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ORIGIN OF DOOR-KNOCKERS

Ample Proof That They Antedate
Western Civilization by Many
Hundreds of Years.

The origin of door-knockers is almost lost in obscurity, and their development from mere articles of utility to objects of art has been a long, slow process of evolution, covering centuries and antedating western civilization by many hundreds of years.

The first general use of knockers that is positively known was among the ancient Greeks, who probably adopted them from the Egyptians. We are told that the Greeks considered it a breach of good manners to enter a house without warning the inmates, and that the Spartans gave this notice by shouting their arrival, while the Athenians announced themselves by using the knocker. Its introduction doubtless came at the time when doors superseded hangings, for the purpose of insuring greater safety or privacy.

In the Greek houses of the better class a porter was in constant attendance at the door to admit visitors. Slaves were usually employed in this capacity, and were chained to the door-posts to prevent their wandering and shirking the monotony of the duty, and in order to awaken them a short bar of iron was fastened to the door by a chain, to be used as a rapper by those desiring entrance to the house.

It is said that this strictly utilitarian rapper, as it was first called, was often wrenched from the door to be used as a weapon of offense by visitors who were not friendly disposed toward the householder. A later development was a direct consequence of this misuse, the next type being in the form of a heavy ring fastened by a strong clamp or plate to the door, thus serving the double purpose of knocker and handle.

From Greece the custom was transferred to the Romans, and with the western trend of early civilization to nearly every country of Europe. The introduction of knockers to England, where together with Italy and Germany they have attained the greatest artistic development, was no doubt due to the Roman conquest of western Europe and Britain.—Architecture.

VIOLIN ALWAYS THE SAME

For Centuries Shape and Substance of
That Tuneful Instrument Have
Not Been Altered.

Even in this age of bustle and change, some few of the old standbys remain unchanged, but at that it is rather startling to realize that the violin, probably the best loved of all musical instruments, has remained virtually unchanged in shape or substance for three centuries. In that time the lute and spinet have passed away, the harp has been improved, the piano has been invented and developed, but the violin, which took a hundred years to assume its present form, since the days of the great Stradivari, the world's most famous violin maker, has remained unchanged.

The violin is popularly supposed to date from the days of the ancient Indians, but the present instrument had its beginning back in the days of the troubadours, who used musical boxes called viols or gaital fiddles. And as the years went by the little viols were improved. The shape was altered; bit by bit the instrument changed. Now a bridge was added; now a waist; openings on either side of the bridge were added.

And from 1500 to 1700 the violin industry rose to its greatest achievements in the developments of Amati, Guarneri, and Stradivari, Italian violin makers living in the town of Cremona. Since their time there has been no change, and the finest and most priceless musical instrument of today is a Stradivari violin, made three centuries ago by the master craftsman Stradivari in Cremona.

Poetry and Plagiarism.

After Longfellow's poem "Excelsior," first appeared it was copied all over the country in the various journals. It was not long in reaching England, where it met with the same enthusiastic reception. Longfellow, in his diary of September 1, 1871, notes: "I received from Mr. Henry Gerson to-day a Hebrew translation of 'Excelsior.'"

In the writing of "Excelsior," Longfellow was charged by a number of critics with plagiarism. One of these claimed that the poet had adopted lines from Brainard's poem, "The Mocking Bird," but to this the poet replied:

"Now, when in 'Excelsior' I said 'A voice fell like a falling star' Brainard's poem was not in my mind nor had I ever read it. Of a truth, one cannot strike a spade into the soil of Parnassus without disturbing the bones of some dead poet."—Detroit Free Press.

Had a Wide Use.

Unlike the diamond and the ruby, the emerald appeared to have been widely used, according to ancient and medieval writers, for useful as well as for ornamental receptacles. Drinking cups cut from the gem appeared to be the popular form. Of some of these receptacles it was claimed that they possessed the magic quality of turning water poured into them into a pleasing drink with an exhilarating kick, perhaps a mint julep, that would doubtless, if they could be found, give them priceless value in the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave, and instead of being a June Jewel, the emerald would be the peerless gem of every month in the year.

CAMPING IN OLD MOROCCO

Travel by Caravan, the Chief Means
of Transportation, Has Many
Pleasant Features.

The Moroccan encampment, whether it is military or that of some traveling band, is always picturesque, Elsie F. Well writes in Asia Magazine. The tents of persons of distinction are often surmounted with copper balls and decorated with arabesques of cloth. Camping is a fine art in Morocco, where the roads are almost impassable, and the chief means of transportation is by caravan.

All day one rides across the great plains, prodigally covered with iris, daffodils, daisies, buttercups and wild lavender. Perhaps a wild band of horsemen will gallop by, their robes, sea green, salmon colored and blue, streaming in the wind, their horses richly caparisoned like those of some crusading king. Occasionally one skirts a little village built of mud and wattle and surrounded by fields of wheat and barley. Here and there the white-domed shrine of some saint rises serenely above the plain. And at sundown the shepherds playing on their reed flutes drive their flocks of sheep and goats home from pasture.

Then it is time to pitch the tents near a grove of orange trees or on a fairy carpet of red anemones. One dines on roasted sheep and cous-cous and is lulled to sleep by the songs of the guard under the intense blue of the African sky.

SIGHT WELL WORTH SEEING

Canyons of Southern California at
Times Furnish Spectacles Nothing
Short of Remarkable.

The spectacle of rain, fire and flood all occurring at the same time, is not an unusual sight in some of the canyons near Los Angeles, says the Scientific American. The most notable example is near Santa Monica, which is on the southern coast of California. The precipitous sides of the canyons debauching into the Pacific ocean in that vicinity are composed of clay and shale. Whenever rain falls on these rocks, great clouds of steam rise from the canyons. The canyon crests and faces are crowned by vitrified rock burned a dull red.

It is reported by the early historians that when the Mission fathers visited this region 150 years ago the natives avoided these places. They claimed that these mysterious canyons were the abode of evil spirits and the Indians could not be induced to guide the priests to their vicinity.

Actual flame has also been reported in one of these canyons. Hence the occasional newspaper accounts of active "volcanoes" near the coast of California. The phenomena are evidently due to fires in the petroleum-bearing shales which crop out in these regions. The cause of the fires is uncertain. They may be started by lightning or they may be a case of spontaneous combustion.

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