

Miscellaneous.

Correspondence of the Scientific American.

WASHINGTON CITY, Dec. 1st, 1849.

Within the past few days this city has been transformed, as it were by magic, from comparative quiet to a state of the most intense excitement. Politicians of every grade and description are rapidly congregating at the great political arena, all wanting something, which they are determined to obtain if perseverance and importunity upon the high pressure system can avail. From the present time to the close of the Session, stagnation will be unknown. But in this age of steam and electricity it will not do to stand still. Motion, action, progress—are the words which now fill the whole world with their stirring demands, making humanity's heart pulsate with a stronger bound. There is now something for all to do. The world is becoming wider in magnitude, closer in interest, and more eventful than of old: not in deeds of barbarism, but in the leaping, vivifying impulses of a better birth of the soul.

The official communication of Lieut. Maure, in favor of a railroad from the Mississippi to the Pacific, is a very interesting paper, and it is thought he satisfactorily demonstrates that such a road will be the best and the most efficient fortification that can be devised for the protection of those distant shores. In support of his assertion he alludes to the following fact, which belongs to the history of the times:—"In the difficulties with Great Britain, pending the North Eastern Boundary Question, that power, before she sent her Minister Plenipotentiary to Washington with her ultimatum, proceeded to assemble on our coasts and around us, a fleet greater than the whole American navy; and notwithstanding she was engaged in two distant and expensive wars, one third of the whole standing army of Great Britain was sent to North America. Her sea captains had instructions in case a certain contingency should arise, to proceed, and without further notice to commence hostilities by an attack upon our frontier seaport towns; war was to be declared at the cannon's mouth.—Suppose the attack had been made upon New York, and that the systems of railroads and magnetic telegraphs in the old States had been then as complete as they are now—before the echo of the first broadside of her "wooden walls" had died away in the highlands of Neversink, the magnetic telegraph would have announced the fact of war, bloody war, in all parts of the country, and the next hour would have found the trains of a thousand engines, filled with soldiers from the North, the South, and the West, all speeding with terrible rapidity to the scene of action."

This is a striking illustration of the advantage of rail roads, and if the alternative could be submitted to our military men, as to whether, in defending the country, they would rather have the present fortifications without the railroads, or the railroads without the fortifications, there would be but little doubt as to their choice.

As usual, there are some scores of inventive philosophers on here for the purpose of asking aid from Congress in building their models. There are three men with the balloon mania, one of whom pledges his sacred honor that if the Committee of Ways and Means will recommend an appropriation of \$10,000, he will convey the three hundred members through the air, in spite of the wind, to Baltimore and back again in less than two hours. He also proposes to carry the U. S. Mails for one-eighth the present rates, dropping them at the several stations with the least possible delay. The advocates of the cheap postage system had better see to it.

Another genius is prepared to communicate a secret to Congress, by which "grubs and worms, which infest fruit trees, can be effectually destroyed." He values the secret at the small sum of \$100,000.

There are at the capital several models of rotary pumps, one of which, it is said, is capable of throwing up nearly 1000 gallons per minute. I presume it is the same as that or-

dered by Capt. Stockton for his gold mine in Virginia.

I conversed with a gentleman from your city this morning, who feels confident that he has at last hit upon a plan for establishing a telegraphic communication with Europe. Should this ever be accomplished, what a proud day will it be for science! The blue waves of the Atlantic once conquered, we could then communicate with the whole world, and the inhabitants thereof would soon necessarily become "one language and one speech."

Mr. Leavens, of Springfield, Mass., is here putting up his patent "sash and blind machines;" they work admirably, so much so, that there was a keen competition for the purchase of the right for this district. It is to be regretted, however, that there are no competent mechanics here, for when a fine model is wanted, the order is almost invariably sent North. The fact is there is so much false pride here that a mechanic is looked upon as an inferior being, and the expression "he is only a mechanic" is quite common. In such a state of society, it cannot be expected that the skillful artisan will take up his abode where he and his family are treated with contempt. If the hundreds of clerks who are daily trembling lest they shall be turned out of office, were good mechanics, it would save them a world of trouble. *

The Spirit World.

There has been quite an excitement in Rochester, N. Y., about mysterious sounds heard by visitors in the presence of three bespirited young ladies. Committees of ladies and gentlemen have been appointed to try and find out the cause, but all in vain. The ladies' committee divested the bespirited damsels of their clothing to find out whether that something or other, we suppose, was not concealed underneath, but the sounds were heard just as well. They were placed on feather beds and all sorts of non-electric conductors, but the sounds were heard just the same—thus proving, no doubt, that there is no relationship between spirits and magnetic currents. The sounds reported to be heard, are certain raps on the floor or wall, and these raps have been formed into a kind of alphabet, to repeat certain names, &c. (queer, this, very.) We perceive by the names of some of the gentlemen on the committees, that they are men of high standing in Rochester, and some we know personally. It will all turn out to be a piece of nonsense, because the raps and all that has been done, is stuff—nothing sensible or of utility. All ghost stories are made up of just such miserable fiddle-faddle—and we all know that the swallowing of pins, mounting the air on broomsticks, &c., constitute the amount of witch learning.

The late Steamboat Explosion at New Orleans.

From testimony which has been adduced since this most terrible accident took place, it is very evident that the cause of the explosion was a want of water in the boilers. Parts of the boilers that have been found exhibit the action of fire, which should have been sound, if covered with water. The boat was resting on mud, and the pumps are supposed to have been choked, or did not draw any water. In such a case as this, we see what recklessness and want of care does. The ultimate cause of such an explosion, must be a commingling of the liberated gasses of the water and some other gas, forming an explosive gas like carburetted hydrogen when mixed with a certain amount of the atmosphere. Its expansive powers must be very extraordinary, for one piece of the boiler went through two cotton bales and cut down two iron posts. No cannon ball could have done the like of this. We therefore believe that some other gas must mix with the elementary gasses of the water, to produce such terrific effects as those which result from steam-boiler explosions. Of one thing we have no doubt—that is, our engineers on the western waters use steam of too high pressure, and the boilers of many of the steamboats are made of very inferior iron.

A cotton factory is about to be established at Wilmington, N. C., by an English manufacturer.

Alleged Burying Alive.

In the midst of exaggeration and invention, there is one undoubted circumstance, says the Quarterly Review, which formerly excited the worst fears: the fact that bodies were often found turned in their coffins and the grave-clothes disarranged. But what was ascribed, with seeming reason, to the throes of vitality, is now known to be due to the agency of corruption. A gas is developed in the decayed body which mimics by its mechanical force many of the movements of life. So powerful is this gas in corpses that have lain long in the water, that M. Devergie, the physician to the Morgue at Paris, the author of a text-book on legal medicine, says that unless secured to the table, they are often heaved up and thrown to the ground. Frequently, strangers seeing the motion of the limbs, run to the keeper of the Morgue, and announce with horror that a person is alive. All bodies, sooner or later, generate gas in the grave; and it constantly twists about the corpse, blows out the skin till it trends with distention, and sometimes bursts the coffin itself. When the gas explodes with a noise imagination has converted it into an outcry or groan; the grave has been reopened; the position of the body confirmed the suspicion, and the laceration been taken for evidence that the wretch had gnawed his flesh in the frenzy of despair. So many are the circumstances which will constantly occur to support a conclusion that is more unsubstantial than the fabric of a dream.

Something for Astronomers to get up a Discussion About.

Prof. Matteson, who is lecturing on Astronomy in Newark, quite startled his audience, says the Newark Daily Advertiser, by indulging in several curious speculations in regard to the curse resting upon our globe as the results of the first transgressions, and upon the question of its having extended to the moon. The question of the moon's participation in the final conflagration of our globe, and of her continued attendance upon the "New Earth," after the Day of Judgement, as she did upon our new made world before the fall of Adam, were also considered.

[There is one question which should be settled by believers in the Bible before they begin to speculate upon the manner of the moon's destruction, and that is, the preparation of man for the world's destruction.]

Copper at Pittsburg.

The works erected at Pittsburg for the smelting of Lake Superior Copper, now smelt from six to eight tons per day. The Detroit Free Press, remarking upon this, says the amount of minerals melted this year is 900,000 pounds—the product of which is 540,000 or 60 per cent. But as copper is largely mixed with the slag to be melted over, the average yield is estimated at 65 per cent. From the amount of metal received and that to receive, about 600 tons of copper will be made this year at the Pittsburg furnace.

The capitalists of Pittsburg seem determined to make something out of our mineral resources. It would seem, that if copper can be transported to Pittsburgh and there smelted at a large profit, that capitalists might reap large profits from smelting works here. Having a direct water communication by steam vessels with the mining regions, and having every facility that could be offered anywhere for the erection of smelting works, manufacture and stripping of the smelted copper, it seems strange that our own capitalists take so little interest in the matter.

The Free School law submitted to the people of the State of New York at the recent election, has been adopted by the following vote: For Free Schools, 249,972; against Free Schools, 91,951. Majority, 157,521.—This is a glorious majority against the advocates of ignorance and darkmindedness.

Professor Kollenati, of Berlin, has propounded a theory that men shed their skins as animals do their coats, and that like them they assume a thicker or a thinner covering, according to the climate in which they reside. The professor is correct, but rather late in his declarations, to be considered a new discoverer.

Gliddon's Panorama of the Nile.

This Panorama was opened for a primary private exhibition, to the faculty of the New York press, and the friends of Mr. Gliddon, on Tuesday of last week. The Panorama of the Nile, as a work of art, is unequalled by any that we have ever seen. The figures of horses and camels, that compose part of the scenes, were painted by a master-hand—they are more like living figures than representations. The work is derived from the studies of Mr. Bonomi, the traveller and artist, Messrs. Henry Warren, Fahey, John Martin and Edward Corbould, of London, were the artists—a galaxy of talent which would let no poor piece of workmanship pass out of their hands. Mr. Warren is President of the Water Color Society, and is a man of fame.

We have every thing to say in favor of the panorama, but have to regret that the compliment to the gentlemen, (and ladies too) of the Press, was enough to press the very essence of good nature out of them. It was too crowded by far.

Hartford Arts Union.

The Association composed of mechanics, manufacturers and artisans, at Hartford, Ct., has completed its organization, and elected its officers. We have received a copy of the constitution, and see a very excellent article in the Hartford Courant, explaining its objects. We cannot but say a good word for this Institution. All the people in Hartford are acquainted with its objects by this time, and every true-hearted man must respond to their nobleness of aim. No young man in Hartford can plead any excuse for not joining it, the terms are so moderate. The names of the gentlemen who have been elected to office is a sure guaranty to us, that it will soon be an Institution of which Hartford will feel proud.

Interesting Fact in Grafting.

Du Hamel, the celebrated French pomologist and horticulturist, ingrafted a young lemon, of the size of a pea, upon the branch of an orange tree. It grew there, ripened, and had all the qualities of the lemon, without partaking of any of the properties of the orange. It is evident, in this instance, that the stalk of the lemon changed the color, taste and smell of the juices of the orange tree. And from this experiment, we have reason to conclude, that all the different figures, colors, tastes, and smells, which we find in different plants, are formed in the plants themselves.

Worcester Mechanics' Association.

We have received a copy of the Reports of the different Committees that were appointed to examine the merits of the machine, works of art, &c., which were exhibited at the late (Second Annual) Exhibition of the Worcester County Mechanics Association. We wish that we had room to copy all these reports; the language is so judicious and the ability of the various committees, for their different duties, so manifest, that we cannot but look upon it as a valuable commentary upon many works of art.

Convention of Iron Masters.

A Convention of a number of iron masters of the United States, met at Pittsburg two weeks ago, and published a number of resolutions against an *ad valorem* duty. They want a duty of \$9 put on every ton of iron, when priced at \$15, and to be reduced as this price increases; and passed resolutions calling upon Congress to do something to relieve their trade.

New British Coinage.

The British Government has commenced to make a new currency or coin upon the American Decimal System: cents and florins are to be used—the cent to be about one half an American cent—the florin 100 cents (50 American.) They might with more good sense have adopted the American currency in toto.

Pennsylvania supports a population of only 500,000 less than the whole six New England States, but the man-fame of the two are sadly disproportionate in favor of the Free School region.

The Fastest Steamboat in the World.

The steamboat *Alida* made a recent trip to Albany, from this city, running at the rate of 21 miles per hour.