to connect the batteries and receivers to the fence. A. Connect the batteries and receiver to the line in series. Put half of the battery at each end of the line, using care that the poles at each end are in the same order. 3. How much power will be needed? A. We cannot tell. A great deal more than with an insulated line. 4. Can dry batteries, when the current gives out, be restored? If so, how? A. No; they can be opened and filled with sal ammoniac solution, running them as wet cells till the zincs are used up. 5. How can you magnetize a piece of iron by using a magnet? A. A piece of iron cannot be permanently magnetized. It is made into a magnet by bringing one end to the end of the permanent magnet.

(8103) J. M. S. asks: 1. In making an electric furnace, there is a core of fire-clay wound with platinum wire and then covered with clay and asbestos and connected up with a rheostat. Is there anything but platinum wire used, or do they cut in a fiber similar to that used in an incandescent lamp? A. You seem to be describing an electrical heater, and not an electrical furnace. The electrical furnace is made by bringing two carbons into contact and then drawing them apart while they are covered by the substance to be treated in the furnace. A very high temperature, which will melt any substance, is thus produced. A platinum wire wound on fire-clay can hardly come under the designation of an electrical furnace. In such a heater as you describe there would be no advantage in using a carbon filament. 2. In making a controller to reduce electric current (107 volts, alternating), what size of German-silver wire is used, and how long should each space be to the branches, so as to reduce same to 2 volts, 3 volts, 4 volts, 5 volts, 6 volts, 7 volts, 8 volts, and 9 volts? A. What you want is not a "controller," but either a transformer or a choking coil. A controller is used with a direct current. A choking coil can be arranged with branches so as to give the various drops in voltage which you mention. We cannot give you a design for this, as we know nothing about your current, except the voltage, nor what you wish to do. Apply to the company furnishing the current for the apparatus. 3. Could I use the insulated German-silver wire, and splice in short pieces the required distance, and then wind same up in a ball, leaving the various ends protrude, connect each up with a button, and use switch leaves, with button, that correspond to the voltage desired, without danger of burning same out? Am using 107-volt, 1,200-ampere, alternating current. A. No; a rheostat becomes heated by the current which flows through it. This would burn the insulation. Wound into a close coil, the wire would be still more heated than if wound into a spiral. Resistance coils are wound into open spirals, and placed so that air can draw through them and keep them cool.

(8104) F. J. S. writes: To have a current we need two different substances united by two contacts—one liquid, one metallic. Such a case occurs in an ordinary zinc cell when a particle of iron is embedded in the zinc surface. This wasteful circuit is done away with by amalgamating. But does not this evil effect (local action) necessarily exist in the storage battery? There is the metal grid in immediate contact with the oxide, and at the same time in contact with it through the intermediary of the liquid. Thus it would appear that there ought to be a vast amount of local action all the time. A. There is no local action in a storage cell. The only action on open circuit is the slight formation of lead sulphate by the combination of the lead and sulphuric acid. This is a very slow process. The action of a storage cell is between the

peroxide of lead and the spongy lead on the negative plate.

(8105) L. A. G. asks: 1. In the telephone-magneto generator described in SUPPLEMENT, No. 966, could the steel magnets be charged by simply placing them against one of the poles of the magnet of a powerful dynamo, or would consequent poles result? A. Permanent magnets are best magnetized by a coil of wire through which a current of electricity is flowing. Pass the magnet steadily through the coil back and forth. 2. When constructed as directed in the SUPPLEMENT, through what distance will the generators ring? That is to say, how many thousand ohms will the generator be? A. We do not know. 3. Could you also give me a good formula for a red and a black pigment or enamel for painting the generator magnets with? A. Any good varnish paints will do. 4. In the Hunning's telephone transmitter described on page 813 of "Experimental Science" (next to last edition), how fine and how hard packed should the granular carbon be? Would a carbon diaphragm and carbon back give better results than a brass back and ferrotyp diaphragm? A. The carbon grains of proper form and size can be purchased of manufacturers of telephones, for which see our advertising columns. The packing should be adjusted to clearest transmission by experiment. 5. Can the small alternating dynamo described in the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, Vol. 77, No. 11, be made self-exciting and still give 110 volts? How? A. No; there is not room on the armature for a commutator. You can redesign the yoke, etc., and put in a direct-current arrangement. 6. Would you furnish me with a list of the articles that have been published in the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN (not the SUPPLEMENT) on the telephone and the dynamo? A. Many details of the telephone are described and illustrated in SUPPLEMENT, Nos. 142, 163 and 966. Illustrated articles, giving complete details for the construction of small dynamos, are contained in SUPPLEMENT, Nos. 161, 599, 600, 844 and 865. We supply the SUPPLEMENT copies at ten cents each. For a list of many general articles on these subjects, we refer you to pages 13 and 17 of the Supplement Catalogue, which we supply free on application.

(8106) F. M. writes: Some two or three weeks ago, in Notes and Queries, you said water was a non-conductor, since which time I have got into all kinds of trouble by making this claim. Please explain how a fireman in Kansas City was knocked over the other day when the stream from the metal nozzle came in contact with a live wire. Also the old trick of trying to get a piece of money out of a bowl of water connected to a battery; why wetting the hands before taking hold of an electro battery will intensify the shock. A. We regret that you have been brought into trouble by inability to defend our statement that water is a non-conductor of electricity. Yet such is the fact, without any qualification. But the water must be pure, of course. Any impurity immediately lowers the resistance of the water very greatly. All the cases you cite are of this character. A man's hands are not ordinarily clean, never chemically clean. Should they be made so and dried, the first traces of perspiration would bring with it salt, and this is a good conductor. Dry hands are very well insulated by the skin. We never heard of any difficulty in taking a coin from a bowl of water connected to a battery. If the bowl were connected to a charged Leyden jar, there would be a shock on touching the water—ordinary water. Thompson, in his "Elementary Lessons in Electricity," gives the resistance of pure water as 265,500,000,000, when the resistance of copper is 1.57. Now, divide the large number by 1.57, and you will have the fact that pure water has 1,777,777,777, or, roughly, one billion and three-quarters times as much resistance as copper. Glass has only about 1,000 times the resistance of water, and glass is one of our best insulators. Now, add 5 per cent of sulphuric acid to the purest water and its resistance drops 500 times. A water resistance is a very common thing in electrical works nowadays. We hope these facts may enable you to discomfit your adversaries.

(8107) R. D. T. writes: I have made one of the motors described in SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN of December 8 and 15, 1900, and mounted same temporarily on wood bearings. Have tried three cells of open circuit battery in series (and multiple arc), but can get no effect whatever. Field is not short-circuited. A few questions. 1. Ought there not to be some effect with two or three cells when motor is mounted as above? A. Yes. There ought to be plenty of magnetism in the field and a spark at the terminals on breaking the circuit. 2. How can I test the armature and windings, not having a galvanometer? A. Connect one end of the winding to the battery, and try with a wire from the other pole of the battery whether a spark can be obtained from the iron of the armature core, or the yoke of the machine. This will show if the winding is grounded on the machine. 3. Would introducing a compass in place of armature and brushes demagnetize the compass when current as above is turned on? A. No; it would make the compass stronger. 4. Why should armature revolve by hand as easily one way as another when field is not short-circuited, with three cells of wet battery like Leclanche open circuit? A. Probably because there is no current flowing. It seems as if you have

no circuit through the motor. Perhaps you have connected up the field magnet so that the two halves neutralize each other. 5. Where can I get the brass balls necessary? A. You cannot purchase solid brass balls. We think you will have to make them.

(8108) L. A. D. writes: I have trouble with my photo plates in the fixing bath, which takes off the black and leaves the plate gray. Fixing bath used is 1 ounce hypo. to 3 ounces of water. I wish you would help me out. I develop the plates a good black in the high lights, but after fixing they are gray, with no contrast. Please give me a receipt for a fixing bath which will not destroy the high lights. A. The trouble with your photo plate does not, probably, lie with the fixing bath. This does not take away the black and leave them gray. They were thin before they went into the hypo. The trouble is over-exposure or under-development. The best formula for any plate is the one given by the maker in the box of plates. You cannot improve on that. Expose a shorter time and find by experiment what the proper time is for exposure.

(8109) J. M. S. asks: 1. How are electric furnaces (for dental uses, fusing porcelain, alternating current) wound? I am informed that platinum wire is used, but is that all? Is not there something similar to the fine film or carbon used in incandescent bulbs connected in to avoid burning out a fuse? A. The heating furnaces which have recently come into use are of platinum wire, wound on a non-conducting core. The resistance is made such that the proper current flows without fusing the platinum, and no external resistance is employed. The limit of temperature is the melting point of platinum. 2. Would there be very much expense in changing a motor from alternating to direct? A. A commutator is required in place of the collector rings. Its cost depends on the number of bars required in it. 3. Is it possible to charge a storage battery from an alternating current? A. No; except the alternating current is used to run a rotary converter. 4. There is an electric appliance out for annealing gold foil, used by dentists. Can you tell me how it is made? A. We have no information about this heater.

(8110) T. D. asks: What is the voltage of the Edison-Lalande battery, type "W"? A. The manufacturers, in their catalogue, give 0.667 volt as the mean working E. M. F. of a cell.

(8111) W. O. E. asks: Please tell an old reader of the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN what is the specific heat of hydrogen gas at constant pressure and constant volume. A. The mean specific heat of hydrogen at constant pressure is 3.4062, on the authority of Regnault and Wiedemann. The calculated specific heat at constant volume is 0.2419, by some authorities; by others it is given as 0.2359.

(8112) C. & Son write: We desire to melt a small amount of iron for experimental purposes, not sufficient to pay for a cupola. Can you give us any information on the subject? A. You can melt 3 or 4 pounds of cast iron in a black lead crucible in a forge fire by building up a loose brick furnace around the tuyere, with about 3 inches clearance around the crucible.

(8113) G. E. C. writes: Am thinking of making the mercurial barometer described in SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, February 2, 1901, page 74. Would like to know how many ounces of mercury I should get, and what it will cost. A. Not more than a half pound is actually required, but a pound will make the work easier.

(8114) J. B. Co. asks: In your issue of December 1 you describe and illustrate artificial lightning. Will you put us in the way of getting specific information as to the amount of current necessary to operate one of these signs? Our commercial current is 500 volts, 104 and 110 volts. A. We do not know any way in which so strong an effect can be produced directly by 500 volts of pressure. Ten times as much pressure is desirable. It can be obtained by a powerful transformer.

(8115) R. D. asks: Will you kindly give me a description of the secondary section windings of induction coil, such as Riethie, in Boston, uses for his coils, or is there a book written on this subject which gives full information regarding such windings and sizes of wires used? A. The making of a modern induction coil, with the secondary in sections, is fully described in SUPPLEMENT No. 1124, price ten cents. The dimensions of all parts and sizes of wires are plainly given.

(8116) E. P. R. writes: In testing the small disks as they are wound (in making a Ruhmkorff coil) I use the galvanometer and battery of sufficient strength to deflect the needle, to tell whether the wire is broken or not in winding. I have the battery and meter connected up and have two clamps to attach to the terminals of the coils when testing. I noticed that at times the needle would deflect one way and then the next time it would deflect just the opposite to what it did before; and as I knew that the current was passing through the meter in the same direction at all times, I made an investigation and found that if I connected the outside terminal of

the disk to the wire from the battery and the inside terminal to the wire from the meter that the needle would deflect one way, and by connecting them just the opposite the needle was deflected just the opposite as to what it did before, just the same as it would had I changed the direction of the current through the meter, which I did not do. I made several tests, with the same result each time. I have never heard of anything like it before, and do not know whether I am in the wrong or not about the matter, but can see no reason for the needle to change. Will you kindly explain, if it is worth an explanation? A. In the second mode of connecting the coil to the battery and galvanometer the current flows through the coil in the opposite direction from which it flowed the first time. The poles of the coil are therefore reversed. It may be that the coil is so near to the galvanometer that its needle is deflected by the coil. We do not see any other way in which the deflection of the needle should be reversed.

(8117) G. G. A. E. asks: 1. How can you determine the size of wire to be used in different circuits? Is it according to the capacity of the wire and the requirements of the instruments or to some other rules? If so, give the principal rules. A. The wiring of a circuit is determined by the current it is to carry, the drop to be allowed in it, etc. The tables of the Underwriters are the general guide for size of wire. You will find Cushing's "Wiring Handbook," price \$1, by mail, a good book on the subject. The edition for 1901 is just out. 2. How many candle power can a 75 watt dynamo, capable at 1,400 revolutions of producing 15 to 20 volts, and at 2,000 revolutions 40 to 50 volts, furnish? Also, how the candle power could be divided up into seven different lamps in order to get best results? A. Two and a half to four watts are to be allowed per candle with small lamps. With 75 watts you can have 20 to 30 candle power. If you have 7 lamps on 20 volts, you will have about 3 volts for a lamp, and you will need 1 candle power lamps, 7 in a series. At 50 volts you can use 7-volt lamps, and can have 2 candle power lamps, in series. 3. Which do you think is the better for both general and accumulator use—the series or the shunt-wound dynamo? A. A series dynamo is not adapted to the work of charging storage cells. Use a shunt-wound machine. 4. Can dry batteries, when exhausted, be used for accumulators; and, if so, how many would be required for the above dynamo? A. We know of no way to use dry cells as accumulators.

(8118) J. K. asks: 1. How can I make a core for an induction coil, for medical use or igniting use? A. The core of an induction coil for any purpose consists of a bundle of iron wires, covered with paraffined paper or other insulation. Upon this the primary coil is wound. Full instructions for winding a medical coil are given in Bottone's "Electrical Instrument-Making," price 50 cents, by mail. 2. Can an incandescent light be produced without a dynamo; and, if so, how? A. Yes; a small lamp may be lighted by a primary battery. 3. How can I construct a small electric motor for running small machinery? A. Follow the directions given in the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN SUPPLEMENT, 641, 759, or 1210, price 10 cents each.

(8119) A. McD. asks: Is there a water motor used to run a dynamo? Is it a success? A. A dynamo can be run by water power as well as by steam. It is necessary to secure steady motion by a steady pressure of the water. For water motors see our advertising columns.

(8120) B. G. J. asks: 1. To change an alternating current that now has a pressure of 50 volts to one of 115 volts, what effect would the increased pressure have on conductor and the rubber insulation, the present conductor having the capacity of 10 amperes? A. No appreciable effect. The difference between the voltages is too small to make any difference. 2. Would it be necessary to increase the size of the conductor? A. No; the conductor could be diminished if any change were to be made in it for the same current. The higher the voltage the smaller the conductor needed to carry a given amount of electricity. 3. Are transformers made to step down 5,500 volts to 115 volts? A. Yes; such transformers would be supplied by any company furnishing current at this pressure.

(8121) A. W. P. asks: 1. What is the object in having a vacuum in coherer tubes? A. It is not necessary to have a vacuum in the coherer tube for wireless telegraphy. 2. What kind of burner should be used with acetylene gas to obtain a hot blue flame for laboratory work? A. A party claims to have a jet which will produce a colorless flame with acetylene and burn safely so long as it is properly used. It is unnecessary to say that mixtures of air and acetylene are explosive, and unsafe. We are not informed how the burner in question is constructed. 3. How do the following rank as insulators: Hard rubber, paraffin wax, paraffin oil, dry shellacked wood, glass? A. We are not able to give any exact figures of relative resistance of the various insulators. Much depends upon the temperature and condition of the substance. All become fairly good conductors as soon as chemical change begins. Glass conducts as an electrolyte as soon as it softens. 4. If the terminals of a 3-inch spark

coil be brought close up to opposite sides of a large cake of paraffin wax 1 inch thick, would there be any appreciable flow of current through the paraffin? A. No. 5. In experimenting with wireless telegraphy and electric wave radiation, could wooden balls, covered with tinfoil, be used in the oscillator in place of the brass spheres usually employed for such purpose? A. It was at first thought that the surface of the balls must be most highly polished for use as transmitters, but this is no longer done. Whether so rough a body as tinfoil would transmit at all or not we cannot say. You can make experiments and find out the result. 6. To what extent will zinc sulphide fluoresce under the influence of Roentgen rays, as compared with calcium tungstate? A. We are not aware that zinc sulphide has been used at all for fluorescent screens. If it is serviceable for that purpose it would drive out calcium tungstate, since it is very much cheaper.

(8122) C. J. B. asks: Is it possible to enlarge a photograph by projection? By this I mean to insert a negative in the camera, behind which there is a source of light, in place of a plate and project the image on a piece of rapid paper. I tried this several times and could get nothing more than reduced silver on the paper. A. It is possible to make an enlargement in the manner described, if properly arranged. The operation must be performed in a room entirely dark, so that no light can strike the paper except that which passes through the negative. The light must be in a box from which no light can escape into the room. A ground glass, or opal glass, or oiled paper must be put between the light and the negative to diffuse the light and prevent a flare spot from forming in the focus of the lens. If a perfectly distinct and sharp image of the negative can be seen on the paper a photographic positive can be made on the paper by giving the proper exposure. An exposure much longer than to daylight will be required, of course, since any artificial light is weaker than daylight. Bromide enlargements are made very often in this way. The best way, however, to make an enlargement is to use a camera with two bellows, with the lens in the middle between the bellows, with a holder for the negative at one end and the plate holder at the other end. The bellows are longer than they are in ordinary cameras, to give room for making enlargements of various sizes. Such cameras are sold under the name of Copying Cameras. An ingenious person can make an attachment for an ordinary camera which will answer the same purpose.

(8123) L. P. R. writes: I wish you would publish through your paper the several causes of knocking in rail joints. A. The knocking at rail joints is caused by the wheels striking a depression at the joint of the rails, made by a separation and the wear made by the wheels rolling over the joints. An additional cause may also come from loose fish plates, which allow a slight depression of the end of the rail that the wheels are passing off, when the wheels will strike the elevated end of the next rail, and thus make a slight depression at the joint.

(8124) H. D. W. asks: 1. Can you give me any formula for an induction coil suitable for running a wireless telegraph? A. A coil is described in SUPPLEMENT 1214, price 10 cents. The coil is put to its strongest spark by adding cells of battery. Six or eight cells should be sufficient for the coil named above. 2. Is it known how Tesla gets his 100-foot spark? A. We presume by one of his oscillators. 3. Would it be any cheaper to make an apparatus like his or to make an induction coil (for 10-inch spark)? A. The coil is much cheaper. A coil giving a 10-inch spark is described in Bonney's "Induction Coils," price \$1, by mail. 4. Can you tell me of any explanatory or descriptive articles on wireless telegraphy? A. See Fahie's "History of Wireless Telegraphy," price \$2, by mail.

## INDEX OF INVENTIONS

For which Letters Patent of the United States were Issued for the Week Ending

MARCH 5, 1901.

AND EACH BEARING THAT DATE.

[See note at end of list about copies of these patents.]

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Adding and printing machine, A. Hoch ..... 669,167  
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