SCIENCE FOR THE PEOPLE.

THE ALASKA GLACIERS.—A writer in *The San Francisco Bulletin* is enthusiastic over the great glaciers near Fort Wrangel, Alaska. Standing at the mouth of the fiord, he says, the water foreground is of a pale, milky-blue color, from the suspended rock-mud issuing from beneath the grinding glacier—one smooth sheet sweeping back five or six miles, like one of the lower reaches of a great river. At the head the water is bounded by a barrier wall of bluish-white ice, from five to six hundred feet high, a few mountain tops crowned with snow appearing beyond it. On either hand stretched a series of majestic granite rocks from three to four thousand feet high, in some places bare, in others forested, and all well patched with yellow-green chaparral and flowery gardens, especially about half-way up from top to bottom, and the whole built together in a general, varied way into walls, like those of Yosemite Valley, extending far beyond the ice-barrier, one immense brow appearing beyond the other, while their bases are buried in the glacier. This is in fact a Yosemite Valley in process of formation, the modelling and sculpture of the walls nearly completed and well planted, but no groves as yet, or gardens, or meadows, on the raw and unfinished bottom. The whole front and brow of this majestic glacier are gashed and sculptured into a maze of yawning chasms and crevasses, and a bewildering variety of strange architectural forms, appalling to the strongest nerves, but novel and beautiful beyond measure—clusters of glittering lance-tipped spires, gables and obelisks, bold outstanding basilons and plain mural cliffs, adorned along the top with fretted cornice and battlement, while every gorge and crevasse, chasm and hollow was filled with light. Along the sides we could see the mighty flood grinding against the granite with tremendous pressure, rounding the outswelling bosses, deepening and smoothing the retreating hollows, and shaping every portion of the mountain walls into the forms they were meant to have, which in the fullness of appointed time the ice-tool should be lifted and set aside by the sun. Back two or three miles from the front the current is now probably about 1,200 feet deep; but when we examine the walls, the grooved and rounded features, so surely glacial, show that in the earlier days of the ice-age they were all overswept, the glacier having flowed at a height of from three to four thousand feet above its present level.

THE GREAT LURAY CAVERNS.—Dr. F. P. MacLean, of Washington, gave the Maryland Academy of Sciences the other day an interesting sketch of his researches in the Luray caves of Page County, Virginia. There are evidences of three ancient openings through which water once flowed, carrying along mud, stone and other debris and in some of the rooms this deposit reaches nearly to the roof, being some several feet in thickness. Of these three discovered openings but one has been made accessible, and this one was unknown to the inhabitants of the vicinity until last year, although, as was plainly shown, the cave has been in some parts completely smoked over by fire, the deposit of soot being very thick. The removal of large patches of the stalactites from the floor, to make it smooth and more easily used, show something more than accident; while the recent deposit upon the fractured rock shows that a long period of time has elapsed, perhaps of hundreds of years, since voices echoed through the now silent halls. Who these beings were, whether Norsemen or Redmen, remains yet to be proved by scientific research. Many bones and deposits have been brought to light; and one skeleton, that of a middle-aged male person, may throw much light on the subject. The skull of this specimen will be examined and compared at the Smithsonian Institution, and the results will be watched with much interest. Deposits of excrement containing animal bones, which occur in large quantities, were also exhibited, showing the multitudes of animals which at one time roamed in this immense subterranean cavity. The cave abounds in singular and interesting objects deposited from the dripping waters—stalagmites and stalactites of great size and variety. One, the Empress column, is a pure white mass of alabaster seventy feet high, reaching from the floor nearly to the roof. Another pendant formation, nearly equal to the former in length, vibrates for a minute upon being struck, and one of the rooms, termed the cathedral, has a series of twenty slender columns, which sound part of a scale on being struck successively. This is called the organ. A great deal of work yet remains for the naturalist and the scientist, and no one can determine the actual extent of these investigations.

A VALUABLE PLASTIC CEMENT.—Amongst the many useful purposes which glycerine has served, there are probably none, says *The English Mechanic*, of greater utility than its combinations with other substances, by which compounds with peculiar properties have been produced. A plastic cement is the latest invention in which glycerine forms the important ingredient; it is known as Jaudin's cement, from the name of the patentee, a resident of Paris. The cement is simply a mixture in suitable proportions of yellow oxide of lead (the quality known as massicot being preferable) with glycerine. Several other metallic oxides and matters may be mixed with the cement, so as to suit the quality or the color of the cement to the nature of the work to be produced, but the two essential compounds are yellow oxide of lead and glycerine. The proportions of oxide of lead and glycerine vary according to the consistency of the cement it is desired to produce. The proportion of glycerine will of course be larger for a soft cement than for a stiff cement; it is not necessary, therefore, to specify the exact proportion of each of the two essential compounds. This cement is specially adapted for moulding those objects which require an extreme delicacy in the lines of the cast, such as engraved blocks and plates, forms of printing type, photoglyptic plates, etc. Under the influence of gentle heat it sets in a few minutes, and then resists perfectly both pressure and heat. When set it is also a good substitute for natural lithographic stones, and it can replace them for many practical purposes. It can also be used for artistic reproductions, such as fac-similes of terra cotta, whose color and sonorous quality it possesses. Though setting to great hardness in a few minutes, it does not shrink. Massicot, it may be observed, is an old name for litharge, but the term is more generally applied to the yellow oxide of lead prepared from the scum of the molten metal by roasting until the color is fully developed. For purposes in which the color is of no moment, the scum itself would doubtless answer, provided it is thoroughly oxidized.

NEAR APPROACH OF COMETS.—Amongst the cases of close approach of comets to our globe, says *Nature*, there are two in which we are able to fix the actual degree of approximation with certainty, the orbits at the times having been determined with great precision. The first is that of the comet of 1770, treated of by Laplace in the *Mecanique Celeste*. According to Cassen's elaborate investigation, in which the effect of the earth's attraction is included, this comet at 5:00 p. m. Greenwich time, on July 1, was distant only 0.01509 of the earth's mean distance from the sun, or 1,390,000 miles, and it is the closest approach of one of these bodies of which we have any certain knowledge. On this evening its apparent diameter, as measured by Messier, was no less than 2½ degrees, or nearly five times the apparent diameter of the moon; at this time the comet was traversing the constellation Draco. The second case is that of Biela's comet at its appearance in 1805. At 9 p. m. on December 9, just before it descended below the horizon in Europe, and almost at the time of the last observation by Thulis, at Marseilles, the comet was distant 0.0366, or about 3,380,000 miles. There can be little doubt that the comets of 568, 1366, 1472, and others passed near the earth, but the elements of their orbits are not determinable within anything like close limits. The first comet of 1743, for which Chasen assigned an elliptical object, was also near us, but the orbit in this instance is doubtful, and the actual distance in perigee cannot be deduced with precision. There have been many instances where comets at one or other node have passed much nearer to the earth's orbit even than in the case of the comet of 1770, as occurred with Biela's comet in 1839, but the nodal passages have taken place when the earth has been far removed from those points of her path.

A YEAR OF WEATHER SIGNALS.

THE ANNUAL REPORT OF GENERAL MYER—HOW NEAR THE "PROBABILITIES" ARE TO BEING RIGHT—STATIONS AND BULLETINS.

[GENERAL PRESS DISPATCH.]

WASHINGTON, Oct. 24.—Brigadier-General Albert J. Myer, Chief Signal Officer of the Army, has completed his annual report.

During the past year, the course of drill in military signalling, telegraphy, meteorology and other signal service duties, at Fort Whipple, Va., has been improved by useful additions. During the year 122 men have been instructed as assistant observers. More have been trained for promotion to the grade of sergeant. The whole active force of the Signal Corps is practised at this post in the general drills with arms and with telegraphic equipments. The act of Congress providing 150 sergeants, 30 corporals and 270 privates has, it is said, been productive of good results, and has opened the service to the best class of young American citizens. The office files are crowded with applications for enlistment. The clause in the act providing "that two sergeants may in each year be appointed to be second-lieutenants" gives, by assurance of permanent service and promised reward, that stimulus to exertion so long and earnestly sought for.

One hundred and seventy stations of observation of the approach of storms and other meteoric changes have been maintained during the year. Twenty-five stations of a class hitherto described as "sunset stations" have been continued in operation. The daily telegraphic reports from stations in the West Indies, extending from Cuba by Jamaica to Barbadoes and the Windward Islands, have in view of the small amount of appropriation available, been suspended, except in seasons of especial danger, when special reports have been called for. These reports are of importance at times for the pre-announcement of cyclones approaching the Gulf of Mexico and threatening the coast of the United States.

An examination of the daily forecast or indications shows a p rcentage of 90.7 per cent of them verified. A minute analysis of the same forecast, and a careful comparison with the weather and the instrumental changes afterward occurring within the time and within the district to which each forecast has had reference, has given an average percentage of accuracy of 86.6 per cent. An average of 90 per cent to follow this comparison is also believed to be attainable.

Since the date of the last annual report a railway bulletin service on railways has been established in cooperation with the Signal Office. The different railway companies receive, at the time of the midnight report, and by telegraph, a copy of the report, which is distributed, under the supervision of the superintendents of the railway telegraphs, to designated stations along the lines. Thirty-six railways, with a total of 1,212 stations, are now cooperating in this service. The reports, when received, are bulletined.

The display of cautionary day and night signals, by flags and lights, upon the lakes and the great ports of the United States upon the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, has been made systematically, on occasions of supposed especial danger, at ninety-four different sea and lake ports and cities. There were added on January 1, 1878, to the display of day and night signals at the ports which had been "cautionary" alone up to that date, the display of the "cautionary off-shore signal," indicating that while winds might be high and there might be danger the winds to follow were expected to blow "off shore." It is of importance to vessels thus to be preadvised as to coming winds. The adopting of this signal first made so far as is known at the ports of the United States has much increased the usefulness of the service. Of the total number of cautionary signals thus displayed 80.1 per cent have afterward been reported as justified. In the cases reported as failures of justification following the display the wind did not attain at the place of display a violence held to justify it. No great storm has swept over any considerable number of the ports of the United States without preannouncement.

By an arrangement with the Post Office Department 6,142 printed "farmers' bulletins," on which appear daily the forecasts of this office, have been distributed and displayed in frames daily, at as many different post offices.

The telegraph lines of the Signal and Life Saving Service are on the immediate sea coast, and in positions to command a view of the seas, and are in reach of disasters to occur from shipwreck. The reports of weather conditions and the state of the sea had by them, and not attainable in any other way, are necessary. Vessels passing in view can or at once warned by signals of coming danger, or can be aided if in distress. The watch kept by the service, and the prompt transmission of a few messages, have in times of danger saved property amounting to more than the cost of the lines. There has been added to the sea-coast line during the year, as an auxiliary, a telephonic line extending from Kitty Hawk to Cape Henry, and connecting the intermediate Life-Saving Stations, a distance of about sixty-two miles. This connection has proved a successful experiment, and in cases of emergency has been very serviceable. Telegraph lines in Arizona, New-Mexico and upon the Texan frontier, to be used for the protection of the populations from Indians and other depredators, are nearly completed. Lines in the Northwest are being pushed rapidly forward. A total length of 4,467 miles of telegraph lines, including 543 miles on the Atlantic coast, were in operation and maintained in the care of officers and enlisted men of the Signal Corps on June 30, 1879.

The Chief Signal Officer recommends that there be just provision by legislation for the permanent employment and grades of the officers of the corps. The increase of the enlisted force of the corps is recommended as a measure of economy.

RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE.

A rather indefinite item which has got into the religious papers reports that the Mosque of St. Sophia, at Constantinople, which for centuries has been closed against the intrusion of unbelievers, is to be open every Tuesday and Friday for believers of all faiths to attend a lesson intended to reconcile the differences of religions.

The Moody and Sankey hymns have been published in many languages. Friends of Mr. Sankey have recently sent him copies of the hymns from Spain, China and the Sandwich Islands, and printed in the languages of those countries. He has four editions of them in Chinese, and believes each edition is by a different publisher.

The Jesuits have determined to elevate their college at Beyrout, Syria, to the dignity of a university, and to include within it a gymnasium, a technical school, a clerical seminary and a Jesuit convent. Besides this institution the Jesuits possess four other active missionary stations in Syria. The college at Beyrout was built in 1877.

The decree of the King of Portugal providing for the civil registration of Protestants, and granting to such as shall register all civil rights and freedom from all disabilities, has been in force since January last. Since then Protestant Missionaries have suffered occasionally from attacks, but the police have never failed, it is said, to give them help when called upon.

Mrs. Amanda Smith, a colored evangelist, formerly a slave, well known as a successful Christian and temperance worker in this country, and who has recently been conducting meetings acceptably among the higher classes in England and Scotland, started in October by the overland route for Bombay, India. She was called there by the Rev. William B. Osborn, who has charge of the missions established by the Rev. William Taylor in that city some years ago.

Cardinal Manning has purchased Mgr. Capel's estate at Kensington, with the school-house and land adjoining it, the price being $45,000. The site was freehold, and the purchase was made from the mortgagees. It is Cardinal Manning's intention to reorganize the school with a new staff of masters. This school is for boys only, and has been more successful in attracting students than the Catholic University of which Mgr. Capel was the rector.

Mr. Moody goes to St. Louis for revival work in a few weeks. The churches of that city will begin on Tuesday next the work of training singers, and Mr. Sankey, it is expected, will arrive a week in advance of Mr. Moody, in order to help the singers to complete their practice. Daily noon prayer-meetings will be held in many churches, beginning next week, and continuing until the Evangelists begin their regular meetings.

Efforts are making to secure for the Yale Divinity School the coming year, a course of lectures on preaching, from Professor Theodore Christlieb, of the University of Bonn. Professor Christlieb became well known in this country through the meeting of the World's Evangelical Alliance, at which he made an able defence of evangelical Christianity. He has also published a book "Modern Doubt and Christian Belief," which has had a large circulation in this country and is a defence of Christianity against the arguments of transcendentalists and materialists.

The restoration of Tewkesbury Abbey has been completed, and a few weeks ago services appropriate to the occasion were held within its walls. The bishop of the diocese expressed in his sermon a hope that despite all passing trials of the day, the future of the Church of England might be read in the grand and renewed building in which he spoke. This abbey was founded by Robert Fitzhaman, one of the Norman Knights of William the Conqueror, nearly 800 years ago. It has a melancholy interest as the resting-place of the prince who was stabbed by "false, fleeting, perjured Clarence" on the battle-field of Tewkesbury.

Hasskeui is a small village on the Bosphorus inhabited principally by Jews and composed of dilapidated houses of blackened wood. These Jews and all others in the Levant country are the lineal descendants of those who were expelled from Spain in 1492, and it is said that they are still obliged sometimes to appeal to the Turks to protect them from the aggressions of Christians. They speak Spanish, as they did 500 years ago. Rags and dirt abound in the streets of Hasskeui, and beggars are numerous.

Another massacre of Protestant missionaries is reported to have taken place in Mexico. It occurred at Tolnco, about fifty miles from the City of Mexico, to the Presbyterian Mission. How many were killed is not stated, but one man, after being badly cut, was dragged through the streets and then hung up to a tree, where his body remained all night. The Rev. John Butler, a Methodist missionary in the City of Mexico, reports the outrage in a letter which *The Christian Advocate* of this week makes public.

The Rev. William Rogers Richards was installed on October 16 over the Congregational Church at Bath, Maine, of which the Rev. Ray Palmer was formerly the pastor. The sermon was preached by the Rev. E. Y. Hincks, of Portland; Professor Packard, of Brunswick, offered the ordaining prayer, and the Rev. C. A. Dickinson, of Portland, delivered the charge to the people. Mr. Richards, who is a son of the late Rev. George Richards, formerly pastor of the Central Congregational Church of Boston, over which the Rev. Dr. Duryea is now settled, was graduated with honors of every kind from Yale College in the class of 1875, and from the Andover Theological Seminary last spring.

Sayyed A. Badawy is a Mahometan, living at Alexandria, and he has sent to *The Pall Mall Gazette* a rather curious letter on what he calls the failure of Christianity. It is beyond doubt and nothing but rational, he observes, to say that real Christianity "has been perverted by the gloomy ages of the past, or has been erased immediately after Christ by those who would but naturally do so—namely, those who had the power of killing Christ himself; and all the present forms of Christianity are not worthy to be named as such." Luther's work he calls "a noble attempt to reform" Christianity, but unfortunately it was only "the adding of so much water to mud." Badawy thinks it quite practicable to provide evidence of "the spuriousness of all the present different creeds of Christianity." The Mahometan doctors, besides having special books on Christianity when they teach the doctrine of Islam, "refute on the most sound principles all religions Christianity included, and it is simple, nevertheless just, to observe that Islam is unquestionably the most pure, real, and the most teaching (helsm of all the religions of the universe"—moreover it is "that religion which in less than a century has united—not by force of arms, as misrepresented by its enemies—the different and difficult nations that existed from near the heart of China to the very coast of Africa on the Atlantic, as well as northward and southward, to one common principle: the belief in the unity of God, and His—and only His—sacred worship (praise be to Him); and to do unto others any good, wh ther they would have it done unto themselves or not."

THE REPORT OF GENERAL MEIGS.

ARMY TRANSPORTATION FOR A YEAR—FUEL AND FORAGE—RECOMMENDATIONS.

WASHINGTON, Oct. 24.—The annual report of Quartermaster-General Meigs shows that the expenditures of his Department during the last fiscal year were $16,758,000. The Department moved during the year 59,177 persons, 4,921 beads, and 120,440 tons of supplies from the settlements to the military posts, many of them in the far interior and at the end of long lines of communication. The cost of this transportation was $2,215,968. The Pacific Railroad earned for Government transportation $722,000.

General Meigs reports that the embarrassment and expenditure caused by the legislation against land grant railroads still continue. He again recommends the repeal of this special legislation so as to "leave these questions and claims to be settled on the principles of law and equity decided to be applicable by the United States Supreme Court."

The Southern railroad companies which purchased material from the Quartermaster's Department under the executive orders of October, 1865, still owed the United States on the 1st of July last the sum of $1,892,677. Of this sum the Nashville and Northwestern Railroad, which is insolvent, owes about $900,000, which amount it is supposed will never be paid.

The Quartermaster-General calls attention to the inequality of recent legislation on the subject of officers' horses, and the hardships imposed on officers in some districts by abolishing the issues of fuel. Officers East of the Mississippi suffer from the first circumstance; those in the far Western wilderness from the second. He reports also that although the law which requires the transfer of military headquarters to military posts has been conditionally repealed, the attempt to execute it has involved the War Department in expenditures which aggregate $801,000.

The report contains recommendations for the enlistment of post quartermasters' sergeants; for an allowance of $10 per month extra pay to Lieutenants detailed as Acting-Assistant Quartermasters (as compensation for the responsibility and risk of loss involved in the care of money and supplies), and for the construction of a fire-proof building in Washington for the safe storage of valuable records relating to claims, etc.

A DISPLAY OF VIRGINIA'S PRODUCTS AND INTELLECT.

RICHMOND, Va., Oct. 24.—The Nineteenth Annual Fair of the Virginia State Agricultural Society, will begin here on Tuesday next and continue four days. The indications are that it will be the most successful fair ever held here, the number of entries being larger than in any year since the formation of the society. Every department is fully represented by exhibits from Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio, North Carolina, New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, New-York, and other States. There will be two days of competitive military drill—one between white soldiers, and the other between colored soldiers. Another new feature will be contests in map-drawing from memory, for boys in dais, by pupils representing a number of the public schools of the State. All the railroads are offering reduced rates and facilities for visiting Richmond during the continuance of the fair.

EPISCOPAL CHURCH CONGRESS.

ALBANY, Oct. 24.—At the Episcopal Congress to-day the topic of discussion was "Memorial Art." The following persons read papers on this subject: Dr. H. N. Powers, of Bridgport, Conn.; the Rev. G. A. L. Richards, of Providence, and President E. M. Potter, of Union College. Those who spoke on the subject were Frank L. Norton, of Troy; the Rev. G. S. Gray, of Catskill; Dr. Van Rensselaer, and the Rev. Percy Brown, of Boston.

The last session of the Congress was held in the afternoon. The subject of debate was "The Personal Work of the Holy Spirit." The writers upon the question were Dr. Samuel Osgood, of New-York; Dr. J. B. Eccleston, of Newark, N. J., and Dr. H. F. Randolph, of Baltimore. The speakers were Bishop Whipple, of Minnesota; the Rev. A. A. C. Hill, of Boston; the Rev. J. E. Walton, of Handen, Conn., and the Rev. James Haughton, of Yonkers.

The Congress was closed with prayer and the singing of the "Gloria in Excelsis," followed by the benediction.

YOUNG MEN IN POLITICS.

The Executive Committee of the Young Men's Republican Club met Thursday at its rooms, No. 185 Fifth-ave. Chairman F. G. Gedney made a short address. He said that already the applications for membership were over 250, and were constantly coming in. The organization had a mission separate from that of any other political club. The loafer and ruffian had been too long suffered to domineer in politics, and there was no reason why the gentlemen should not become a power. The purpose was to effect a permanent organization for the furtherance in New-York City of Republican principles, and the expectation was to soon have a membership of at least 1,000, to procure spacious rooms, and to take active part for the future in local politics. Such an organization would open a way for the entrance into politics of gentlemen who would not go to meetings at beer saloons and places of a like character.

The Club will hold a mass-meeting at the Cooper Institute Friday evening, October 31. Thurlow Weed consented to be present and relate from his own observation what young men have accomplished in New-York politics by organization. General Hawley, "Mark Twain," Joseph H. Choate, Horace Russell and others will also make addresses, and the Union Glee Club will sing campaign songs.

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