about $53 a ton. The price of American steel rails is from $45 to $47 a ton; in large lots perhaps as low as $43. It is clear, therefore, that Mr. Vanderbilt paid for the English rails something like 25 per cent more than American rails would have cost him.

Against this bargain certain American gentlemen, professing to speak in the interest of American rail makers, have protested with much vigor. One of these gentlemen, Mr. Alfred Earnshaw, of Philadelphia, after taking Mr. Vanderbilt severely to task for wasting his stockholders' money, closes his letter with these words:

"If a railroad president has any duties toward his stockholders, if a man occupying high public places has any duties toward the well-being of a great national industry, and if the railroads have any duties toward American steel rail makers in return for their services past and present, Mr. Vanderbilt's duty bids him plainly and openly give his reasons for this purchase."

When approached by a *Tribune* reporter, Mr. Vanderbilt pardonably declined to be brought to book after the fashion proposed. A "prominent official of the New York Central Railroad" proved less reticent, and explained the transaction in a way that, if true, reflects little credit upon the manufacturers of steel rails in this country. He said that the order was not given for the English rails until careful tests, chemical and other, had proved the English rails to be worth the price. The English manufacturers gave a guarantee of twelve years' wear, all rails not coming up to the standard to be replaced free of cost. Every American manufacturer applied to declined to furnish such a guarantee, five years being the longest time for which a guarantee was offered. "It is well known to railroad men," said the Central officer, "that the utmost limit of wear for American steel rails, as now manufactured, is five years, where they are subjected to the strain of heavy traffic such as continually passes over the New York Central road. Some of the English rails now laid on this road have been in constant use for many years without showing the least evidence of wear, while American steel, laid at the same time, has worn out, and must be replaced." That (these conditions being true) the English rails were the cheaper and the bargain a good one goes without telling.

There remains, however, a serious question for the American rail makers to answer, namely, Why are American rails inferior to the English? Mr. Earnshaw writes: "In justice to Mr. Vanderbilt, I will say that I believe it to be true that the American rails laid on his Western roads have worn out quicker than the foreign rails, but their life has not been sufficiently short to account for the difference in price."

On the contrary, the difference between a five years' guarantee and one for twelve years does amply justify the payment of a price larger by only 25 per cent. And the case against the American rail makers is even worse than appears on the face of this transaction. The American maker has in his favor a duty which practically doubles the cost of English rails in this country. Why is it, then, that the American manufacturer cannot make for $50 as good a rail as the English can for $25? The English price is no doubt exceptionally low just now; but the duty more than equalizes the conditions.

Since the foregoing was in type, the president of the American Iron and Steel Association, Mr. D. J. Morrell, has replied in the *Tribune* to the statements of the railway official quoted by the reporter of that paper. Mr. Morrell says that the alleged inferiority of American rails is not sustained by fact; and that the asserted brevity of the life of American steel rails "is a bold assertion of what is absolutely and entirely untrue." He says: "That some American steel rails may not under certain conditions last five years or even one year may be true, and it is equally true of foreign rails. The usual guarantee of American rails is five years' wear, with an agreement to replace all such as give out from fair usage within that time; and for this guarantee no extra charge is made. It is not fair for Mr. Vanderbilt to suppose that all American manufacturers of steel rails are so stupid as to make an inferior article, when, with the best of materials to start with, they can with the practice of intelligence and skill make a good rail with just as little cost as they can an inferior rail."

Further on Mr. Morrell says: "The hardness of temper of the rails is regulated by the amount of carbon the steel contains, and this is usually controlled by the roads that use them, some railroad managers requiring their rails much softer than others, preferring toughness and immunity against possible accidents from breaking, to the extreme hardness which would insure greater endurance. American rails have been used for more than ten years on many of our leading roads, and for the last six or eight years more than a million and a half tons have been put down, and I am ignorant of the first instance of any such complaint as would justify the assertion so boldly made by this 'prominent official,' indeed, I know exactly to the contrary."

In every large lot of rails there is a liability to be a few imperfect ones, from flaws in the ingot or from mechanical defects which cannot be detected by the closest and most careful inspection, but these imperfections usually disclose themselves during the first few months' service. This is equally true of English as well as American rails. The number of rails so failing within five years is so inconsiderable that the guarantee has never been considered any great hardship to manufacturers. If the utmost life of American rails is limited to five years, as asserted by a "prominent official," the New York Central might have its road kept constantly supplied with new rails under the usual American guarantee, without any expense to the company beyond the first outlay."

Touching the asserted twelve years' guarantee, Mr. Morrell says:

"I am not aware that Mr. Vanderbilt has ever asked for twelve years' guarantee from American makers, or even asked from them, certainly not from very many of them, at what price or on what terms they would supply his wants. His purchase of these foreign rails would seem to have some other motive than the one given. The 'economy' plan is too thin for credence."

While the indications are that the immediate interests of the Central Railroad may not have been the controlling element in determining this transaction, the makers of American steel rails are still left under the burden of a serious implication. It is not sufficient for them to deny the alleged inferiority of their rails. The charge must be disproved by specific and abundant evidence. The New York Central road is not the only road that has a large traffic, or that has tried American steel rails.

If other roads, under severe tests, have found American rails as durable as the English, their testimony would just now be of great value. If, as Mr. Earnshaw admits, they have not worn so well as English rails, it is the duty of the American makers to explain the cause, if they can, and remove it.

A REMARKABLE CONFLAGRATION—THE RIVER BETWEEN NEW YORK AND BROOKLYN SET ON FIRE.

One of the important receiving stations of the Standard Oil Company in this city is near the foot of Sixty-fifth street, on the bank of the Hudson River. Here the company have tanks for the storage of oil, which is brought directly into their premises in cars that come to the city over the New York Central and Hudson River Railway. From this station the crude oil is in part distributed in barrels to the shipping along the river, and to other points, but a large portion is transferred through a pipe line directly to the refinery at Hunter's Point, in Brooklyn. This pipe line extends under the streets of New York across the city to the East River, and thence under the bed of the river to the Brooklyn shore. The river at the point where the pipe line crosses is about three-quarters of a mile wide, a large and splendid stream, usually covered with sailing and steam vessels engaged in the ordinary services of the commerce of a great city like New York. The entire length of this oil pipe line is three miles, the oil being forced through it from the Hudson River to Brooklyn under a strong pressure, by means of a large Blake steam pump. On Sunday morning, April 20th, at a time when the river happened to be comparatively free from vessels, an appearance something like a water spout was observed on the river near the Brooklyn side. The water rose high up in the air and fell in graceful showers all around. In a very short time the surface of the channel was covered with oil, which naturally spreads rapidly on the surface of water and which was carried down stream also by the ebbing tide. This explained the unusual phenomenon. The oil pipe had burst at the bottom of the river and the oil was flowing in a big stream to the surface. Several little boys who were playing around the dock noticed the oil and promptly threw some lighted matches into the river. The oil ignited, and in a few seconds the whole river front was ablaze, and the dock also caught fire. The boys ran away rather more scared than happy. The fire engines were sent for as quickly as possible. Three responded. The fire on the dock, in rear of which are gas works, was quickly extinguished, and in about a quarter of an hour there was no appearance of fire on the river. But just as the firemen were about to leave, flames shot up here and there along the channel. Now and then, fanned by fitful gusts of wind, they lengthened enormously, and swept the fences and trees along the river front, scorching them here and there.

The oil continued to bubble up from the leak at the bottom of the sea, and the flames in that vicinity rose to a great height. It was not until all the oil in the pipe had risen to the surface and had mostly been consumed that the flames died out. This was fully four hours after the outbreak. The quantity of oil lost must have been very great. Beyond the scorching of a few vessels, the fences, trees, and the partial destruction of the dock, there was no other harm done.

Cleveland to be Lighted by Electricity.

We learn that the authorities of Cleveland, Ohio, have made a contract to light a large portion of the city with the Brush light. The lamp posts, which are very ornamental, and twenty feet high, have all been erected, and it is expected that the lamps will be placed in position in a short time. The results of this generous experiment in electric lighting will be noted with great interest by the public in general and electricians in particular.

PLASTER of Paris mixed with equal parts of powdered pumice stone makes a fine mould for casting fusible metals. The same mixture is useful for incasing articles to be soldered or brazed. Casts of plaster of Paris may be made to imitate fine bronzes by giving them two or three coats of shellac varnish, and when dry applying a coat of mastic varnish and dusting on fine bronze powder when the mastic varnish becomes sticky.

AMERICAN INDUSTRIES.—No. 11.

THE MANUFACTURE OF SPOOL THREAD.

In our last issue we gave an illustrated description of the manufacture of sewing machines; we now present to our readers a description of the manufacture of an article without which, in its perfect form, sewing machines would be useless. Thread, although one of the smaller articles of manufacture, is the foundation of an immense industry, and the processes and machinery by which it is produced have been developed and perfected until it appears that there is little room for further improvement.

The primitive method of spinning cotton thread was to attach a bunch of the carded cotton to a forked stick called a distaff, and, holding it under the left arm, the cotton was drawn out and twisted with the left fore finger and thumb; the size and quality of the thread being regulated solely by the delicacy of the touch as it passed through the fingers. As soon as sufficient length was twisted to reach to the ground, the thread was wound upon a stick called a spindle. In this manner the spinsters of Old England made their thread, and it was not until the time of Henry VIII. that the spinning wheel—which had long been in use in India—was introduced into England. After this came the spinning jenny, then the spinning mule, and then a host of machines for various branches of textile manufacture.

Without doubt the manufacture of thread, as conducted at the establishment of Messrs. Clark, may be taken as an example of the best practice. Entering their extensive manufactory, in Newark, N. J., one can but notice, first of all, the system, order, and cleanliness that everywhere prevail; the gleam of polished machinery, the hum and flutter of the thousands of spindles, spools, and reels, the ceaseless progression of the material from the raw to the finished state, convince us that the world must use an enormous quantity of thread, and, while wondering "where in the world" it all goes to, we are informed that this establishment furnishes only a fraction of the thread consumed in the United States alone.

A spool of cotton appears a simple thing, but when it is considered that the thread, which is so even and so strong, is composed of six cords; that the filaments which compose each cord are straightened and made parallel and twisted; that two such cords are united and twisted together, and that three of the double cords are twisted to form a complete thread, it becomes a matter of wonder that it can be profitably done for the price at which the thread is afforded to the consumer.

The machinery of the Clark Thread Works is driven by two double Corliss engines of about 500 horse power each, and several smaller engines, the power amounting to about 1,400 horse power. The engines, as well as all of the other machinery about the establishment, are in perfect order and of the finest quality.

The cotton, as it comes from the bales, passes through machines called pickers, which pick it up loosely, removing burrs, dust, and other impurities by means of a vacuum. From the pickers it passes to the lap machines, where it is similarly treated and well flattened and compactly rolled up into laps preparatory to passing through the carding machines. In the carding machines, which are shown in the upper right hand view in the engraving (front page), the fibers are further cleaned, combed, and broken, and delivered in a narrow unbroken ribbon, called the sliver, to tall cans, in which, by ingenious mechanism, it is coiled. The filled cans are conveyed to the ribbon lap machines, where a number of the ribbons are united in a single lap several times wider than the single ribbon. These laps or rolls are now conveyed to the French combers, which, with perhaps the exception of the spooling machines, are the most interesting of all the machines used in thread manufacture. They are intermittent in their action, and comb out all the short staple, leaving only the long fibers to be worked into the thread. The sliver, as it passes from the combers, looks delicate and gauzy, more like a spider's web than anything else. The machine handles it delicately, and brings it together in a narrow ribbon and coils it in the cans. This operation, which is represented in the upper left hand view in the front page engraving, is of the greatest importance, as it removes the short fibers and arranges the long ones to the best advantage.

The ribbon is next drawn and twisted in the drawing frames, and is afterward further twisted in two separate machines before spinning, and is wound upon large spools, which are carried to the spinning mules, shown in one of the lower views in the engraving. In each of these machines there are several hundred spindles, which revolve very slowly as they are carried forward by the carriage in winding the thread on the spindle, but revolve with great speed as the carriage draws back in the operation of spinning. The spinning mules are entirely automatic in their action; the attendant has only to repair the broken threads, of which there are not many. From the spinning mules the cops go to the cop winders, where two strands are wound together on a single spool. These two strands are twisted in the machine shown in the small circular figure. The bobbins revolve at a speed of about 5,000 revolutions per minute, and the thread is wound on the bobbins by a simple differential arrangement.

Three of these double strands are twisted together, making the well known six-cord spool cotton, for which this company are justly celebrated.

The spools from the twisting machines are conveyed to the reeling machines, shown in the large central figure,

where the hanks are formed. When removed from these machines the hanks are inspected by experts, who, by long practice, are enabled to detect a very small variation in the size of the thread, or any other imperfections.

While the thread is in hanks it is passed to the bleaching house, where it is bleached twice, being subjected during the process to a thorough soaping. After bleaching, the hanks are dried and passed to the hank winding machine, where the thread is wound on large spools preparatory to spooling. The spools, we are informed, are made in Maine, it having been found that they could be made and shipped cheaper than the wood could be shipped and worked at the manufactory.

The spooling machines, which are shown in one of the lower views of the engraving, seem the very embodiment of ingenuity. They take the spools, hold them between centers, revolve them, start the thread, wind it back and forth with the utmost precision, making allowance for the beveled ends, stop when the required amount is wound, nick the spool, put in the thread, cut it off, and release the spool, all without attention. All that is required of the attendant is to see that thread is supplied, and to keep the hoppers full of spools.

The tickets which are placed on the ends of the spools are printed in the establishment, two steam lithographic presses being employed for the purpose. The bronze is applied to the tickets by a bronzing machine, and they are gummed and punched by hand.

The tickets are very rapidly applied to the spools by girls, who hold a small package of them in one hand, passing them one at a time into one side of the mouth, while they are taken by the other hand from the other side of the mouth and applied to the spools. By continued practice the hand becomes very dexterous.

The boxes which contain the spools are made by an army of girls, and the label and other printing is done in a printing office containing two Hoe cylinder presses and two other small presses.

The Clark thread is well known throughout the world, and the familiar trade mark, O. N. T., is the guarantee of a good article.

The New York office of Messrs. Clark is on Broadway, at Walker Street.

THERAPEUTIC MACHINERY.

We herewith give illustrations from *Engineering* of some very interesting machines exhibited by Messrs. Goransson & Co., of Stockholm, at the recent Paris Exhibition. These machines are intended for use in surgical gymnasia. The machine shown in Fig. 1 is intended for the development of the muscles of the wrist and arm, and is worked by means of the handle mounted on the spindle which carries the upper of two pulleys at the top of the frame. A crossed belt passes to a second pulley, on the axis of which is a crank that gives motion to a longlever hinged to a separate standard, and carrying a sliding weight by means of which the strain on the operator's wrist can be varied at will. The machine represented in Fig. 2 is specially intended for developing the muscles of the chest and back. The patient sits upon the stool in front of the machine, the height of which can be regulated at will; he then places his arms in the crutched rests, his back being toward the machine, and the latter is then started. Motion is imparted to the rests, which alternately recede and advance, as also does the padded lever below, the function of which is to exert a pressure against the patient's back, at the same moment that the rests recede, with the result of expanding his chest. The arrangement of the machine permits of the most minute adjustment for regulating the degree of expansion and speed of working.

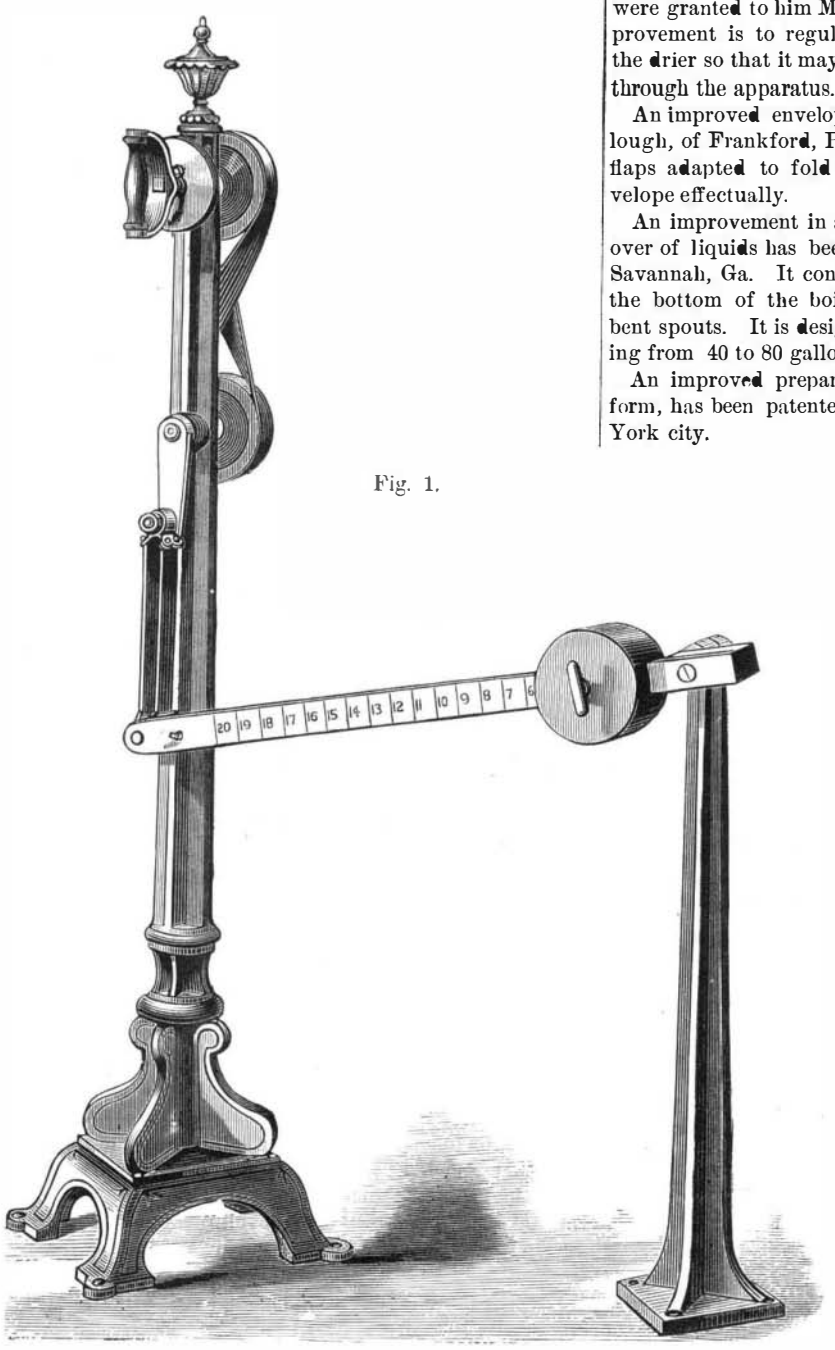

Fig. 1.

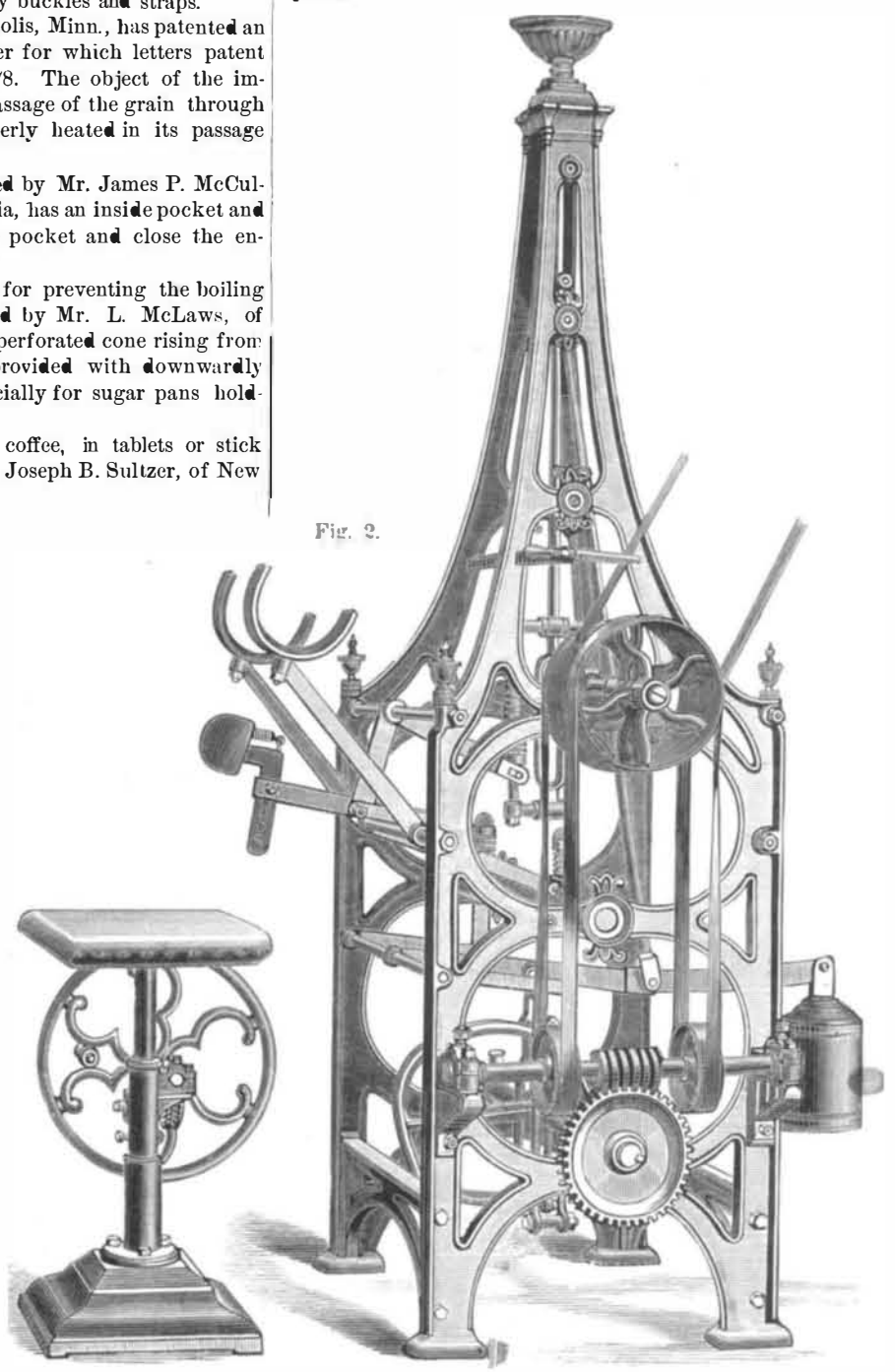

Fig. 2.

MISCELLANEOUS INVENTIONS.

Mr. Albert Back, of New York city, has patented a design for neck ruching, in which a new ornamental effect is secured by giving it two or more folds, arranged so as to present parallel sides running in the direction of the length of the ruching.

An improved roofing composition, recently patented by Mr. Joseph E. Bowen, of Leavenworth, Kansas, has a coal tar base, combined with other ingredients, that render it efficient and durable.

An improvement in cabinet bedsteads, in which the detachable head board and its base are combined with a rod which forms the axial support for the upper end of the folding bed frame, has been patented by Mr. Mark Crosby, of Wakefield, Mass.

An improvement in sounding boards for upright and other pianos has been patented by Mr. Albert H. Wood, of New York city. The object of this invention is to prevent the escape of vibrations, and to utilize to the greatest extent the vibrations of the strings.

A blinder for taming and restraining vicious cattle has been patented by Mr. Byron W. Webster, of Acra, N. Y. It consists of a metallic plate united to a U-shaped wooden piece which is secured in place by buckles and straps.

Mr. Peter Provost, of Minneapolis, Minn., has patented an improvement on the grain drier for which letters patent were granted to him May 21, 1878. The object of the improvement is to regulate the passage of the grain through the drier so that it may be properly heated in its passage through the apparatus.

An improved envelope, patented by Mr. James P. McCullough, of Frankford, Philadelphia, has an inside pocket and flaps adapted to fold inside the pocket and close the envelope effectually.

An improvement in apparatus for preventing the boiling over of liquids has been patented by Mr. L. McLaws, of Savannah, Ga. It consists of a perforated cone rising from the bottom of the boiler and provided with downwardly bent spouts. It is designed especially for sugar pans holding from 40 to 80 gallons.

An improved preparation of coffee, in tablets or stick form, has been patented by Mr. Joseph B. Sultzer, of New York city.

Mr. E. E. Hawkins, of New Lisbon, N. Y., has patented an improved whip socket, which is formed of wire coiled spirally, with its upper and lower coils closed together for receiving pieces of rubber for holding the whip.

Mr. William A. Bradford, of Goshen, Ind., has patented an improvement in school desks, in which the wooden slats forming the seat are secured by a cheap and novel fastening.

A cotton bale tie, in which the ordinary tie loop or buckle is used in connection with a fastening wedge, has been patented by Mr. Henry A. Burr, of Wilmington, N. C.

An improvement in dental forceps, in which the forceps, with the exception of the inside of the jaws, are covered with a non-conductor of electricity, has been patented by Mr. Amase Cobb, of Beloit, Ohio. The forceps are used in connection with a galvanic battery.

Mr. R. E. Miles, of Louisville, Ky., has patented an improved breast collar, which may be readily adjusted to any sized neck and allows great freedom to the motion of the horse.

An improvement in Venetian blinds, which consists in a novel mode of connecting the slats and a new arrangement of cords for operating the slats, has been patented by Mr. Thomas Langdon, of Castroville, Cal.

Mr. Henry N. Rawson, of Brattleborough, Vt., has devised an improved renovator for cleaning and renovating feathers, horse hair, and similar material, by exposing it to the action of steam. The apparatus cannot be clearly described without an engraving.

An improved fire escape ladder, devised by Mr. Joseph R. Winters, of Chambersburg, Pa., is designed to carry the fire engine hose as well as to afford a means of escape from burning buildings. It is strong, simple, and effective.

An improvement in portable railway tracks has been patented by Mr. Joseph Morgan, Jr., of Wilmington, Del. The invention consists in combining shoes made of channel shaped iron with the rail sections, so as to lock them securely together, and still admit of readily separating the sections.

Mr. Jacob Simonson, of Newark, N. J., has patented an improved railway platform guard, designed to protect passengers against falling or being pushed upon the track. It is readily folded out of the way to permit passengers to pass from the platform to the cars.

An improved steam railway brake has been patented by Messrs. J. F. Waite and S. Gavit, of Tyrone, Pa. It requires no brake couplings and it is always in condition to operate.

THERAPEUTIC MACHINERY.

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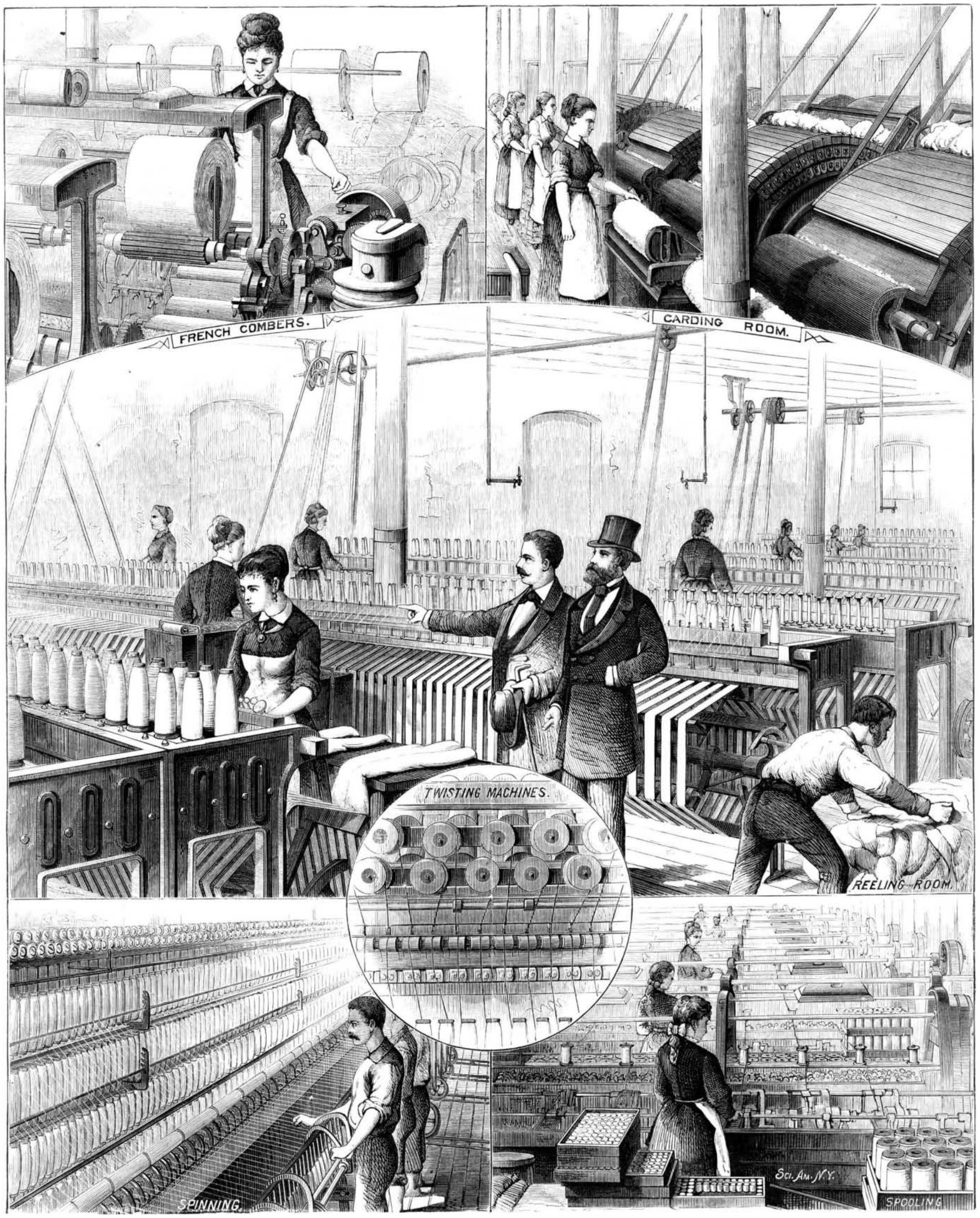

CLARK'S SPOOL THREAD FACTORY.—(See page 289.)