

# The AUTOMATIC AGE

## MILLIONS IN PENNIES

**YOU** live in an automatic age.

By merely dropping a coin in the slot you can buy recreation, information, food, even lodging, without contact with a single clerk.

The machines that make this possible are legion, developed to a high state of perfection in half a century of experiments. They are produced and serviced by a constantly growing industry employing several hundred thousand men.

Dispensing with the services of salesmen, cashiers and attendants, these machines offer standard products at low prices and are to be found in all parts of the country. Besides those owned individually, thousands are operated in "chains."



Top, a Fortune-Telling Machine That Talks to the Patron;  
Below, Coin-in-Slot Grocery Store without Clerks

There are more than 8,000 of these chain operators in the United States, and thousands more abroad.

The granddaddy of all America's coin machines was marketed in 1846 to sell—chewing tobacco! The customer dropped a dime in the slot, pushed a lever down and cut a neat, fresh "plug" for himself from a slab inside the machine.

Just now, the marble-board recreation machines, or "pin games," are the public favorites. Manufacturers estimate that 100,000 of them are in operation in America. In Illinois, it is estimated that \$6,000,000 was spent in these machines in 1930, the last year for which figures are available. In Youngstown, Ohio,



the games attracted such interest that the city council had to pass a special ordinance to force them to close at one a. m. so the townspeople would get some sleep!

The factories which turn out these devices have been working overtime with extra crews to keep abreast of orders that are pouring in. They exported 15,628 machines worth \$746,692 in 1931, and expect exports this year to top the million-dollar mark in value.

Besides the pin games, food machines will sell you, literally, everything from soup to nuts. An automatic grocery has been perfected. It sells canned goods, packaged foods and small parcels of things usually sold in bulk. The housewife drops the required coin in the slot, pushes a plunger and a panel slides down, disclosing the product she desires resting in a little cubicle. She lifts this out and her shopping for this particular article is finished, without an annoying wait for a clerk or

time-wasting conversation. The designer built this vender after his wife complained that an impertinent clerk had made her morning's shopping unpleasant.

One of the first springless scales, the Everett, was imported from England in 1886, and its earnings astounded everyone. In 1888, the first United States patent on a coin-operated scale was granted. L. W. Baldwin, accountant and inventor, who later became president of the Empire Trust Co. of New York, founded one of the early day scale-manufacturing companies, and this firm at one time earned greater dividends than Anaconda copper!

On New York's Bowery, the famous "Street of Forgotten Men," an automatic hotel has been opened. The guest enters, selects a tiny room shown by a sign on the lock to be unoccupied, deposits a quarter in a slot on this same lock, and enters. Inside he finds a cot, made up, hooks and hangers for his clothing, a chair, mirror, wash basin, soap, towels and privacy for the night.

Drink venders form an important



Top, Apparatus That Reads "Bumps" of Head; Center, One of the Many Pin Games; Below, Newspaper Vending Machine



unit in the coin machine army. One that sells liquids that have a tendency to stratify, such as milk, just has been patented. It has a plunger which stirs up the liquid—mixing, say, the milk and cream thoroughly—before pouring a glassful. One called the Auto-mixer, in use in England, mixes more than 300 different drinks! The buyer deposits a coin, pushes a plunger, and then dials the ingredients of his drink on a device similar in appearance and operation to the telephone-number dial. A special glass-washing apparatus is a part of this machine.

Most modern coin machines are equipped with cheat-proof slots. They cannot be operated with matches, cardboard, toothpicks, slugs or washers. Some, equipped with a mechanical "brain," will deliver the correct change with any purchase.

Most of the machines selling information are of the fortune-telling type. An exception is a device which asks questions which you answer by pressing various reply buttons. It then checks your intelligence and issues a record of your score.