

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

**A Little Knowledge** Few remarks are either more banal or more true than "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing."

One of the best examples of this eternal verity which has come to the attention of THE BULLETIN recently is contained in a pamphlet distributed by a leading Chicago milk company. Under "Handy Hints for the Home" this publication tells the housewife how to clean her drain pipes as follows:

"Make your own solution. Mix a pound of caustic potash in three quarts of water; pour liberal quantities into the drain pipe boiling hot. Do not make the mistake of using caustic soda, for in combination with grease this makes an insoluble soap."

Possibly the first reaction of most chemists to this is amusement at the idea of insoluble soda soaps.

However, on second thought one is apt to be perturbed rather than amused at the idea of telling a housewife to make a boiling hot solution from one pound of caustic potash and three quarts of water without any detailed instructions or the mention of any precautions. In many cases even a chemist's wife might be expected to proceed by gaily splashing a pound of caustic into an aluminum saucepan of boiling water with results possibly disastrous to both saucepan and housewife.

The modern tendency to over-simplify science in order to explain its mysteries to the public may be open to criticism. It tends to make pamphlet writers unconscious of their own ignorance.

### HANS TROPSCH

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nection with this synthesis, such as gas purification, were also investigated.

"In Prague the Coal Research Institute was constructed according to my plans.

"In 1927 I accepted an invitation of the American Chemical Society to its Institute of Chemistry at State College, Pa., where I gave some lectures on the synthesis of hydrocarbons and other problems in coal chemistry. At the Coal Conference in Pittsburgh in 1931 I delivered a lecture on "Catalysts in High-

Pressure Hydrogenation.

"1931 to the present, professor at Armour Institute lecturing on "Catalysis," and also carrying on researches for the Universal Oil Products Company."

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THE BULLETIN quotes from The Hexagon's comment on the Alpha Chi Sigma Conclave at Turkey Run:

"The attendance was: members, 44; wives, sweethearts, etc. 49; total, 93."

Are Chemists bigamists or prospective bigamists or does the "etc." explain the situation in some subtle way?