

FREAKS OF LIGHTNING

Not Yet Understood by Science—Its Action as an Explosive.

So mysterious and little understood is electricity even now that it is so widely utilized for mechanical purposes, that its vagaries in nature excite the utmost interest.

The question recently discussed by Italian scientists, as to whether a bird could be struck by lightning seems to be answered in the affirmative by the destruction of a whole flock of wild geese on April 30 last.

Inasmuch as 200 people are killed every year by lightning in the United States special protection for the person is surely called for.

Lightning does occasionally strike twice in the same place. A few years ago St. Aloysius' Church in Washington suffered. A flash ran down the lightning rod to within twenty feet of the ground.

The introduction of lightning rods in Roman Catholic countries was strongly opposed on religious grounds. Pious persons declared that the devices were of the devil, and called them "heretic rods."

As to the nature of phenomena of this sort science knows almost nothing. Such globular lightning is seen quite often, but nobody can guess how it is formed.

The Scientific American tells how to keep cider sweet. It says that pure, sweet cider, that is arrested in the process of fermentation before it has become acetic acid, or even alcohol, and with carbonic acid worked out, is one of the most delicious beverages and gives the following scientific method of treating it to preserve its sweetness.

When the saccharine matters, by fermentation, are being converted

into alcohol, if a bent tube be inserted into the bung with the other end into a pail of water, to allow the carbonic acid gas evolved to pass off without admitting any air into the barrel, a beverage will be obtained that is fit nectar for the gods.

A handy way is to fill your cask nearly up to the wooden faucet when the cask is rolled so the bung is down. Get a common rubber tube and slip it over the end in the pail.

Then turn the plug so the interior of the cask can have communication with the pail. After the water in the pail ceases to bubble, bottle or store your cider away.

Not Appreciated.

A Detroitier who spent the night at a small stage town in Montana and received his bill after breakfast was more than surprised to find the amount \$13.00.

"Provisions must be pretty high out here?" he queried as he counted out the money.

"Well, no. Purvishuns are both plenty and cheap," was the reply of the complacent landlord.

"Then hired help must be very expensive?"

"Not nigh as expensive as last year."

"Maybe they charge a man \$5 for a bed out in this country?" persisted the Detroitier in search of information.

"That would be highway robbery," blandly replied the landlord as he pocketed the cash.

"Well, is this bill for three meals and lodging, then?"

"Great dogs! but what do you take me for?" exclaimed the host in great surprise. "Why, no, of course not!"

"But I had no extra as I remember."

"You didn't. Didn't you hear that row on the sidewalk?"

"Yes, I heard a row."

"And wasn't a man shot right at the door?"

"Why, I heard a shot, but made no inquiries."

"And hadn't there two dead men lying along the barn fur you to look at as you go out?"

"I presume so, but what has all this to do with the size of my bill?" queried the Detroitier.

"Everything, sir! The boys knew you was a stranger to the country and got up a row for your benefit. It's \$5 hotel bill and \$8.50 for the kitchen, and if you are the man to kick on that you'd better head away fur home and a one-hoss town!"

Youngful Heroism.

A few weeks ago the Transcript recorded the award of a medal by the Massachusetts Humane Society to a girl of 7 in Lynn who had saved from drowning another lass of the same age.

Notable as the deed was, it is interesting to hear that such incidents are common, though they have not always commanded recognition from the Humane Soc. etc.

A correspondent to Essex sends us two items which show that the nobler qualities of human nature may be developed, or, at least, manifested at a very early age.

About a year ago some boys were playing on the railroad when an express train came along. The whistle was sounded and all but one little fellow got off in ample time.

The one left being but 3 years old, and, of course, unable to appreciate his danger, one of the lads, 10 years of age, jumped for his companion and pulled him away just as the pilot of the engine brushed against his clothing.

The engineer said, "When I saw the bigger boy jump for the smaller one I thought that there would be two killed out right instead of one."

On a recent winter day a boy of six fell through the ice, and another boy, aged 10, catching him by the collar, tried to pull him out, but he was not strong enough, so he called for another boy, a lad of but 8 years, and by his help they saved their companion.

They were all in a peculiarly perilous position on, and the wonder is that any of the three escaped alive, yet with the indifference to danger characteristic of most boys when their sympathies are aroused, they spoke of the venture as though there were nothing remarkable about it.—Boston Transcript.

He Wanted an Easier Way.

"One of the best salesmen we have on the road, if not the very best," said a well-known wholesale dealer, "came to us ten years ago from the backwoods, and a greener fellow you never saw. I met him the first time he came into the store, and gave him his start. He told me about the kind of country he lived in and its remoteness, and said he wanted to sell from house to house, but he didn't want to be a common peddler.

ROMAN SACRIFICES.

Red-Haired Pupils Went Up in the Spring to Encourage the Crops.

We learn from Festus that the Romans sacrificed red-haired puppies in spring, in the belief that the crops would thus grow ripe and ruddy; and there can be little doubt that these puppies, like the lamb sacrifice at Holme and King's Teign-ton, were a substitute for an original human victim.

The famous Gardens of Adonis were baskets or pots filled with earth in which wheat, barley and flowers were sown at the time when the women were mourning over the dead Adonis. To this day, in Sicily, at the approach of Easter, the women sow wheat, lentils, and caryac seed in plates, which are kept in the dark and watered every two days.

In one of the chapels dedicated to Osiris in the great temple of Isis, at Philae, the dead body of Osiris is represented with stalks of corn springing from it, and a priest is watering the stalks from a pitcher. Mr. Fraser suggests that the legend of the mangled remains of the god being scattered up and down the land may be a reminiscence of the custom of staving a human victim and distributing his flesh or scattering his ashes over the fields to fertilize them.

Indeed, Manetho tells us that the Egyptians used to burn their red-haired men and scatter their ashes with winnowing fans.—Fortnightly Review.

Catch Questions.

If a goose weighs ten pounds and a half its own weight, what is the weight of the goose? Who has not been tempted to reply on the instant fifteen pounds—the correct answer being, of course, twenty pounds.

Indeed, it is astonishing what a very simple query will sometimes catch a wise man napping. Even the following have been known to succeed.

How many days would it take to cut up a piece of cloth fifty yards long, one yard being cut off every day?

A snail climbing up a post twenty feet high ascends five feet every day and slips down four feet every night. How long will the snail take to reach the top of the post?

A wise man having a window one yard high and one yard wide, requiring more light, enlarged his window to twice its former size, yet the window was still only one yard high and one yard wide. How was this done?

This a catch question in geometry, as the preceding were catch questions in arithmetic. The window was diamond-shaped at first, and was afterwards made square.

As to the two former, perhaps it is scarcely necessary seriously to point out that the answer to the first is not fifty days, but forty-nine; and to the second, not twenty days, but sixteen—since the snail who gains one foot each day for fifteen days, climbs on the sixteenth day to the top of the pole and there remains!

A man walks around a pole, on the top of which is a monkey. As the man moves, the monkey turns on the top of the pole so as still to keep face to face with the man. Query:—When the man has gone around the pole, has he, or has he not, gone around the monkey?

The answer which will occur at first sight to most persons is that the man has not gone around the monkey since he has never been behind it. The correct answer, however, as decided by Knowledge in the pages of which this momentous question has been argued, is that the man has gone around the monkey in going around the pole.

Maple Flooring.

Among the noteworthy features of recent lumber trade development is the rapidly increasing demand for maple flooring. Improvement in the method of manufacture has kept pace with the growth in demand for product; or perhaps it is more exact to say that the recognition of maple flooring has been forced on the attention of consumers by the enterprise of manufacturers in turning out a perfected product and urging it on public attention. A few years ago all the maple flooring used was worked out on orders by a few planing mills. The hardwood dealers carried maple strips in their yards and had them dressed and matched when they happened to receive an order for flooring.

Now great manufacturing plants have been established for the sole purpose of producing maple flooring. Exact, strong, and swift machinery has been invented to work out the stuff. The boring machine has rendered sawing easy, and now comes the end-matching invention.

Maple flooring has come to be regarded as the thing indispensable in most public buildings and is used largely in private dwellings. Such an extent has the demand reached that the larger dealers are obliged to make contracts for millions of feet far in advance of requirement, the same as is done with pine or any other wood of extensive sale any consumption in the building trades and manufacturing.

Railway Accidents in Britain.

The British Board of Trade has issued its report of the railroad accidents which occurred in the United Kingdom in 1893. One thousand and eleven persons were killed and 4,109 injured during the year, a decrease of 119 and 376 respectively as compared with the figures of 1892. Of those killed 106 were passengers, but only seventeen were the victims of accidents to trains, rolling stock, or permanent way, the remainder having succumbed to accidents from other causes; 460 of the victims were railway servants, and of these only ten suffered from mishaps to trains or permanent way. No less than fifty-five persons, apart from passengers and servants, were killed at level crossings, and the trespassers and suicides who perished on the railways numbered 300. Other fatal accidents not classified numbered thirty. Of passengers injured in various ways there were 1,221, while of companies' or contractors' servants there were no less than 2,631. The complement of the list of injured is made up of persons passing over level crossings, trespassers, and would-be suicides. This list of fatal and other accidents, however, is by no means complete, for in addition to eighty persons were killed and 4,687 injured upon the premises of the various companies, though not in connection with the movement of vehicles on the railways. These accidents included kicks from horses, falls from scaffolding, etc.; thus the total number of personal accidents reported during the year amounted to 1,091 persons killed and 8,796 injured.

It Didn't Work.

I was standing before the stamp window at a suburban postoffice the other day, waiting for a woman to get through, that I might invest half a dollar in carmine chromos of our country's paternal. The woman who had the attention of the clerk, had a package upon which two of the adhesive portraits mentioned had been affixed, and she desired to learn if they were sufficient to carry the package on its way. The clerk weighed the parcel and asked if it was a newspaper. "Yes," replied the woman, "a newspaper with a pair of mittens inside." "That makes it merchandise," said the clerk, "it will require four cents more." "I'll not pay it!" she exclaimed. The clerk simply smiled. Meantime the woman fished out four more stamps. "There is no writing in it, is there?" asked the clerk. "Only a short note," says the woman, "as she gently laid the stamps upon her tongue, gum side down. "O, then it will be letter postage," said the clerk, "sixteen cents." "I'll not pay it," ejaculated the woman, grabbing the parcel and starting for the door with an air of outraged innocence. It was a case of ignorance merely. No wrong was intended and it was foolish, therefore, to get angry at herself.—Arkansaw Traveller.

A Giant Walnut Log.

The large walnut log from Leavenworth County, Kan., which attracted so much attention at the World's Fair, will be converted into furniture by a company that bought it from the Kansas commissioners, says the Timbe man. The log was cut from a tree growing in Tonganoxie Township. It cost \$200 to get the log out of the woods. The commissioners paid \$600 for it for World's Fair purposes, and sold it at the close of the Exposition for \$1,200. The tree from which the log was cut was the monarch of Leavenworth County, being seventy-five feet high. The distance from the ground to the first limb was forty-seven feet. Exclusive of the log, the tree yielded two car-loads of lumber. The log was fifteen feet long, seventy-two inches in diameter at the top and eighty-four inches at the butt. It weighed 40,000 pounds and contained 3,500 feet, board measure. People not acquainted in Kansas who visited the Fair could not understand how such a giant grew in that State. The tree, scientists say, was 71 years old when Columbus discovered America. It was stated to be the largest tree of its species in the United States.

His Pint Was Better Than a Pound.

Old sayings are nearly always truthful, but they must be applied with due discretion, as a woman in a little store "down the neck" discovered to her sorrow. An old darkey called one morning to purchase a pound of shot; the storekeeper being out, his wife attempted to serve the customer. She could not find the weights, but being a good housekeeper, she remembered an old saying of frequent use in cookery—"A pint's as good as a pound the world over."

In her dilemma she quoted that saying to the darkey, asking if he would be satisfied to take a pint for a pound. The darkey with wide-awake cunning, snapped at the chance, got his shot, paid for it and hurried out of the store. The woman couldn't account for the sudden hurry of his departure until she with pride related to her husband her happy idea enabling her to get along without weights.—Philadelphia Call.

The best work need not look for common credit.

SWISS OPINION OF AMERICA.

Land of Strange Extremes. Nonsensical Pride and Reckless Money Getting.

A well known Swiss writer, who visited the World's Fair and was then forced to remain here for sometime on account of illness, has joined the long list of foreigners for whom "America" has been a favorite subject for "dissertations." In a recent issue of the Neue Zurichcher Zeitung, one of the most famous Swiss journals, under the headline, "What is America?" he wrote: "America is a land compared with which Europe is only a peninsula; the United States form a country compared with which the European kingdom are pygmies. America is the land of unmeasured distances and dimensions; the land of dollars and electricity; the land where the prairies are more extensive, the rivers mightier, the waterfalls deeper, the bridges longer, the lightning expresses faster, the catastrophes more terrible than in any other country in the world. It is the land where in a single railroad accident—and one occurs every few days—more people lose their lives than in Europe in a whole year. It is the land where the houses are higher, the tallbirds more numerous, the rich richer, the poor poorer, the millions greater, the thieves more daring, the murderers more shameless, the educated fewer, the teeth more generally false, the corsets narrower, the diseases more deadly, corruption more general.

The summers warmer, the winters colder, the fires hotter, the ice thicker, time more precious, the men more nervous, than in any country in our pastoral Europe. It is the land where the old men are younger and the young men older, the negroes blacker, the whites more yellow, than in any other place. It is the land of immeasurable natural wealth. In short, it is the land of extraordinary contrasts, of strange extremes, of nonsensical pride, of reckless money-getting, of senseless care for gain—the land of the colossal and the pyramidal—of course, in the opinion of Americans. How many have gone from our peaceful home to the land of false hopes to seek riches, fortune, and better life, and have been lost—either in the gutters of the great cities or the sands of the prairies? How many have been glad, when poor and deserted and broken in heart and soul, to sail back to their native land?"

Carpeaux's Check.

The sculptor Carpeaux was always a Bohemian, and generally absent-minded. Invited once to the Tuileries by Emperor Napoleon the Third and the Empress Eugenie, he pulled out his pipe after dinner, sipped it, and, discovering that he had no matches, took a scrap of paper, climbed on a chair, and lighted the pipe from the great chandelier above the table. "You don't mind smoking, do you, ma'am?" he said to the Empress. He on e accepted from a rich patron an order to make a sculptured group representing the Cyclops Polyphemus crushing the youth Aias under a rock. Carpeaux had no sooner accepted the commission than he regretted it, for the subject had no fascinations whatever for him. He put the matter off again and again, but was urgently pressed to begin it by his patron. At last, one day, Carpeaux took the impatient patron to his studio and showed him a great, rough block of unformed clay. "There is your group," said the sculptor. "My group? Where?" "Why, this is the rock." "That's all very well, but where is Aias?" "Under the rock—crushed quite out of sight, of course." "But where is Polyphemus?" "Oh, he? Why, do you think he would remain anywhere about after he had done a thing like that?" This was as far as the classical "group" ever got.

One Consolation.

The London newspapers used to make a distinction between a simple notice of a death, for which they charged five shillings, and a brief obituary, for which they demanded seven and sixpence. One day Dr. Thomas Hume called at the office of a morning journal and silently placed upon the counter the announcement of the death of a friend, together with five shillings. The clerk glanced at the paper, tossed it one side, and said, gruffly, "seven and six."

"I have frequently," answered Hume, "had occasion to publish these simple notices, and I have never before been charged more than five shillings."

"Simple!" repeated the clerk, without looking up; "there's an added line, universally beloved and deeply regretted! isn't there? Seven and six."

Hume produced the additional half crown and laid it deliberately by the others, observing in the most solemn tone, "Congratulations, yourself, sir, that this is an expense which your executor will never be put to."

A Good Lie From Maine.

Uncle Dan Gannon of Canton, Me., says he caught a fox, thought he had killed it, and was just nicking the ears off the pelt, when he stopped to look at a fire in the woods. Sly Monsieur Reynard, who wasn't dead at all, just slipped on his skin and got away. Of course, this is 99 per cent. Gannon, but it goes as a pretty good Maine lie.

Too Realistic.

Visitor—And how did my little pet like the theater? Little Girl—Not very much. The actors didn't act as if they was just actin'; they acted as if it was all so—'n' that made me uncomfortable.

"Why?"

"I felt just as if I was peekin' through a keyhole into somebody else's house."—Good News.

THEORY AS TO "CREEPING" RAILS.

Attempt at Explaining a Curious Phenomenon Observed on Railroads.

Unless there are counteracting influences, the natural tendency of rails is to "creep" downward, obeying the well-known laws of gravity. If, however, the grade be too slight to give much effect to this law, and, in fact, so slight as to require the use of steam in the handling of descending trains this natural tendency may be minimized, and, indeed, overcome and reversed by a constant draft of loads in the direction of its descent, says the Charleston News and Courier. Heavy loads pulling constantly in one direction have a tendency to drive the rail in the opposite direction. Should it be necessary, however, to apply the brakes, the rail is driven in the direction of the moving train. On a perfectly level track the rail almost invariably "creeps" in the opposite direction from the movement of the heaviest and most constant traffic, except at points where it is customary to shut off and apply the brakes, at which the "creep" is in the same direction. On roads having grades which change abruptly from ascending to descending grades over the crown of a hill, it often happens that the rails "creep" up grade on both sides of the crown, and this is especially true where long, heavy trains are run, as the heavy pulling of the engine after it has passed the crown, going down grade, causes it to drive the rail upward on the one side, while the rear of the train has somewhat the tendency to pull, or at least to hold, the rail on the opposite ascent. One rail often "creeps" faster than the other; this is not confined to the east rail or the west rail, the north or the south. It is due to a variety of causes, and to none perhaps more than to the fact that there is a difference, and often a peculiarity, in humanity. There is in railroad parlance what is known as a "line" and a "gauge" rail; in nine cases out of ten the "line" rail gets the most attention from the foreman in charge; and in addition, two men are usually selected to "keep up" the bolts on joints, one of which is generally the most trusted man in the "gang." The other works under him; almost invariably this trusted man gets on the "line" rail, and thus it will be seen that the joints and bolts are kept in better shape on the one rail than on the other, and are therefore more capable of resisting the tendency to "creep." This habit among trackmen of adopting a pet rail is one of the peculiarities of human nature; barbers have somewhat the same peculiarity—they lather and rub, shave and powder one side of a man's face until human endurance rebels against the injustice.

Birds That Come and Go.

There are some birds that depend almost entirely for their food on light-winged summer flies that love the sunshine. These the economy of our cold season does not provide for. The tree-creepers and the tits, insectivorous in their propensities, are content to seek food in the crevices of bark and up and down the branches of old trees, in the cracks of walls, and in and out among the stones and bricks of old buildings peering, probing, pecking at the creatures that ha e thought to get safely through the cold weather by hiding. Not so our migrant singers. Many of them, like the swallows eat only such things as they can catch in their swift flight open-mouthed through the air; these are few and far between in the raw and cold atmosphere of winter here. Swift and swallow, nightingale and cuckoo, warbler flycatcher, whin-hat, wheatear, blackcap, and wrenneck—all the merry troupe of strolling singers, must follow the sun and the creatures that dance in the sunbeams to lands that are warm in the winter.

The movements of the birds that come and go in spring and autumn are prompted by the abundance or the scarcity of certain kinds of food among the varied stores our land affords. The nomadic wanderings of our resident birds are also foraging expeditions. Only in the spring and early summer are any birds able to find the food they require in a particular neighborhood. Then insect life abounds, and found about the nesting place enough and to spare is to be found both for the busy parent birds and the insatiable chicks and squabs. But in the autumn and winter there is, strictly speaking, no such thing as a stationary population of birds in any place. All turn gypsies then, and thither and thence their restless way, eluding the famine of a frost here, the dearth of a snowstorm there, or the buffeting of storm winds, by continually moving onward.

Cold, Not Iced, Tea.

Those who do not like to use ice as prodigally as some do in beverages, and yet like "cold tea," will find that they can have it without the ice. If you have no ice at all, put the amount of tea required in a pitcher in the morning and pour over it only enough water to cover it; let it stand for three or four hours, and you will find that all the flavor is extracted from the leaves. When you wish to serve, pour fresh water, as cold as can be obtained, upon the tea, and you will have a delightful glass of tea, with none of the bitterness of "boiled" tea about it and sufficiently cold.—Boston Post.

The wounds of sin may be healed, but their scars will always remain painful to the touch.

Every man has both a natural and constitutional right to establish his own labor union.