

Agnes' needle, of some sort, must have been in use, since we read that our first parents sewed together, together for the first time, and the sewing implies a needle of some kind, and was only a thorn. But the origin of needles is involved in obscurity. In Abbott's Egyptian Museum, among the articles found wrapped up with the embalmed bodies, are several needles, chiefly of bronze. They are from two to four inches long, and very clumsy. But Sir Gardner Wilkinson, who has made closer researches into Egyptian antiquities than any other modern traveller and author, and who minutely examined the remains of the ancient garments, gives a very decided opinion that these must have been sawed with very fine needles. In the first century of the Christian era, needles of bronze, for sewing and knitting, were in ordinary use, and such have been discovered in the long-buried, but now considerably disturbed, cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii. The present steel needle was introduced into England about three hundred years ago, during the reign of Elizabeth, and at that time was almost exclusively made in Spain. Much secrecy was observed as to the process of manufacture. A few Spaniards, who had settled in England, kept the process to themselves, and, at the high prices which they were able to exact, did well. But in the year 1650, various needle manufactories were established in different portions of England, and the trade began to assume considerable importance. The first mills used in the needle trade were horse mills. Three mills were used for scouring and pointing the needles, superdrying, and the method of wrapping up the needles in buckram with very dry oil, and oil, and rolling them to and fro by the movement of the workman's feet. The earliest needles made in England were square-eyed, of shape most readily produced. It was with square-eyed needles that Mary, Queen of Scots, worked those beautiful tapestries for the walls of her prison cell. After many fruitless attempts, drill-eye were successfully brought out in 1826; two years later the burnishing machine, which gave a delicate finish to the eye, was introduced. Previous to the year 1840, needles were hardened in water, during which process the majority became crooked, and straightening the crooks was, in consequence, an occupation for a considerable number of work-people. In the year mentioned, however, a Reddick manufacturer revived the practice of hardening in oil, and the resulting needles were crooked pieces with the exception instead of being the rule. These crooked needles were the cause of the trouble, and the enterprising manufacturer out of town. Eventually, the revived process came to be generally adopted. A pointing machine is the latest invention of importance in the needle trade. The variety of needles made at the present time is wonderful, the surgeon, tailor, harness-maker, blindor, soil-worker, sail-maker, saddler, embroiderer, etc., each requiring needles of shapes, sizes and lengths almost infinite. The Chinese, who have proved themselves so ingenious in many ways, supply their own requirements in the needle way, and it is not until we come to the more ancient in the Colonial East, that we find needles. Certain it is that round-eyed needles were made in China long before the primitive square-eyed ones were known in England.