

ences, more or less numerous, to station publications where further information can be secured if desired.

It is of course impossible to refer in detail to all the subjects. A reference to a few will probably be of interest. Under *Chrysanthemum* we read that experiment showed it to be possible to keep pollen of the plant for five days and still retain its vitality. It is observed under *Dandelion*, quite extensively used as "greens" in spring, that it has been studied in Minnesota, and directions are given for cultivating it. Geological work is not extensively carried on, only four geologists being employed, and these being engaged in studying soils. Numerous varieties of grasses are discussed, over ten pages being devoted to them. In a short note upon Leguminosæ numerous references are made to investigations upon root-tubercles. Their value in taking nitrogen from the air and storing it in the soil is considered very great, and it is stated that by growing the tubercle-producing plants and plowing them under they form manure for wheat and other crops requiring considerable nitrogenous material. The article upon *Milk* refers to the value of late researches upon bacteria causing fermentation, souring of cream, etc. Those bacteria causing red milk, ropy milk, etc., can be prevented by cleanliness. Those which are useful in butter and cheese making can be utilized. The aroma of butter has been determined to be due to a specific bacterium, and the ferment produced by this is being used to a certain extent in Germany and Denmark. In the ripening of cream there is a conflict of many varieties of bacteria and the problem has been to separate that one which will give the best results. So, too, with

cheese-making. The ripening of cheese is due to the action of micro-organisms. The number of these has been found to be from 25 to 165 millions per ounce. The conclusion reached is that in the future "the butter-maker will separate the cream by the centrifugal machine in as fresh a condition as possible and will add to the cream an artificial ferment consisting of a pure culture of the proper bacteria, and then ripen his cream in the normal manner. The result will be uniformity. The cheese-maker will in like manner inoculate fresh milk with an artificial ferment, and thus be able to control his product. Perhaps he will have a large variety of such ferments, each of which will produce for him a definite quality of cheese. To the dairy interest, therefore, the bacteriologist holds out the hope of uniformity. The time will come when the butter-maker may always make good butter and the cheese-maker will be able in all cases to obtain exactly the kind of ripening that he desires."

Under the head of *Phosphates* there is an interesting account of the different kinds, with analyses of those found in South Carolina and Florida. Perhaps the longest article in the volume is upon the weeds of the United States, nearly 20 pages being devoted to them. A list of the weeds with common and scientific names and station publications where referred to occupies thirteen pages. Finally in an appendix there are given a number of tables of analyses, of feeding stuffs, vegetables, fruits, nuts, commercial fertilizers, farm manures and ash constituents of woods. The volume is, upon the whole, one of the most useful which has ever been issued by the Department of Agriculture.

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Wants.

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Wanted.—Sachs's Text-book of Botany, 2nd English edition. Dr. Alfred C. Stokes, 527 Monmouth Street, Trenton, New Jersey.

WANTED to exchange for human bones or recent medical text-books, the following books "Metallurgy of Silver," M. Eissler, 1880; "Practical Treatise on Petroleum," by Benj. J. Crewe, 1887; "Cook's Chemical Philosophy," 1885; "Cairn's Chemical Analysis," 1880; "Wagner's Chemical Technology," by Crookes, 1886; "Fresemier's Qual. Chem. Analysis," 1879; "Elementary Treatise on Practical Chemistry and Qual. Analysis," Clowes, 1881; bound Vols. 1 to 12 of Dr. Lardner's "Museum of Science and Art" (very rare), 1854; back numbers of "Electrical World," beautiful specimens of Pyrite Incrustations from Cretaceous of New Jersey; Magnetite Iron Ore, Highly Polarized. Address D. T. Marshall, Metuchen, N. J.

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Why Have the Old Rods Failed?

When lightning-rods were first proposed, the science of energetics was entirely undeveloped; that is to say, in the middle of the last century scientific men had not come to recognize the fact that the different forms of energy—heat, electricity, mechanical power, etc.—were convertible one into the other, and that each could produce just so much of each of the other forms, and no more. The doctrine of the conservation and correlation of energy was first clearly worked out in the early part of this century. There were, however, some facts known in regard to electricity a hundred and forty years ago; and among these were the attracting power of points for an electric spark, and the conducting power of metals. Lightning-rods were therefore introduced with the idea that the electricity existing in the lightning-discharge could be conveyed around the building which it was proposed to protect, and that the building would thus be saved.

The question as to dissipation of the energy involved was entirely ignored, naturally; and from that time to this, in spite of the best endeavors of those interested, lightning-rods constructed in accordance with Franklin's principle have not furnished satisfactory protection. The reason for this is apparent when it is considered that the electrical energy existing in the atmosphere before the discharge, or, more exactly, in the column of dielectric from the cloud to the earth, above referred to, reaches its maximum value on the surface of the conductors that chance to be within the column of dielectric; so that the greatest display of energy will be on the surface of the very lightning-rods that were meant to protect, and damage results, as so often proves to be the case.

It will be understood, of course, that this display of energy on the surface of the old lightning-rods is aided by their being more or less insulated from the earth, but in any event the very existence of such a mass of metal as an old lightning-rod can only tend to produce a disastrous dissipation of electrical energy upon its surface,—“to draw the lightning,” as it is so commonly put.

Is there a Better Means of Protection?

Having cleared our minds, therefore, of any idea of conducting electricity, and keeping clearly in view the fact that in providing protection against lightning we must furnish some means by which the electrical energy may be harmlessly dissipated, the question arises, “Can an improved form be given to the rod so that it shall avoid this dissipation?”

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As the electrical energy involved manifests itself on the surface of conductors, the improved rod should be metallic; but, instead of making a large rod, suppose that we make it comparatively small in size, so that the total amount of metal running from the top of the house to some point a little below the foundations shall not exceed one pound. Suppose, again, that we introduce numerous insulating joints in this rod. We shall then have a rod that experience shows will be readily destroyed—will be readily dissipated—when a discharge takes place; and it will be evident, that, so far as the electrical energy is consumed in doing this, there will be the less to do other damage.

The only point that remains to be proved as to the utility of such a rod is to show that the dissipation of such a conductor does not tend to injure other bodies in its immediate vicinity. On this point I can only say that I have found no case where such a conductor (for instance, a bell wire) has been dissipated, even if resting against a plastered wall, where there has been any material damage done to surrounding objects.

Of course, it is readily understood that such an explosion cannot take place in a confined space without the rupture of the walls (the wire cannot be boarded over); but in every case that I have found recorded this dissipation takes place just as gunpowder burns when spread on a board. The objects against which the conductor rests may be stained, but they are not shattered.

I would therefore make clear this distinction between the action of electrical energy when dissipated on the surface of a large conductor and when dissipated on the surface of a comparatively small or easily dissipated conductor. When dissipated on the surface of a large conductor,—a conductor so strong as to resist the explosive effect,—damage results to objects around. When dissipated on the surface of a small conductor, the conductor goes, but the other objects around are saved.

A Typical Case of the Action of a Small Conductor.

Franklin, in a letter to Collinson read before the London Royal Society, Dec. 18, 1755, describing the partial destruction by lightning of a church-tower at Newbury, Mass., wrote, “Near the bell was fixed an iron hammer to strike the hours; and from the tail of the hammer a wire went down through a small gimlet-hole in the floor that the bell stood upon, and through a second floor in like manner; then horizontally under and near the plastered ceiling of that second floor, till it came near a plastered wall; then down by the side of that wall to a clock, which stood about twenty feet below the bell. The wire was not bigger than a common knitting needle. The spire was split all to pieces by the lightning, and the parts flung in all directions over the square in which the church stood, so that nothing remained above the bell. The lightning passed between the hammer and the clock in the above-mentioned wire, without hurting either of the floors, or having any effect upon them (except making the gimlet-holes, through which the wire passed, a little bigger), and without hurting the plastered wall, or any part of the building, so far as the foresaid wire and the pendulum-wire of the clock extended; which latter wire was about the thickness of a goose-quill. From the end of the pendulum, down quite to the ground, the building was exceedingly rent and damaged. . . . No part of the aforementioned long, small wire, between the clock and the hammer, could be found, except about two inches that hung to the tail of the hammer, and about as much that was fastened to the clock; the rest being exploded, and its particles dissipated in smoke and air, as gunpowder is by common fire, and had only left a black smutty track on the plastering, three or four inches broad, darkest in the middle, and fainter towards the edges, all along the ceiling, under which it passed, and down the wall.”

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