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Curious Facts About Needles.

As matter of facts, the art of needle making was kept secret until about 1650, when it was revealed by Christopher Greening. In the little town of Redditch, a few miles from Birmingham, the needle-makers still ply their trade for all the world. Twenty thousand people make over a hundred millions of needles a year. From the ugly pig of iron to the fairy-like needles are manifold processes, but probably the drilling of the eye is the most interesting of all. The experts can easily perforate a hair, and thread it with its own end. The steel wire is cut into the length of a bristle, and the needles are born as twins, heads together, feet furthest apart. In the old days the end was sharpened at a cost of life that made this industry more deadly than war. The "grinders asthma" by which strong men's lungs were inwardly ground to pieces by inhaled particles of steel, slew tens of thousands of strong men. Now, a blast of air away from the grindstone makes a grinder's life a first-class risk for insurance companies. Tempering, annealing, and polishing are all worth seeing in the process.

So easily and cheaply can English needles be made and exported, that on our American tariff needles stand on the free list. We have no hand-needle industry to be protected. We still depend on John Bull and the gentleman who wears the spiked helmet.

But do not our Yankees, who invent, who harness the river, the lightning, and the child of wedded fire and water to do their work, make any needles?

Yes; for it was the Yankee who made the needle turn a somersault. All the world since the first fig-leaf sewers thread the needle in one fashion. It was the Yankee who discovered that it was threaded at the wrong end. He declared the business end of a needle to be, like that of a bee, farthest from its head. Either Elias Howe, or the other man, who did not win the lawsuit, was the first man who, like the hero in Greek mythology, held the "eye" in his hand and put it where he would. He drilled the needle and inserted the thread at the other end, and set it in arms of steel, multiplying its potency. As Americans gave the world the sewing-machine and a new kind of needles, so they manufacture this sort and this only. At Springfield, Massachusetts, the National Needle Company make and finish every year thirty million machine needles. Prussia, the great War Power, put a spike on her helmet and a needle in her gun, and with the latter humbled Austria. The United States, which, as President Arthur declared, is the great Pacific Power, put her needle in frame and treadle to lighten toil and clothe the naked. Probably there is a true parable here.

"As naked as a needle" is an old proverb, yet, though nude and limbless the needle has features and anatomy. Yet all the world does not see eye to eye, as their terms and description show. Missionaries who translate the gospel, in which a camel and a needle a rich man and the kingdom of heaven, meet only to separate, must keep their own eyes open. The translator of the Coreans New Testament had to write, "It is easier for a camel to go through the ear of a needle." And this though the Coreans, like the Japanese and unlike the Chinese, wear no ear-rings. The ear of the needle! Ha! hal what gossip could the steel give to a tongue, had it one?

In English literature how often the needle shines! The open book of London street names—a volume of English literature in itself—tells of Threadneedle Street. There were three needles in the arms of the Needle-makers' Company of London, but "the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street" is the Bank of England. All England took up Cobbett's epithet, which stuck to this Mrs. Partington of his time. Does not Dr. Marigold call a bank-note "a silver curl-paper which I myself took off the shining locks of the ever beautiful lady?" From great Shakespeare to the poet of "Sunset and Evening Star," the shining inch or two is often mentioned. Even in politics and controversy an act of Parliament is only "the needle to draw in the thread" of the new measure. Proverbs also and folk-lore locate the needle in strange places. Was the swain popping the question when the haystack was made the symbol of useless search? Is there more of paganism than of Christianity in the name "devil's needle" given to the dragon-fly? Are not our first parents and their limitations pictured in the term bestowed upon the thorns and fibres of the yuccaplant, of "Adam's needle and thread," while another velvety leaf is named "Adam's flannel"?

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ON THE VERGE OF THE UNKNOWN.

An Experiment That Makes Us Ask, "What is Coming?"

Mr. W. H. Preece, chief engineer and electrician to the postoffice, has put up a wire a mile long on the coast near Lavernock and a shorter one on Flatholm, a little island three miles off in the Bristol channel. He fitted the latter wire with a "sounder" to receive messages, and sent a message through the former from a powerful telephonic generator. That message on the mainland was distinctly heard on the island, though nothing connected the two, or, in other words, the possibility of a telephone between places unconnected by wire was conclusively established.

There is a possibility here of inter-planetary communication, a good deal more worthy attention than any scheme for making gigantic electric flashes. We do not know if we can communicate by telephone through the ether to New York or Melbourne with or without cables, but we do know that, if we cannot, the fault is in our generators and sounders, and not in any prohibitory natural law.

Will our habitual readers bear with us for a moment as we wander into another, and, as many of them will think, a suprasensual region? The thought in a man's brain which causes him to advance his foot must move something in doing it, or how could it be transmitted down that five or six feet of distance? If it moves a physical something, internal to the body, why should it not move also something external, a wave, as we all agree to call it, which on another mind prepared to receive it—fitted with a sounder in fact—will make an impact having all the effect in the conveyance of suggestion, or even of facts, of the audibility of words? Why, in fact, if one who can talk to another without connection, save through ether, should not mind talk to mind without any "wire" at all.

None of us understands accurately, or even as yet approximately, what the conditions are, but many of us know for certain that they have occasionally, and by what we call accident, been present to particular individuals, and that, when present, the communication is completed without cables, and mind speaks to mind independently of any machinery not existing within itself.

Why, in the name of science, is that more of a "miracle"—that is, an occurrence prohibited by immutable laws—than the transmission of Mr. Preece's message from Lavernock to Flatholm?—London Spectator.

A Rainmaker to Be Depended Upon.

Frederick W. Root is a good deal of a hoodoo. He gracefully acknowledges the charge himself. It is a singular fact that whenever he appears to deliver a lecture the rain begins to fall. He is a good a rain producer that he has seriously considered the idea of utilizing his talents for that purpose in the arid regions of the west.

While at Silver Lake Assembly, in New York state, he delivered a lecture on musical tastes or a kindred subject. He had delivered the same lecture a half dozen times in the west, and the refreshing shower came along each time before he had half finished it.

But when he reached the Silver Lake Assembly grounds the sky was bright, and Mr. Root congratulated himself upon having shaken off his evil spirit. He mounted the rostrum, cleared his throat, and when he had got as far as "Friends and fellow citizens" the rumble of distant thunder grated harshly upon his ears. Yet he gathered up his courage and went on, and before he had delivered a quarter of his lecture the rain came down in torrents.

"Indeed," said Mr. Root, "I never saw it rain so hard before." After the address a witty young Chicago woman who knew of the hoodoo business suggested, for the convenience of the public, that next year Mr. Root should write a lecture upon a dry subject.—Chicago Post.

Burial Customs in Kentucky.

In the mountains of Kentucky when a husband dies his funeral sermon is not preached until after the death of the wife, nor that of a wife until the husband also is dead. Then a preacher is sent for, friends and neighbors are called in, and the respect is paid to both together.

More peculiar is the custom of having the services for one person repeated, so that the dead get their "funerals" preached several times months and years after their burial. I heard the pitiful story of two sisters who had their mother's "funeral" preached once every summer as long as they lived.

In strange contrast with this regard for ceremonial observances is their neglect of the graves of their beloved, which they do not seem at all to visit when once closed or to decorate with those symbols of affection which are the common indications of bereavement.—Blue Grass Region of Kentucky.

Photography and Medical Diagnosis.

It seems there must be added to the already numerous applications of photography that of an agent in medical diagnosis. A Berlin lady was having her photograph taken. The face in the first negative came out covered with spots. Examination showing nothing abnormal in the sitter; a second was taken with the same result, so it could not be the fault of the plates.

What was it? In a week the poor woman died of smallpox. The cleverest physician could have perceived nothing, but the sensitive film of the photographic plate had detected an actinic alteration of the skin where the pustules were to develop.—London Tit-Bits.

Polliteness and Rent.

The reason why it is the custom for an inquiring person in a New York tenement house to interrogate the residents of the top floor first is because he receives plenty of polite attention, whereas if one begins at the lower floor and proceeds upward, he will get short answers and little satisfaction. The top floor tenants pay the smallest rents.—New York Sun.