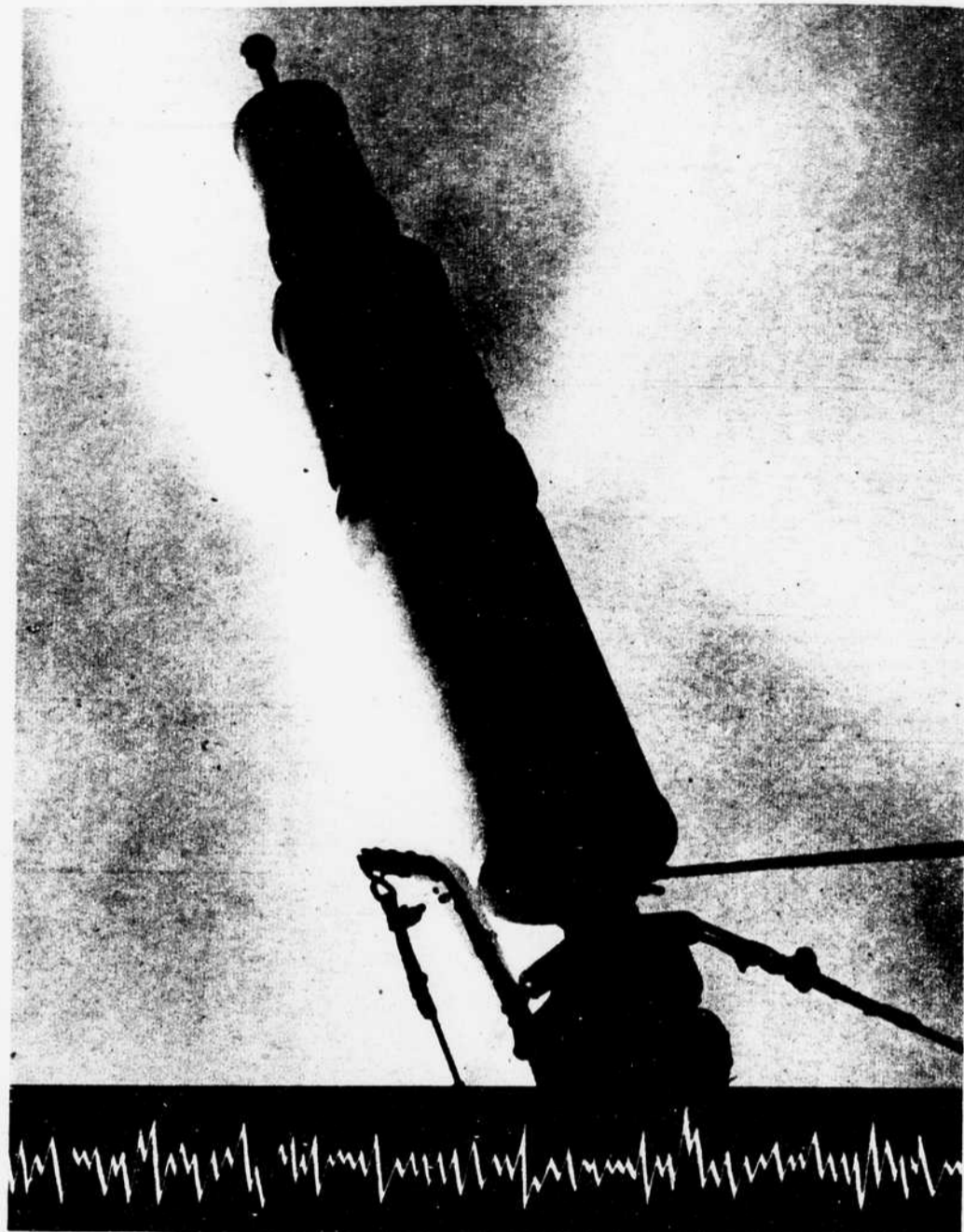




ED LATRAM



EWING GALLOWAY

IS NOISE DRIVING YOU CRAZY?

SINCE eight in the morning, the rumble and shriek of buses, street cars, police whistles, typewriters and factory machines have been pounding in your ears. But at last you're safe in the quiet of your own home, settling back in your easy chair to read the paper. Suddenly, outside your window, traffic stalls, an impatient taxi driver begins to pound his horn. The noise hits you. You straighten up in your chair.

"What's wrong?" your wife asks.

"Just jumpy," you say, forcing a smile.

Yet, whether you know it or not, that noise is no laughing matter. Doctors and psychologists who have made an intensive study of noise in the last few years now realize that it is one of the most serious threats to our health today. They know it damages our bodies like disease. They know it can cause not only deafness, but nervous disorders, called neurasthenia and psychasthenia. They know it can even produce outright insanity.

Consider the impact of that one taxi horn. You may think it only startled you momentarily. Actually, it produced intense pressure on your brain. In a series of experiments at New York's Bellevue Hospital, Dr. Foster Kennedy has proved that a noise as small as the bursting of a paper bag raises the pres-

It's no laughing matter, doctors have discovered, but a serious threat to your health. Here is how noise can hurt you, and how you can help fight it

sure on your brain four times above normal.

That taxi horn, according to studies made at Harvard by Dr. Walter Cannon, may also have upset your digestion by decreasing the contraction of your stomach muscles as much as 37 per cent. For noise is one of man's deepest fears. "This fear," says Dr. Donald Laird, formerly of Colgate, "shows itself in human reactions as increased tension of voluntary muscles, lessened activity in the digestive tract, and diminished secretion of saliva and digestive juices. . ."

Destroys Efficiency

THAT taxi horn also made your heart rate jump. Even when you are asleep, psychologists at the University of Michigan discovered, the noise of a horn blowing has an immediate effect on your heart.

"It is true that we don't awaken at every sound," says William Varley in a report of the National Noise Abatement Council, "but our minds register these sounds, and our brain pressure and nervous tensions increase because of them."

Day after day, noise menaces our health and destroys our working efficiency. There's the man who ran a punch press at a factory; he was always the healthiest-looking man on his block till suddenly they had to send him away for two months' rest in the country. "Fatigue," they called it. But the doctors who examined him knew that the fatigue wasn't from lack of sleep but from the relentless noise of factory machines, eating away at his nerves.

There's the dignified business executive who was never known to lose his temper or

even raise his voice. Then one night, when his neighbor's radio had been blaring for three hours, the dignified executive went next door, rang the doorbell, and without a word proceeded to kick the radio to pieces. The noise had finally become too much for him to stand.

Long and painful noise is dangerous because our ears and nervous systems weren't made to take this kind of battering. For centuries, we lived in quiet. Now, with machines all around us, our nervous systems face the continual struggle of adjustment to sounds we instinctively hate.

It all adds up to a blunt warning that noise can bring us nervous and physical exhaustion, similar to the "combat fatigue" of the war.

Dr. Edward Podolsky carries the warning even further. "It is not an exaggeration at all," he points out, "to say that often cases of insanity are caused by nervous systems which cannot adjust themselves to the constant bombardment of noise." He cites two recent cases. In one city, a woman confined to a wheel chair by rheumatism, was driven into a frenzy by the constant blare of radios from surrounding apartments, and finally wheeled herself over the window ledge to her death. In France, an apartment-house super-

by Lawrence Lader