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THE ENGLISH BELIEVE IN THE SEA SERPENT.

The London *Spectator* gives full credit to the last reported observation of the sea serpent. Its appearance coincides with what is now agreed upon, that it must be of a Saurian character, like the monsters of geologic periods. The *Spectator* says, "In the Straits of Malacca the sea-monster, so repeatedly seen and so repeatedly declared to be mythical, appears at last to have been carefully observed by competent witnesses. The creature was seen by the passengers and crew of the ship *Nestor*, on her voyage to Shanghai; and on her arrival at Shanghai the master of the ship, Mr. John Keiller Webster, and the surgeon, Mr. James Anderson, made a statutory declaration of what they had seen before a magistrate, as a mode, we suppose, of formally attesting that they spoke in good faith. The creature (which resembled a huge salamander, only that instead of being about six or eight inches long, these dimensions must be multiplied by at least 75 or 100, the body being from 45 to 50 feet in length, the head 12 feet, and the tail, it is said, no less than 150 feet) was first seen at half past ten o'clock on the 11th of September, 15 miles northwest of the North Sand lighthouse, in the Straits of Malacca. The weather was fine, the sea smooth, and the air perfectly clear. The Chinese on deck were terribly alarmed and set up a howl. The whole watch and three saloon passengers saw the creature clearly and observed its movements. It traveled for a long time about as fast as the steamer, appearing to paddle itself by the help of 'an undulatory motion of its tail in a vertical plane.' The body and tail were marked as those of the salamander are marked—with alternate bands, black and pale yellow in color. 'The head was immediately connected with the body, without any indication of a neck.' Both witnesses state positively that the only resemblance was to some creature of the frog or newt kind, while one of them (the surgeon) says the longer he observed it the more he was struck with its resemblance to a gigantic salamander. Its back was oval in form. No eyes or fins were seen and it did not blow or spout in the manner of a whale. The greater part of its head was never seen, being beneath the surface. Probably the creature is of a race which survives from that very different world in which creatures of gigantic size seem to have been so much commoner than now. There appears to be no manner of reason for doubting the very express evidence so succinctly and soberly given."

THE DISTANCE OF THE SUN.

If some celestial railway could be imagined, the journey to the sun, even if our trains ran 60 miles an hour, day and night and without a stop, would require over 175 years. Sensation, even, would not travel so far in a human lifetime. To borrow the curious illustration of Prof. Mendenhall, if we could imagine an infant with an arm long enough to enable him to touch the sun and burn himself, he would die of old age before the pain could reach him. According to the experiments of Helmholtz and others, a nervous shock is communicated only at the rate of about 100 feet per second, or 1,637 miles a day, and would need more than 150 years to complete the journey. Sound would do it in about 14 years if it could be transmitted, and a cannon-ball in about nine, if it were to move uniformly with the same speed as when it left the muzzle of the gun. If the earth could be suddenly stopped in her orbit, and allowed to fall unobstructed toward the sun under the accelerating influence of his attraction, she would reach the central fire in about four months. I have said if she could be stopped, but such is the compass of her orbit that, to make its circuit in a year, she has to move nearly 19 miles a second, or more than 50 times faster than the swiftest rifle ball; and in moving 20 miles she deviates from perfect straightness by less than one-eighth of an inch. And yet, over all the circumference of this tremendous orbit, the sun exercises his dominion, and every pulsation of his surface receives its response from the subject earth.—*Prof. C. A. Young, in Popular Science Monthly for February.*

FOOD FOR INTEMPERANCE.—A writer in the *Herald of Health* on the "relations of intemperance to food" makes this point: What is the remedy for intemperance? I answer, nerve food—building material to supply the waste of the nervous tissue in the masses. I answer, further, a reform in the present popular system of dietetics, by reducing the proportion of fat and muscle forming elements, and increasing the nerve and brain building material in a proper ratio. Let the supply in each case meet the demand and no more. A study of this subject, and a practical application of the theory that I am advocating for the past 15 years, gives me a solid basis of fact on which to rest its advocacy. Food beverage—a liquid food composed largely of brain and nerve building elements, a combination, concrete, soluble, and one that is so rapidly taken into the circulation that the patient feels immediately its invigorating, energizing power, has proved in my hands an almost certain remedy. It at once, and at the same time, allays thirst and invigorates without stimulating, imparting to the system a permanent basis of nervous vigor and energy.

CURE FOR RHEUMATISM.—Remain constantly in a dark room and drink lemon juice freely. This, it is said, has cured the most obstinate cases of inflammatory rheumatism. Whoever tries this is requested to report to the PRESS.

A CRACK IN THE GREAT GUN.

We have formerly given an outline of the method which the English are employing to make their mammoth cannons. Just on the eve of the completion of the 81-ton gun, a vexatious mishap has occurred which *Iron* says is serious enough, but not thought of sufficient importance to prevent the carrying out of the programme. The holes pierced through the body of the gun, for insertion of the pressure gauges, have been calculated to weaken it considerably, and it should be mentioned, to the credit of the gun, that it has fired 166 rounds, in which it has consumed no less than 23 tons of powder, and discharged 130 tons of projectiles. To this must be added the fact that the charges fired in the later stages of the trials have been much heavier than contemplated when the gun was originally designed, and that the closer confinement of the powder gases obtained by the use of the gas-check has also to some degree added to the work imposed upon the great gun. The authorities, therefore, have regarded, and still regard, with satisfaction, the unimpaired condition of the main structure, while they at the same time admit, as they have invariably done, that the steel tube, or lining of the gun, is its one weak and untrustworthy part. In this steel tube a crack has been discovered. Gutta-percha impressions of the bore have been taken at various stages, and the examination made in this way, preparatory to the renewed trials arranged for this week, revealed evidence of the incipient fracture. It is considered somewhat remarkable, although not surprising, that the 81-ton gun should have followed so closely the example of the original Woolwich infant, the first 35-ton gun, which in a similar manner endured some enormous pressure and then cracked its steel lining; after which mishap it, however, fired many more very heavy rounds, and proved that a defect in the steel tubing was scarcely to be regarded as any very serious detriment to the weapon. English artillerists, generally speaking, have no faith in steel, in consequence of its brittle nature, but they require a hard, smooth and unyielding surface within the bore, to take the rifling and endure the friction of the projectile; and they have, therefore, reluctantly adopted for this purpose a material, the characteristics of which are the opposite of the tough and elastic wrought-iron coils which compose the body of the gun. The thickness of the steel at the place where the crack has occurred, is about four inches, and it is situated at some distance from the powder chamber, and is at present scarcely perceptible, and of small extent. It is calculated that two or three rounds have been fired since the injury occurred, and that the gun is as fit for work as ever it was, the tubing never being calculated upon as contributing anything to the strength of the barrel. The trial of the gun against the enormous armor-plated target will therefore probably be made, as arranged, at Shoeburyness, before it is retubed.

WEIGHT OF BELTS.—Rankine says: Leather belts, when new, are not quite of the heaviness of water—say about 60 pounds per cubic foot; but, after having been for some time in use, they become thinner and denser by compression, and are then about as heavy as water. The weight of a single belting may be approximately estimated at 0.068 pounds per foot, length and inch breadth.

CHANGING THE COURSE OF THE DANUBE.

To avoid the rocks by which the navigation of the Danube has for ages been obstructed at the point known as the "Iron Gates," a new bed has been prepared for the river, of which the Danube has taken possession for itself without waiting for any opening ceremony. This river was dug out in three sections, separated from each other by two dykes, which were left, and over which the roads led to the old bed. The embankment has been raised all along the line and riveted with stone. It was determined to make an opening in the upper dyke so as to allow the stone barges to pass through. Scarcely was the channel opened when the stream rushed in that direction, carrying away the masonry and stone pavement for a considerable distance. In less than 12 hours the basin filled. Curiously enough, the difference in the level of the old channel is found to be not near so great as might have been expected, 18 inches being registered as the fall and for the present there are two streams, the old one not having been as yet stopped. The new channel is nearly nine and one-half miles long, and brings the water of the Danube within a short distance of Vienna. It consists of two parts; The minor channel, which, in ordinary times, will receive all the waters of the river, is 245 meters wide and three to 3.50 meters deep; the other, which is to provide against floods, is 515 meters wide and two meters deep, with a dam 6.32 meters high. Sixteen millions of cubic meters had to be excavated for raising the level of the soil and forming the dam, and half of this by dredging; the stone work of the new dams represented a cube of 350,000 meters, and the pitching nearly as much. The quays absorbed 35,000 cubic meters of concrete and 30,000 meters of masonry.

GLADIOLUS.

THE GLADIOLUS.

This gorgeous flower, grown annually from bulbs, like the dahlia, is justly entitled to rank among the favorites of the amateur culturist. It produces long brilliant spikes of showy flowers, of almost every conceivable shade of color. The gladiolus presents itself at once as the most desirable of our summer bulbous plants. For center and large table bouquets, where size and effect are desired, they are unequaled. The gladiolus should be planted from early in April till the last of June, by which course a succession of bloom will be obtained. The best effect is produced when planted in groups or rows. The bulbs should be planted three inches deep, and for groups place them six to eight inches apart, of six to ten in a group; or, they may be planted in rows two feet apart, and six inches in the rows. If in exposed situations, they should be tied to neat stakes, to prevent injury from strong winds. The bulbs should be taken up in the fall, cleaned, and stored where they will be safe from freezing and moisture.

FIG WATER.—Boil a quarter of a pound of best preserved figs with a half ounce of ginger in two quarts of water. When reduced to a pulp, strain off and bottle for use.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR HANDLING AND USING TRI-NITRO-GLYCERINE.

The following rules are laid down by Mr. Mowbray, in his excellent treatise on "Tri-Nitro-Glycerine," viz.:

1. Handle carefully, avoiding a sudden jar or concussion, and be very careful, if any is spilled outside the can, to avoid striking it against any hard substance.

2. When solid, thaw out by placing the cans in a tub of warm water, not hotter than the wrist can bear, first pouring warm water into the can, and always remove the can before adding more hot water to the tub.

3. To fill cartridges, etc.: Hold the cartridges to be filled over a tray, say two feet by three feet, the bottom of which should be covered with plaster of paris (which will not readily explode when saturated with nitro-glycerine.) The soiled plaster of paris should be frequently renewed.

4. If nitro-glycerine in a liquid state is kept in a store or magazine for some time, the cork should be loosely inserted, and a pint of cold water poured into each can, to be frequently poured off and replaced with fresh cold water in warm weather, taking care to retain the bladder under the cork. It is preferable, when ice can be procured, to congeal the nitro-glycerine.

5. Use funnels (gutta-percha, if they can be had) for filling water holes. Under no circumstances whatever attempt to tamp the drill holes; it is unnecessary, and may kill the man who attempts it.

6. Hot irons to warm the water, or for soldering the cans, will be sure to cause explosions.

7. Never sledge or attempt drilling in a hole or seam where nitro-glycerine has been spilled; fire an exploder, which will effectually clear it up.

8. Never pour nitro-glycerine into a hole unless perfectly sure that it is a sound hole, or will hold water; if seamy always use cartridges.

9. To obtain the best results with nitro-glycerine, drill deep holes, six feet or more. Use powerful exploders and well insulated wires. It is cheaper to fire by electric battery with simultaneous explosion, than to fire several holes with tape fuse.

10. Look out after a blast for any unexploded cartridges lying around.

11. Never allow any but the most careful persons to handle or have charge of the nitro-glycerine, and insist upon the use of every precaution to prevent an accident or explosion.

12. Never allow empty glycerine cans to be used for any other purpose, but destroy them by a fuse and exploder, or by building a fire under them; first, however, removing them to a safe distance.

13. Examine your cans from time to time and notice if, at the level of the nitro-glycerine, any pin holes have eaten through; in such case procure a new can, or stone jar, and empty the contents out, not trusting your hold to the upper part of the can, lest it may give away.

14. When solid or congealed it is absolutely safe; if possible, therefore, any surplus should be stored surrounded with ice, since no explosion can take place when it is solid.

LEAD POISON IN SEWING SILK.

The *Moniteur d'Hygiene* startles its readers with the revelation of an ingenious fraud, not generally known, but likely to be in the long run very dangerous to the health of tailors, seamstresses and others who use silk thread in sewing. Nothing is more pernicious to the system than lead, and yet it may be constantly introduced into the stomach by those who use sewing silk. The fact is important if lead be the metal used for giving weight to silk. Lead acts very surreptitiously on the system; it is essentially "a slow poison," and it is very difficult to combat its effects. It acts on the teeth and on the intestines, in which it produces paralysis, frequently followed by death. "We have seen," says the writer in the *Moniteur d'Hygiene*, "among other cases, that of a lady who keeps a large sewing establishment, who, by the use of such silk thread, was, together with her workwomen, attacked by lead colic, some of them losing their teeth—the result of the habit of putting the ends of the silk into the mouth before passing it through the eye of the needle. Such is the way in which the lead poison is directly absorbed, whilst, by continually handling the silk, the fingers may retain a portion of the lead, to be indirectly introduced into the system with the food that may be touched by the hand. The poison may be avoided by refraining from putting the silk into the mouth—dipping it in gummed water instead—but perhaps the best remedy will be found by the large dealers refusing to buy silk thread by weight unless it is proved to be free from metallic adulteration.

AN INVENTOR WANTED.—The *American Manufacturer* says: It isn't a new notion, but a leading Georgia cotton planter is renewing and emphasizing the demand for a cotton-picker that shall do for cotton what the reaping machines do for the grain crop of the world. Since the invention of the cotton-gin nothing is so much needed in the South, and there can be but little doubt that the man who solves this mechanical problem will win not only fame but fortune. It is not necessary, says the planter, that the cotton-picker should do its work cleanly; if it can but garner two-thirds or three-fourths of the crop, manual labor will take care of the remainder. The customary price of picking cotton by hand is 75 cents per 100 pounds of seed cotton, the average yield of which, in marketable lint, is 33 pounds. The cost of hand-picking, therefore, is 2¼ cents per pound, a very large item, which ought to be reduced, by appropriate machinery, by more than one-half. A successful inventor, who should exact as his royalty only one-eighth of one per cent. per pound upon the cotton crop of the United States, might fairly figure his annual income at more than $3,000,000, a sum worth striving for by any mechanic who has the gift of invention.