

THE SPHINX AND THE PYRAMIDS.

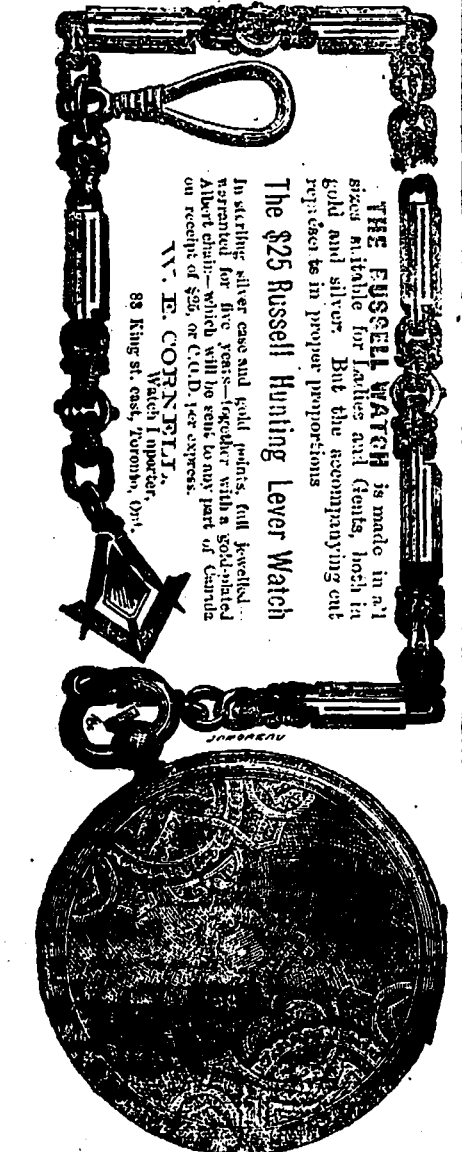
The late Lord Elgin briefly but picturesquely describes his visit to the pyramids in Egypt: "We pushed on over the heaps of sand and debris, or probably covered-up tombs, which surround the base of the pyramids, when we suddenly came in face of the most remarkable object on which my eye ever lighted. Somehow or other I had not thought of the Sphinx till I saw her before me. There she was in all her imposing magnitude, couched on the margin of the desert, looking over the fertile valley of the Nile, and her gaze fixed on the east as if in earnest expectation of the sunrise. And such a gaze! The mystical light and deep shadows cast by the moon gave to it an intensity which I cannot attempt to describe. To me it seemed a look, earnest, searching, but unsatisfied. For a long time I remained transfixed, endeavoring to read the meaning conveyed by this wonderful eye; but I was struck after a while by what seemed a contradiction in the expression of the eye and mouth. There was a singular gentleness and hopefulness in the lines of the mouth, which appeared to be in contrast to the anxious eye. The upper part of the face spoke of the intellect striving, and striving vainly, to solve the mystery—(What mystery? the mystery, shall we say, of God's universe or man's destiny?)—while the lower indicated a moral conviction that all must be well, and that this truth would in good time be made manifest. We could hardly tear ourselves away from this fascinating spectacle to draw nearer to the great pyramid, which stood beside us, its outline sharply traced in the clear atmosphere.

We walked round and round it, thinking of the strange men whose ambition to secure immortality for themselves had expressed itself in this giant creation. The enormous blocks of granite, brought from one knows not where, built up one knows not how; the form selected solely for the purpose of defying the assaults of time; the contrast between the conception embodied in these constructions and the talk of the frivolous race by whom we are surrounded, and who seemed capable of no thought beyond a desire for daily 'backshish,'—all this seen and felt under the influence of the dim moonlight was very striking and impressive. We spent some time in moving from place to place along the shadow cast by the pyramid upon the sand, and observing the effect produced by bringing the moon sometimes to its apex, and sometimes to other points on its outline. I felt no disposition to exchange for sleep the state of dreamy half-consciousness in which I was wandering about; but at length I laid down on the shingly sand, with a block of granite for a pillow, and passed an hour or two, sometimes dozing, sometimes wakeful, till one of my attendants warned me that the sun would shortly rise, and that it was time to commence to ascend the pyramid if we intended to witness from its summit his first appearance. The ascent, was, I confess, a much more formidable undertaking than I had anticipated; and our French friend gave in after attempting a few steps."

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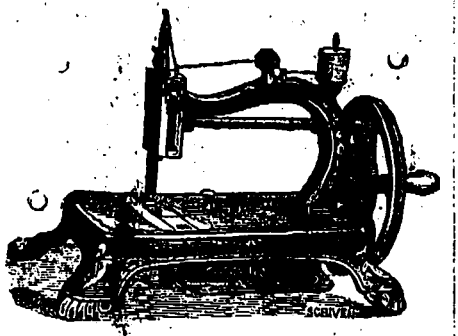
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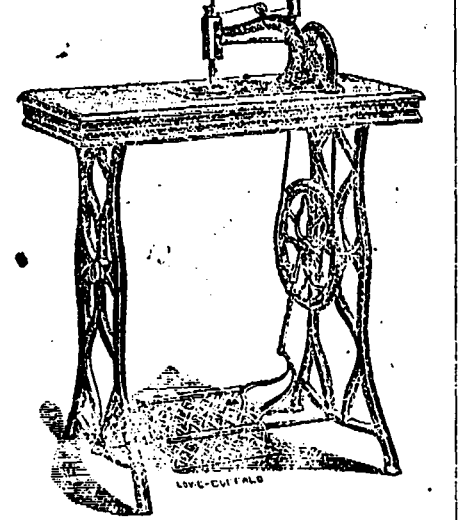
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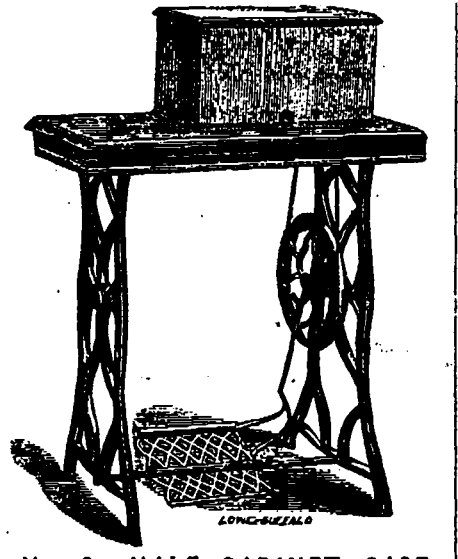
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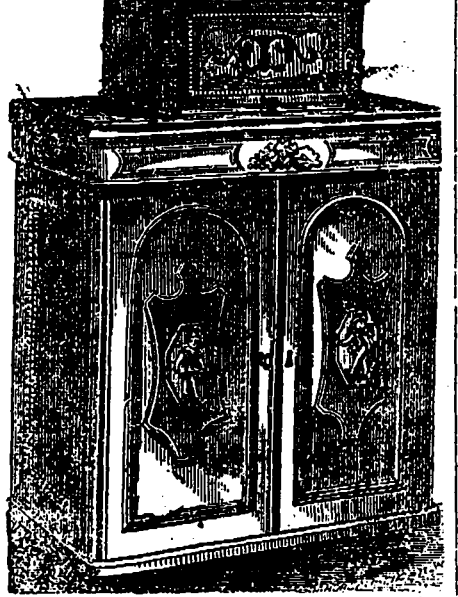
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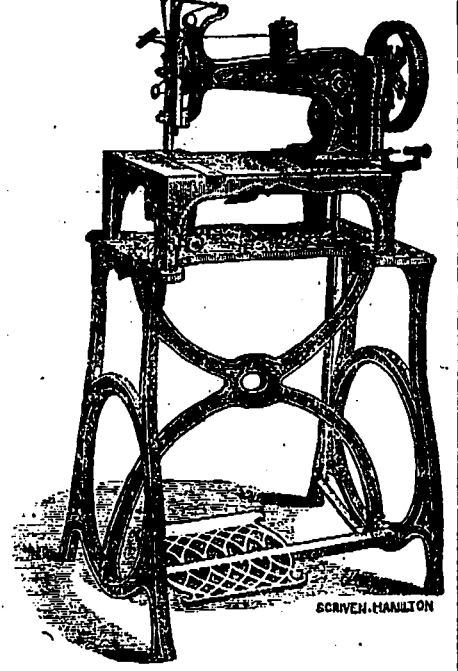
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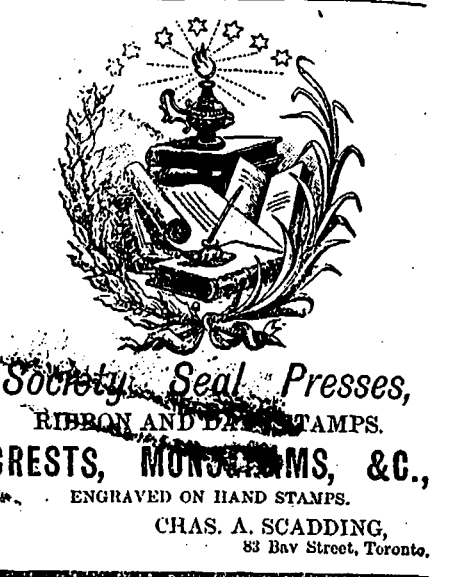
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