

THE LIGHTNING ROD

Remains as Much an Article of Utility as it Was Years Ago.

BUT 92 FACTORIES DWINDLE TO 4.

Consolidation and Railways Take the Rods Off the Country Roads.

THOUGH THE OUTPUT IS ENORMOUS

Twenty years ago there were 92 lightning rod factories in the United States. To-day there are but three, and those doing a trifle better than the nineteenth century.

So says a Chicago paper that ought to know what it is talking about. The quotation was shown, however, to Mr. Hum, of this city, and he remarked: "That man must be a great scientist. Our factory last year sold 40,000 feet of rod, and there were 150,000 feet of it retailed here."

The topic is one not only of scientific and life and property preserving interest, but it is also of interest as showing the tendency of manufacturing and commercial interests toward consolidation for cheapening cost of products and increasing profits at the expense of small capitalists, who must either get out of the way or be squeezed out.

It appears that the lightning rod business has been largely caused by the almost entire disappearance of the wagons that once carried the rods through the country. Thirty years ago a person driving through the country would feel as though something were missing if he did not meet a lightning-rod vender. They were harbingers of summer; but they have been effectually disappeared from view as the yearly migration of wild pigeons, a few years before the war.

It is said the 100 factories or so that 30 years ago gave employment to an army of distributors, have been consolidated until there are but four left; but these can make as much rod as could the 100, and since railroads have been built within a few miles of every district east of the Mississippi, the army of deliverers has been forced to hunt other employment. The rods are

now kept in stock by the hardware stores, and can be had as readily as a spade and shovel. The agricultural implement in modern southern states, the business makes but little show of consequence in this section is explainable by the now largely diffused knowledge that by the great multiplication of conductors the accumulation of opposite electricities in quantities sufficient to produce destructive discharges is prevented, and thus it is that houses in cities are rarely struck, or vessels where many are lying together in the docks. Isolated houses are more commonly the objects of lightning rods.

Some years ago a writer, advancing this hypothesis, argued further that the building of railroads and telegraph lines had so conducted to the multiplication of conductors that the accumulation of opposite electricities in quantities sufficient to produce destructive discharges was prevented thereby the fluid being so greatly diffused that its concentration to the extent known in former days was rendered impossible.

It is certain that we have not the fear of lightning that people had 30 years or more ago; and it is not familiar with it that has freed continents of fear. It is not the feeling to grow. It still returns to be fooled with as strenuously as in the days when Franklin was making his experiments, and in the absence of complete proof, or vessels which bear the inscription: "Eripuit coelum fulmen."

As the honor of this country is bound up with the lightning rod, it is somewhat rash, in the absence of complete proof, to characterize it as "the biggest humbug of the nineteenth century," especially when it has received not only the approval of European as well as American scientists, but of German insurance companies, who

HAVE PROCURED STATISTICS on the subject which strongly support the opinion that rods offer a great degree of protection against lightning. The statistics show not only that rods have been used for many years, but that the number of strikes has been reduced to a minimum.

The security afforded by the lightning rod has been more or less recognized for many years; but the fact that within the memory of man some people thought it a sin to utilize it, shows what slow progress science formerly made against prejudice.

Unless raised in a school, one can realize that the majority of people 30 years ago recognized thunder as the voice of God, as did the man of Uz, vide, Job, xxviii. This idea was as firmly fixed in the mind of the majority of people as the fact of Greece and Rome that Jupiter tilted the earth with thunderbolts when things were not running to suit him, and the story told of the man who was struck by lightning and paid money toward the building of a church, but

REFUSED TO CONTRIBUTE for the purpose of purchasing lightning rods, on the ground that, if the Almighty would strike him, he would not care to be struck. This is a fact, and it is a body's business, simply reflected a large portion of public opinion at that time.

Doubtless, there are myriads of grown people in this country who do not know that, in 1853, for a preacher to wear a moustache was regarded as a sin, by many good people living between Pittsburg and New York. It is a fact, and it is a body's business, simply reflected a large portion of public opinion at that time.

Removal Sale. Shoes can be bought cheaper now than ever before. Every pair of shoes is subject to a cash discount of at least 10 per cent. Many shoes below cost.

Compelled to Move. Our store April 1, and will give at least 10 per cent discount for cash on any pair of shoes. Many lines below cost.

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A HEAVY SHIPMENT.

Freight Agents After a Big Contract for the West at Johnston.

THAT MAHARNEKE TRIAL.

Printed Testimony Will be in the Hands of the Board at Noon To-Day—A Decision Expected by Thursday.

The famous trial of Maharneke, Hospital Steward of the penitentiary, charged by Convict McPhillany with bribery, cruelty and general corruption, has been finally reduced to black and white by Stenographer E. J. Donnelly and his three lady assistants.

The books, comprising several volumes, with a total of over 600 pages, have been neatly bound in black, and will be duly presented to either Secretary Reed or President George A. Kelly, of the board, at noon to-day.

The printed testimony shows some peculiar things, not the least of which is that the testimony of Maharneke, the accused, covers one-fifth of the total number of pages. This may be because he was so constantly interrupted by the accuser, by the board, and by the ladies and their counsel, present; but on the other hand, the testimony taken consists of more solid reading, and is less broken up by questions and answers, than nine out of ten cases that pass through Donnelly's hands. This can be attributed to the wide latitude given witnesses, who were allowed to wander on in their own way, unless something entirely irrelevant was dragged in, when they were brought up with a sharp turn.

A glance over the sheets indicates that the newspaper reports of the trial were pretty correct, not an item or "point" that had been either misconstrued or misrepresented.

President Kelly said that the board would be able to give a decision within a day or so after the printed material was in their hands. He said that he thought that railroads should be restricted to privileges enjoyed by citizens.

Representative Dravo, of Beaver, said there were adverse influences at work, and the legislature would get the Legislative Committee to report on the bill that was to remedy certain evils. A committee was appointed to go to Harrisburg to watch the legislature, and the Chamber of Commerce noted long delayed silver brick was placed on exhibition, and the Chamber of Commerce will bid \$100 for it when it is put up at auction for the benefit of the cyclone sufferers. Its intrinsic value is about \$48.

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THE PITTSBURG DISPATCH BRANCH OFFICES.

For the accommodation of the public, Branch Offices have been established at the following places, where Want, For Sale, To Let, and other transient advertisements will be received up to 9 P. M. for insertion next morning.

Advertisements are prepared except where noted on this page. Classified advertisements on this page carry per line for each week, and none taken for less than fifty cents.

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WANTED—MISCELLANEOUS.

WANTED TO BUY A GROCERY: STATE location, amount stock, particulars generally. Write to J. H. HERRON, 104 Fourth St., Pittsburgh, Pa.

FOR SALE—IMPROVED REAL ESTATE.

FOR SALE—TWO CHOICE LOTS ON STANLEY AVENUE, near Hillside, each 60x120 feet. One lot is a choice building lot, the other is a choice lot for a garage. Price \$10,000. Call on J. H. HERRON, 104 Fourth St., Pittsburgh, Pa.

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