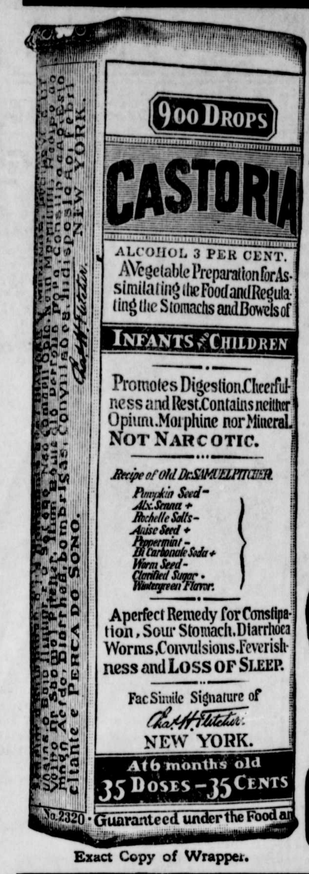

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ATMOSPHERIC ELECTRICITY.

Experiment Suggested by Franklin and Performed by D'Alibard.

To Benjamin Franklin belongs the merit of having perceived that a direct experiment was needed to prove what so far was only a guess. In an article entitled "Opinions and Conjectures Concerning the Properties and Effects of the Electrical Matter Arising From Experiments and Observations Made at Philadelphia, 1749," the following passage occurs:

"To determine the question whether the clouds that contain lightning are electrified or not I would propose an experiment to be tried where it can be done conveniently. On the top of some high tower or steeple place a kind of sentry box big enough to contain a man and an electrical stand. From the middle of the stand let an iron rod rise and pass, bending out of the door and then upright twenty feet or thirty feet, pointed very sharp at the end. If the electrical stand be kept clean and dry a man standing on it when such clouds are passing low might be electrified and afford sparks, the rod drawing fire to him from a cloud.

"If any danger to the man should be apprehended, though I think there would be none, let him stand on the floor of his box and now and then bring near to the rod the loop of a wire that has one end fastened to the leads, he holding it by a wax handle, so the sparks if the rod be electrified will strike from the rod to the wire and not affect him."

The experiment suggested by Franklin was successfully performed in Marly, France, by D'Alibard on May 10, 1752; in London by Canton in Spital square on July 20, 1752, and by Wilson in Chelmsford, Essex, on Aug. 12 of the same year. Franklin himself described having used a kite in Philadelphia in a letter dated Oct. 19 without giving the date of his observations. Rosenberger ("Geschichte der Physik," volume 2, page 316) mentioned that it was done in June.

Franklin's disbelief in the dangerous character of the experiment must have received a severe shock when he heard of the death of G. W. Richman, who, in the year 1753, was killed by an electric discharge drawn from the clouds by means of a kite.

A HOG ORCHESTRA.

French Musician Made the Squealers Sing a Tune.

During the reign of Louis XI. of France there was attached to his court one Abbot de Baigne, a man of considerable wit. The abbot was somewhat musically inclined and delighted the court with inventions of odd musical instruments. One day the king, after having enjoyed a hearty laugh over one of these curious contrivances and desiring to baffle this musical genius, commanded him to produce harmonious sounds from the cries of hogs. This seemed an impossibility to the king, and he prepared himself to enjoy the discomfiture of the abbot. Much to his surprise, however, the abbot readily agreed to produce them. All he required was a sum of money, upon receipt of which he declared he would invent the most surprising thing ever heard in the way of musical atrocity.

He scoured the country and secured a large number of hogs, trying their voices as to pitch and quality, and finally, having fully satisfied himself, he arranged the animals in a sort of pavilion richly decorated. The day of the trial arrived, and the king and his court entered the pavilion prepared for something, but greatly in doubt as to the success of the abbot with the hogs.

However, there were the hogs, sure enough, and, much to the surprise and delight of the king, they commenced to cry harmoniously and in good tune, rendering an air that was fairly recognized. The abbot had arranged a series of stops that were connected with the hogs and upon pulling one of them out caused a spike to prick the hog it connected with, making him squeal his note. The rest was easy, for by pulling out the different stops he produced the tune.

A Ring Island.

Many coral reef islands in the Pacific are in the form of more or less perfect rings, or ovals, inclosing lagoons. The ring island of Ninafou, halfway between Fiji and Samoa, is not a coral reef, but a volcanic ring inclosing a crater containing a lake two miles in diameter. Toward the sea the ring is bordered with walls of black lava, and on the inner side these break down in cliffs 200 to 300 feet in height. An eruption in 1886 formed a peninsula on the eastern side of the lake. While the ocean outside is trembling and thundering under a heavy wind the lake remains smooth or is simply wrinkled with ripples.

The Time to Cry "Halt!"

If one be watchful there comes a time in the life of every man and woman when one or more discoveries are made. The walk is not so brisk, the shoulders have got into a way of slumping forward and the back is not so erect as formerly. Now is the time to cry "Halt!" It is the time to drill the body, the time to revise sleep, diet, exercise, occupation, relaxation and all habits. Every son and daughter of humanity should refuse this gradual yielding to decay.

The Difference.

"I always thought," remarked an English judge, "that a parasol and a sunshade were the same."

"No," replied the witness on the stand; "a sunshade is to keep the sun off; a parasol is to flirt with."—

Those who occupy their minds too much with small matters generally become incapable of great.—La Roche.

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Queer Marriage Custom Among the Quebec French Canadians.

A singular marriage custom prevails among the French Canadians in Quebec. After the morning marriage service in the church the bridal party in caleche or carriole make a tour of calls upon relatives and friends during the day and then return again to church for vespers.

Before the evening dance at the [illegible] comes the supper. When the company rise from the table the bride keeps her seat, and some one asks with great dignity: "Why does madam wait? Is she so soon in bad grace?"

She replies: "Somebody has stolen my slipper. I cannot walk."

Then they carry her, chair and all, into the middle of the room, while a loud knocking announces a grotesque ragged vendor of boots and shoes. He kneels before the slipperless bride and tries on a long succession of old boots and shoes of every variety and size until at last he finds her missing shoe.

The groom redeems it for a good price, which is spent in treating the company. If the groom is not watchful they steal her hat and cloak, which he redeems in the same way, and they have been known to steal the bride, for which there must be liberal pay. The event of the evening is a good jig, in which a guest volunteers to outdance the bride. If successful the visitor demands a prize from the groom.—Pearson's Weekly.

Candor.

Mabel (aged six)—Ain't you afraid of our big dog? The Parson (very thin)—No, my dear. He would not make much of a meal off me. Mabel—Oh, but he likes bones best.—Chicago News.

Every brave heart must consider society as a child and not allow it to dictate.—Emerson.

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