

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 post-office, has put up a wire a mile long on the coast near Laverock 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 suprasensuous 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 law—than the transmission of Mr. Preece's message from Laverock 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 so 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 they 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 postules were to develop.—London Tit-Bits.

Politeness 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.

A LITERAL MINDED MAN.

An Interested Spectator Who Took a Political Story in Good Faith.

The most curious person in the audience of a story teller is the literal minded man. When General Dix ran for governor there was great discussion as to his age. It was one of the controversies of the canvass. His opponents claimed that he was too old to fulfill the functions of the office. Singularly enough, the biographical dictionaries differed about ten years. I was making a speech at Watertown to a very big audience. I was running at that time as a liberal Republican for lieutenant governor upon the same ticket with Francis Kernan. It was an immense outdoor audience. In front of me stood a man who watched me during the three hours of that speech for the purpose of catching me on some material point.

I finally took up the question of General Dix's age, gave the dates of the various biographical dictionaries and encyclopedias, and based a theory on how old he must have been in the war of 1812, where he was a lieutenant, and finally said that the only really authentic data had been revealed by some recent researches in the colonial records of Massachusetts. It had been discovered that when the pilgrim fathers landed on Plymouth rock they found General Dix standing on that historic spot and shouting that unless they made him a justice of the peace he would go over and join the Indians, the point of which was that the general had changed his politics several times, and every time he got an office.

My critical friend saw his opportunity and grasped it at once. He sprang up with a shout that could be heard to the Canadian border. "Mr. Depew, that is a lie!" I looked at him for a moment to see whether he had swallowed the bait, and found that he had taken it in hook and line, bob and sinker, whole and all. Then I stepped to the front of the platform and said with great emphasis and indignation, "Sir, I have told that historic anecdote from Montauk point to Niagara falls to hundreds of thousands of the intelligent and educated people of this great commonwealth, and you are the only man who ever had the audacity to deny it."

"It ain't true, Mr. Depew," he repeated, "because that happened more than 250 years ago." I was told when in Watertown last fall that although this happened in 1873 that man had never been able to come into town since.—Chauncey M. Depew in New York World.

The Waverly Oaks.

The great oaks at Waverly, Mass., are survivals of an oak forest that must have existed in that region, according to the geologists and students of trees, as far back as the Tenth century. They bear every evidence of great age, and an elm tree in the neighborhood, now almost dismantled, with its great limbs lying on the ground and nearly all of its branches decayed, is the most venerable object in the line of trees that can probably be displayed in New England. It is well worth a visit to Waverly just to see this venerable elm. It is immense in the size of its trunk, and its dignity in decay is very impressive. The dozen oak trees in the neighborhood are of the sort that attain a very great age and that maintain their virility unimpaired.

We know of only on other oak tree in New England that can be compared with them. That is located in Ipswich, and is larger and more venerable apparently than any of the Waverly oaks, and that and the Waverly oaks, we are glad to know, have been inspected by the state park commissioners and are likely to be preserved. It is worth one's while to see and study these majestic oaks. They are seen to great advantage in the winter, when their rugged limbs are bare and their immense strength is revealed, and in summer, when they are covered with foliage, they are objects of wonderful beauty.—Boston Herald.

The Poetry of Shopping.

The poetry of shopping comes in with those shoppers who are starved for excitement, variety and beauty at home. It is not lawful; they have no right to do it; but they have no society to satisfy a hunger for the beautiful with jewels and fine dresses on others if not on themselves. They cannot afford the theaters; they go to the shops. They look at the laces and long; they go to the embroidery counters and fancy; they educate themselves in the matter of india shawls; they seek the silkroom, brilliant with gas lights and electric lights, and look at brocades fit for the court of a princess, at silks whose flamboyant scarlets burn in the illumination, whose tender blue is the blue of spring skies half robbed of rain, whose green is the breaking wave of the sea, whose violet is the hue of mountains far away in autumn mists, and they picture themselves or those they love robed and radiant in these tissues. And if the poor shopman is weary when they go away, they themselves are refreshed for a long season of further denial and renunciation.—Harper's Bazar.

A Medical Decision in 1715.

In 1715 a cellar digger having been stifled at Jens, the medical faculty of the university decided that the cause was not the direct action of the devil, but a deadly gas. Thereupon Professor Loescher, of the University of Wittenberg, entered a solemn protest, declaring that the decision of the medical faculty was "only a proof of the lamentable license which has so taken possession of us, and which if we are not earnestly on our guard will finally turn away from us the blessing of God."—Dr. Andrew D. White in Popular Science Monthly.

Strategy.

Small Boy—Mamma wants you to send her up two barrels of those apples she was lookin' at. Dealer—All right, sonny. "Say, couldn't you pour the two barrels into one big barrel?" "Eh? What for?" "Then she couldn't get it through the door of the lock closet."—Good News.

A New Photographic Process.

An effective and greatly simplified method of producing a photographic representation in the form of an intaglio engraving, or, as it is generally called, a "photogravure," is being introduced. The new method is intended to reduce the time occupied in the process, which usually takes many days to a few hours, and to dispense entirely with the supplementary aid of the skillful engraver. Its essential feature lies in the fact that the picture, instead of being obtained from a graduated depth of the engraving, is produced from a sunken surface of uniform depth, the gradations of light, half tone and shade being effected by minute lines and stipples of varying thickness, but of uniform distance apart from center to center.

The picture is made up of equidistant stipples, varying from a microscopic point up to a size where they coalesce in a solid black, the half tones consisting of stipples about 1-400th of an inch in diameter. If a coarse stipple is used the effect varies from that of mezzotint and approaches more nearly that of a line of engraving, the light shades being made up of perceptible lines and stipples, like the effects of a steel or copper plate engraving of equal texture.—Pittsburg Dispatch.

A Comparison of Birth Rates.

There are 38,000,000 people in France, and during the last five years the increase in population has only been 121,000. In 55 departments out of a total of 86 there is actually a diminution. It is not due to any high average of deaths, although infant mortality is higher than it should be. It is due to the small number of children born. The average birth rate has fallen to 21 or 22 per 1,000 inhabitants. This is a phenomenally low rate when contrasted with 38 to 39 in Germany, 35 or 36 in Italy, 33 in England and 30 in Switzerland. The percentage is lower in France than in any other country; so that there is a rapid increase in rival countries and France remains stationary.—Chicago Herald.

A Monument to Loyola.

Ignatius Loyola's followers have erected a monument to his memory over the spot where the fortunes of war decided that Canada should be a free British country. "The Jesuits' Retreat" stands in the city of Quebec on the ground consecrated by the blood of English soldiers, and in front of it has been placed a colossal statue of the founder of the order.—Toronto Mail.

Whittier's Resignation.

Here is a beautiful extract of one of Whittier's letters to Elizabeth Stuart Phelps:

I have just been reading Canon Farrar's sermons on the "Eternal Hope," and I agree with him in the title of one of them, that "Life is Worth Living," even if one can't sleep the biggest part of it away. Thee and I get more out of it, after all, than these sleek heads I folk who sleep o' night. I quite sympathize with thee in what thee say of the "causes." Against all my natural inclinations I have been fighting for them half my life. "Woe is me, my mother!" I can say with the old prophet, "who has borne me, a man of strife and contention." I have suffered dreadfully from coarseness, self seeking, vanity and stupidity among associates, as well as from the coldness, open hostility, and, worst, the ridicule of the outside world; but I row see that it was best, and that I needed it all.—Century.

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