Flow of Liquid Helium II

A SURVEY of the various properties of liquid helium II has prompted us to investigate its viscosity more carefully. One of us[1] had previously deduced an upper limit of 10^{-5} C.G.S. units for the viscosity of helium II by measuring the damping of an oscillating cylinder. We had reached the same conclusion as Kapitza in the letter above; namely, that due to the high Reynolds number involved, the measurements probably represent non-laminar flow.

The present data were obtained from observations on the flow of liquid helium II through long capillaries. Two capillaries were used; the first had a circular bore of radius 0·05 cm. and length 130 cm. and drained a reservoir of 5·0 cm. diameter; the second was a thermometer capillary 93·5 cm. long and of elliptical cross-section with semi-axes 0·001 cm. and 0·002 cm., which was attached to a reservoir of 0·1 cm. diameter. The measurements were made by raising or lowering the reservoir with attached capillary so that the level of liquid helium in the reservoir was a centimetre or so above or below that of the surrounding liquid helium bath. The rate of change of level in the reservoir was then determined from the cathetometer eye-piece scale and a stop-watch; measurements were made until the levels became coincident. The data showing velocities of flow through the capillary and the corresponding pressure difference at the ends of the capillary are given in the accompanying table and plotted on a logarithmic scale in the diagram.

Capillary I		Capillary II			
$T = 1·07°$ K.		$T = 1·07°$ K.		$T = 2·17°$ K.	
Velocity (cm./sec.)	Pressure (dynes)	Velocity (cm./sec.)	Pressure (dynes)	Velocity (cm./sec.)	Pressure (dynes)
13·9	183·5	8·35	402	0·837	36·6
11·5	154·5	6·92	218	0·757	31·3
10·3	127·7	6·88	143	0·715	26·1
9·0	105·0	6·30	101	0·685	21·1
8·2	83·5	6·05	56	0·655	16·4
7·5	65·7	5·55	30	0·609	12·1
6·9	49·3	4·70	11·3	0·570	8·3
6·1	34·1	4·39	9·2	0·525	4·3
5·2^4	20·3	3·92	13·0	0·433	0·9
4·5^5	15·2	2·88	7·2		

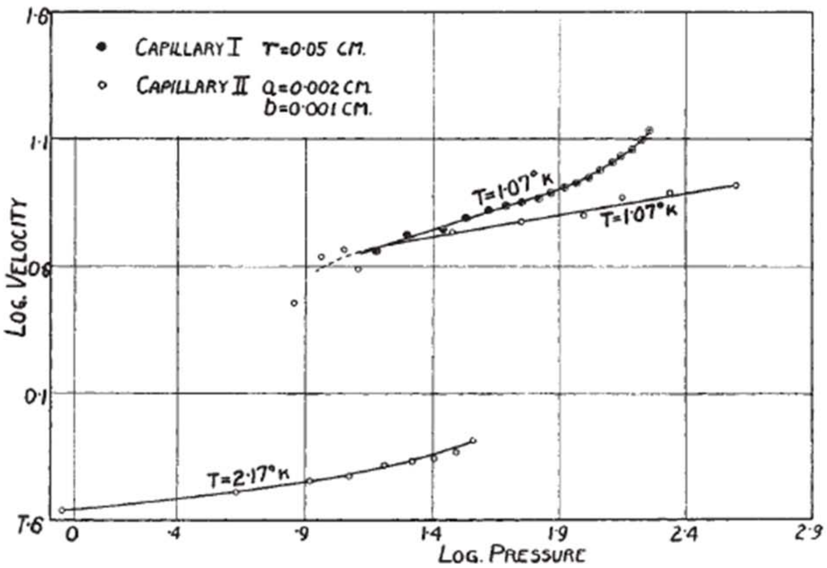
The following facts are evident:

(*a*) The velocity of flow, q, changes only slightly for large changes in pressure head, p. For the smaller capillary, the relation is approximately $p \propto q^6$, but at the lowest velocities an even higher power seems indicated.

(*b*) The velocity of flow, for given pressure head and temperature, changes only slightly with a change of cross-section area of the order of 10^3.

(*c*) The velocity of flow, for given pressure head and given cross-section, changes by about a factor of 10 with a change of temperature from 1·07° K. to 2·17° K.

(*d*) With the larger capillary and slightly higher velocities of flow, the pressure-velocity relation is approximately $p \propto q^3$, with the power of q decreasing as the velocity is increased.



If, for the purpose of calculating a possible upper limit to the viscosity, we assume the formula for laminar flow, that is, $p \propto q$, we obtain the value $\eta = 4 \times 10^{-9}$ C.G.S. units. This agrees with the upper limit given by Kapitza who, using velocities of flow considerably higher than ours, has obtained the relation $p \propto q^2$ and an upper limit to the viscosity of $\eta = 10^{-9}$ C.G.S. units.

The observed type of flow, however, in which the velocity becomes almost independent of pressure, most certainly cannot be treated as laminar or even as ordinary turbulent flow. Consequently any known formula cannot, from our data, give a value of the 'viscosity' which would have much meaning. It may be possible that the liquid helium II slips over the surface of the tube. In this case any flow method would be incapable of showing the 'viscous drag' of the liquid.

With regard to the suggestion that the high thermal conductivity of helium II might be explained by turbulence, we have calculated that the flow velocity necessary to transport all the heat input over the observed temperature gradient in the Allen, Peierls and Uddin experiments[2] is about 10^4 cm./sec. On the other hand, the greatest flow velocity produced by manipulation and by the pressure difference along the thermal conduction capillary will not be likely to be greater than 50 cm./sec. It seems, therefore, that undamped turbulent motion cannot account for an appreciable part of the high thermal conductivity which has been observed for helium II.

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[1] Burton, E. F., NATURE, 135, 265 (1935).
[2] Allen, Peierls and Uddin, NATURE, 140, 62 (1937).

Some Experiments at Radio Frequencies on Supraconductors

MEASUREMENTS were made on an extruded tin wire carrying an alternating current of a frequency of about 200 kilocycles per second superposed upon a direct current. The resulting magnetic field at the surface of the wire was thus caused to pulsate cyclically.