

Miscellaneous.

Correspondence of the Scientific American.

WASHINGTON CITY, March 26, 1850.

From the debate in the House on the Appropriation Bill, you will perceive that in the affair of the Patent Office building, might has overcome right, and \$92,000 are to be taken from the Patent Fund to provide room for the Home Department. The ingenious mechanics of the country, through whose brains this money has flowed into the Treasury, will be indignant at such an act of injustice. But if the surplus Patent Fund is to be thus seized, ought not the fees to our own citizens to be reduced, so that there shall hereafter be no surplus? If we are to overcharge patentees, and erect our public buildings with the surplus, we shall be a century behind the age. When the bill comes up in the Senate, I hear that an attempt will be made in that body to get the matter right.

It is not contemplated that the proposed alterations of the Capitol shall be commenced until after the close of the next short session. An addition of 150 feet will be made to each chamber. If the country shall continue to increase at the present rate, in the course of half a century we shall have a Delegation from the North Pole knocking for admittance.

There are now five memorials before the Post Office Committee of the Senate, from parties asking aid for the establishment of a Telegraphic communication with Europe via Behring's Straits.

The U. S. Supreme Court meets again next Monday, when the decision on the Wheeling Bridge case will be read.

Judson's Patent Steam Governor has been ordered for several printing offices in this city. It is in high repute and is much superior to the ball governing apparatus now commonly used.

There are several scientific monomaniacs still remaining here, to the great annoyance of members of Congress and the Heads of Departments. A few days ago a respectably dressed man, one of this class, forced his way into the private room of the Secretary of the Navy, having, as he alleged, business of the highest importance. He unfolded to the view of the amazed Secretary, several sheets of paper, containing plans of a terrific machine, to be called the "Exterminator," which the man declared would uproot and exterminate any island on the face of the globe in a very short period. The armament of the Exterminator was to be 1200 guns and as many scrapers, which, worked by powerful machinery, were to scrape away the earth with fearful velocity. Mr. Preston at last got rid of the fellow by referring him to the Chief Engineer, Mr. Haswell, who in turn, referred him to the youths in his office. They pretended to take the matter into grave consideration, and promised to make a report on the subject at an early day. Some of these genies are so much dreaded that I have known members of Congress subscribe to the stock for building models, as the only way of securing peace.

In the course of a week, I presume, we shall have an official report from the Committee appointed to investigate the causes of the accident at the Smithsonian building. Their report will cover the whole edifice, and from it we shall learn whether the architect or the mechanics are in fault.

Mr. T. B. King's official report on California, which contains a great amount of highly interesting scientific information, will be sent to Congress in a day or two.

Congress has made no further progress in the Woodworth Patent affair, but the lobby members are working like bees.

A person named Rufus Porter is here, endeavoring to form an Aerial Navigation Company, the stock to consist of 1500 shares at \$10 per share. The funds when raised are to be applied to the construction of an aerial ship capable of containing 150 passengers, and which, Mr. Porter says, will easily carry them to California or London in 3 or 4 days. He proposes to call for an installment of one dollar only per share, until after a machine has been built capable of carrying three persons,

and a journey has been made to Baltimore and back again, thereby demonstrating the feasibility of the plan. He says that several hundreds of persons have already bespoken passage. The prospectus, blanks and scrip for the proposed company are being printed by Mr. Greer. Among other advantages, Mr. Porter includes that of transporting soldiers for the Government in time of war. Only think of the astonishment of an enemy quietly encamped in the soft moonlight, having in the twinkling of an eye a whole regiment of Uncle Sam's Invincibles dropped upon them from a squadron of Porter's ships! But in process of time our enemies will have them also, so that hereafter contending squadrons must meet in mid air, while the peaceable portion of mankind can rest quietly below. Verily there are stirring times ahead. *

Miscellany of Foreign News.

By the last arrival from Europe, although our papers could see "no important news," we perceive that one of the most important motions ever brought before the British Parliament, was defeated by a majority of 150. The motion was introduced by old Joseph Hume, for leave to bring in a Bill to extend the elective franchise to household voters.

There has been very severe cold in Turkey, 150 persons were frozen to death within a few days, some in their houses and some on ship-board. The cold was severe there, but it would be moderate weather here.

The Railways in Russia are progressing rapidly, and when completed they will have the effect of cheapening grain in the Western markets of Europe.

Prof. Munch, of Copenhagen, the celebrated Dane, has discovered a rare manuscript in Latin, on a recent visit to the Orkney Islands, in Scotland. It is as old as the ninth century.

The screw steamer "City of Glasgow," is to leave that city on the 16th of April. She is 1,610 tons burden, with engines of 350 horse power. She is to be commanded by Captain Matthews, formerly of the Great Western.—Cabin passage to New York is £20; second cabin £12.

It is expected that Lady Franklin will soon visit the United States.

Dr. Dick has got a donation of 50 guineas (\$250) from a Society in London. The worthy Doctor is greatly respected everywhere.

The Europa beat the Hermann five days on the passage across from this port. Mr. Collins must show us something better than we can yet boast of. It pained us when they started, to see the imprudent comments about the race, before it was commenced. Well, we will yet learn to run as fast as the best of them.

Ravages of Insects.

A letter in the New Orleans Picayune states that many of the public records of Louisiana have been materially damaged, and rendered perfectly useless in cases of reference, by the ravages of a small insect, the same as that described by Humboldt and others travellers in South America and Mexico. The Recorder of the Parish of Carroll, La., writes that the entire acts of 1837, 1838, 1839, and up to 1841, are destroyed.

Canary Birds of No Value, Legally.

In the municipal court, lately, a lad named Michael O'Keefe was tried for the theft of three canary birds, and acquitted, the court instructing the jury that canary birds, according to the common law, were not of any value, and consequently not a subject of larceny.—[Boston Traveller.]

[We wonder where the judge of the above court studied common law. If the paragraph is true, we must say the decision was a very unjust one.]

The Wonderful Scalp Story.

We perceive the old story of the eight packages of scalps found after the surrender of Burgoyne, is going the rounds of the papers again, with great outbursts of editorial comment. It would be well if some of our editors were better historians.

General Taylor's plantation has been submerged—that is, his Natchez one—he has another, however.

Wire Suspension Bridge.

The wire suspension bridge erected across the Cumberland river at Nashville, will be entirely completed during the month of May next. The Nashville Whig says:

The length of the bridge is 656 feet, and the whole length of the bridge and embankment 1956 feet. Width of superstructure 28 feet—carriage way 20; two footways, each 4 feet.—The bridge will span the Cumberland opposite the southeast corner of the public square of the city, at an elevation of 110 feet above low water, over the main steamboat channel.—Base of pier 60 by 20 feet, solid mason work; anchorage 60 by 56 on the north side; solid limestone cliff on the south side. There are to be 16 cables, each cable composed of 200 strands of No. 10 wire each wire tested to bear 1500 lbs. The whole work is calculated to bear a weight of 4,800,000 lbs. or 2,400 tons. The cost of this magnificent structure is estimated at but \$100,000, though the Wheeling Bridge, 1,010 feet long, cost \$225,000.

Great Invention in Engineering.

The Cincinnati Times says that Mr. Sellers, of that city, formerly of Philadelphia, and known as one of the most ingenious mechanics in the United States, has just completed an invention which it is said, will simplify and revolutionize the whole science of engineering.—Mr. Sellers submitted his machine to the inspection of Dr. Locke, T. W. Bakewell, Mr. Riecke, and other scientific gentlemen, all of whom approve of it, and consider it a great triumph of mechanical skill. The machine, the Times learns, combines the operation of the perambulator with that of the pentagraph, giving profile lines of plats, surveys, and measuring distances. By trundling it over a track of country, a more accurate survey for a railroad can be made than by any other method; and at least fifteen miles per day mapped with correctness—altitudes, depressions and space. It can also be used on our streets, thus dispensing with the services of an engineer.

Railroad in Chili.

Mr. Allen Campbell, C.E., of Albany N. Y., has been chosen by the government of Chili, to construct a railroad from Caldera to the Pacific, a distance of 55 miles. The whole elevation to be overcome does not exceed eleven hundred feet, of which all but four or five miles of fifty feet to the mile are of moderate grades. The great business of this road will be to transport copper and copper ores from the mines near Copiapo, which are among the richest in the world—coal for smelting purposes will be an important item, as also provision for the mining region.

Robert Fulton.

A Fulton Monument Association has been formed at Troy, Indiana, for the purpose of collecting funds to erect upon some bold promontory on the Lower Ohio, a monument to the memory of the father of Steam Navigation.—Fulton rests on the banks of the Ohio, as he wished; and the noise of the passing steamboats has become his lullaby far beyond his most sanguine hopes.—[Phila. Gazette.]

This must be a mistake. John Fitch, not Robert Fulton, sleeps on the banks of the Ohio.

Wonderful Locomotive.

We are informed that there will shortly be brought before the public, a new locomotive, in which the requirements of either steam, fire, air or water will be dispensed with; its power of traction, while effective, will be perfectly safe—by it one half at least of present working expenses will be saved. Advocates of universal peace look forward with hope; this agent will exert a powerful influence on all nations. Distant parts of the world, where steamships, from the expense of fuel, have not been, will soon be reached with facility. This motive power will advance all nations by a larger stride than ever steam has yet made.—[London Mining Journal.]

[We will await with no small amount of impatience, the debut of the above invention. The Californian balloon is nothing to it.]

President Taylor handed Reynold's self-sharpening plow last Monday, at Washington, and beat all competitors.

Works on Science and Art.

ANNUAL OF SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY.—This is a very neat volume, edited by David A. Wells of the St Lawrence Scientific School, Cambridge, and by Geo. Bliss, Jr.: for sale by L. Colby, No. 122 Nassau street, New York. This is a neat volume and a useful one. It is a collection of yearly facts relating to Mechanics, Useful Arts, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, &c. It is adorned with a likeness of L. Agassiz, the eminent Naturalist, and pupil of the celebrated Baron Cuvier. This is a work which we have had in our mind's eye for some years, after the manner of *Times*. We are happy to see such a work published in our country, and so well edited—may we be cheered with the smiles of its countenance every year. It contains a number of extracts from the Scientific American. Such a book has long been wanted in America. It should receive a wide-spread patronage.

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF CHEMISTRY.—This splendid work presenting a complete and extended view of the present state of Chemical science, edited by Jas. Booth, Professor of Chemistry, and Campbell Morfitt, author of "Applied Chemistry" is now completed. It is a work which must and should find a place in every library. A work arranged alphabetically, upon any branch of science, is always to be preferred, because the reference is easy and there is no confusion in the arrangement. The old Chemical Dictionary of Dr. Ure, is now obsolete, owing to the astonishing progress of Chemical discovery, within a few years. This work is wrote up to the present time—embracing descriptions of the latest discoveries.

Bayne's Panorama.

We paid a visit a few evenings since to Bayne's Panorama of a voyage to Europe, together with the most interesting portion of the celebrated river Rhine. We can truly say that it was an evening well spent. The truthful illustrations of what we have often read, seems to impress the memory stronger than even books can do, for the most attentive student. As a work of art it has no superior, and we trust the proprietor will be well rewarded for the time and expense which he has bestowed upon the work. An entertainment of this character is of absolute advantage. The same cannot be said of all which exist in cities and float about the country.

Camera Lucida.

The demand for these useful instruments for teaching the inexperienced the art of draughting has been so great for the past few weeks that our supply of them has become quite exhausted. Those who have ordered Cameras and not received them, are informed that we have a large lot in the hands of our manufacturers, which will be completed in about 10 days, when their orders will be promptly filled.

Back Volumes Scientific American.

We have remaining a few more copies, Volume 4 bound, for \$2.75; but of previous Volumes, no complete sets either bound or in sheets. Of Vols. 3 and 4 we can furnish sets of about 40 numbers each (not consecutive,) for one dollar per set; of Vols. 2 and 3, sets of about 50 Nos. (containing both Vols.) at the same price (one dollar). We have parcels done up ready for mailing of all the different Vols. referred to above, and on receipt of \$1, either of the sets ordered will be immediately forwarded by mail.

Western Journal.

We are in the regular receipt of this able magazine; devoted to Agriculture, Manufacture, Mechanics, &c. Its motto is "Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts are the basis of civilization." It is published by Tarver & Risk, of St. Louis, monthly.

Marrying a Deceased Wife's Sister.

The bill, in the British Parliament, to permit the husband to marry with his deceased wife's sister, has been carried through a second reading by a majority of 52; there being ayes 182, nays 130.

Hail stones of from 6 to 11 inches in circumference, fell at Madison, Ind., on the 17th inst.