CONSUMPTION OF ALMONDS.

Twenty-one Million Pounds Eaten in the United States Each Year.

There are, roughly speaking, 21,000,000 pounds of almonds consumed in the United States each year, some eaten with raisins, some used in the manufacture of candy, some ground for cream and flavoring extracts, and some, of an inferior quality, used for perfumery and soap. The state of California produces about 14,000,000 pounds of almonds in a year, or two-thirds of the amount required for domestic consumption, and the other almonds are imported from European countries, from which, until a few years ago, all the almonds were sent. The figures of almond importations for the fiscal year 1898 show importations of about 7,000,000 pounds. Of this amount 4,500,000 came from Spain, 1,500,000 from Italy, chiefly Sicily, and the balance from Greece and Portugal. Cocoanuts to the value of about $600,000 a year are imported into the United States from foreign countries or from countries which were under foreign jurisdiction at the time of the last annual treasury report. Before the beginning of the Cuban war for independence the importation of cocoanuts from Cuba into the United States was to the value of about $200,000 a year. With the beginning of the war it declined, and under the present tariff the duty on cocoanuts further reduced the importation from Cuba, though a large increase in the shipments of cocoanuts is expected this year under American jurisdiction in Cuba and Porto Rico. The competition of American with foreign cocoanuts, the latter from the West Indies and South American states, has been more active than in the case of almonds, for the reason that the chief source of supply of American cocoanuts is Florida, which is in closer proximity to the New York market. The annual report of Florida cocoanuts amounts to about 7,000,000 pounds, of the value of about $300,000 a year, and the conditions as to almonds and cocoanuts are in this particular reversed. California produces just twice as many almonds as are imported into the United States, whereas Florida produces just one-half as many cocoanuts as are imported.—Boston Transcript.

DIAMONDS OF VARIOUS HUES.

Most of Them Are Colorless, But Some Are Red and Black.

Although thousands of men and women in Chicago wear diamonds, at least on occasions if not constantly, few know much about the precious gems they value so highly. While the largest number of diamonds are white, a clear, colorless, transparent stone is rarer than might be supposed. There are also red, blue, green, yellow, brown, black and pink ones. Heat often changes the color and after awhile the acquired hue becomes permanent. Yellow diamonds perhaps afford the greatest variety of shades. Some of them surpass any other gem of that color. Specimens of canary colored diamonds are quite common. If the gem has a rose-colored tint it is very valuable, while red tints, surpassing the ruby, and considered the most beautiful of all precious gems, are exceedingly rare. A few varieties are on record. One weighing ten carats was bought by Emperor Paul of Russia for $100,000. A cinnamon, or brown, stone is undesirable, as it is seldom pure. A black diamond is nearly as scarce as a red one. Blue diamonds rank next to red ones in variety and beauty. Those of a dark blue color, resembling sapphires, are handsome gems, differing only from the sapphires in quality and the beautiful play of colors peculiar to the diamond. The only real blue stones are found in the mines of India. Besides the Bismarck and Hope diamonds, there are only two others in the world that are properly called blue diamonds. The green varieties are not as rare as the blue, black, red and rose-colored species, but a grass-green or fine emerald color is scarce. When it does occur it is more brilliant than the finest emerald. There are several varieties of green-tinted diamonds at the museum of natural history in Paris, but the best known specimen is at Dresden and is considered one of the five paragons of the world among gems.—Chicago Chronicle.

A Novel Wedding Present.

One of the recent brides has received a small hand "flash light" as a wedding gift. It may be turned on in a moment by the mere pressure of the thumb, which when removed extinguishes the light. It is of a convenient size for carrying about in one's pocket, and would be fine to flash a light on burglars. The charge gives 8,000 flashes, or will burn steadily for over five hours. It is the most ingenious little novelty for a wedding or birthday present.

Peas, 3,000 Years Old.

Peas taken from an Egyptian tomb 3,000 years old have been planted by a Scotch gardener and have produced vigorous vines and fruit. There is no doubt as to the peas being Egyptian, but it will need strong testimony to convince botanists that they are as old as the tombs.

HARDENING PLASTER OF PARIS

Process by Which the Usefulness of the Composition May be Enhanced.

"These plaster casts are very successful as a rule," said a lover of fine art in the statuary gallery at the Art institute the other day, "but unfortunately, they cannot be long preserved. The humid weather, of which we have a superabundance in this locality, will destroy them ere many years have passed." This is the general complaint. Recently, however, a patent has been taken out in Germany for the treatment of articles of plaster of paris with an aqueous solution of ammonium borate, for the purpose of hardening them and rendering them insoluble in water. The process referred to is said to give results decidedly superior to anything that has heretofore been proposed. The hardening liquid may either be mingled with the plaster in the act of molding or may be applied on the surface of the finished casts with a brush. The solution is prepared by dissolving boracic acid in warm water and adding thereto sufficient ammonia to form the borate, which remains in the solution. The manner of using the solution is thus described: The saturation of the gypsum or painting of the plaster of paris is carried out in the cold. The objects are subsequently rinsed off and dried. The surface becomes very hard after two days and insoluble in water, while the induration in the interior advances more slowly. By means of the fluid described gypsum floors can be hardened and rendered more durable and impervious to the influence of the weather. Saturating with ammonium borate is said to be especially useful on the exterior walls of buildings, barracks, etc.; on the latter, because experiments have proved an antiseptic action of the liquid.

ABOVE THE CLOUDS.

This Is the Field of a Naturalist's Work.

Theodore Holm, a Dane, for many years botanist in the National Museum at Washington, concerns himself only with things above the clouds. He makes it his business to probe into the mysteries of nature in the remote heights of the earth. How plants and lichens grow in rigorous climes, on the windy rocks of the snow-capped mountains and in the arctic circle is the special object of his research, and the comparison between plants at the poles and those on the tops of peaks is his special delight. His search for information has carried him into all parts of the world. Three times he has gone into the arctic circle, many times to Greenland and Iceland, and times without number to the North cape and the Lofoten islands. He has climbed the Norwegian mountains and has strange things to tell about the plants that grow on our own Pike's peak. "I have for a long time been studying the subject of arctic flora," said Mr. Holm at the Grand Central hotel, "and during my studies have been in a great many parts of the globe. On several occasions I have been a member of polar expeditions. In 1882-3 I was with the Danish ship Dymphna, which took part in the international polar expedition, in which you will remember Gen. Greeley took part. Andre Hangaad was our captain, and for two years we drifted about the polar seas, caught in the ice floes. The Dutch ship Varna, which we met, kept us company, sank at the end of the second year, but we saved the crew. I began then, as the agent of the Danish government, to pursue the studies of circumpolar botany, and since then I have followed the work in Greenland, Iceland, America—in fact, all over the world. What has most interested me has been the comparison of plants found in the polar regions with those found on the mountain tops. My work lies wholly above the timber line, and you will be surprised to see how many plants are to be found there. There are at least twenty species of flowering herbs on the rocky and snow-covered peaks, some of wonderful beauty and color. None of them grow higher than an inch and most are only half an inch high, but they are perfect in their minuteness and of the most vivid hues. There is the Arctic pink and the Arctic dryas, both of exquisite shade and form. The Arctic poppy is another flower worth hunting for on the treeless slopes, and so is the Arctic willow. The little lycapod is a series of plant that is found in both high and low places. It is said by most botanists not to grow higher than 8,000 feet. I have found it on the top of Pike's peak, 14,000 feet. There it is half an inch high. In Florida it grows eight inches tall. There is a miniature clover also to be found above the timber line, and a flower resembling the forget-me-not, so you see that the rocks which you are used to considering barren are by no means so to one who has the eyes to look for the beauties that are there."—Denver Republican.

Sentiment and Reality.

Maud—There's something so touching about the attraction of the flame for the moth. Edith—It isn't half so sorrowful as the attraction for the moth for your best furs.—Indianapolis Journal.

FLYING ENGINES TAKE WATER

Tanks Are Replenished While the Locomotive Is Making Speed.

On many of the railroads centering at Chicago it is no longer necessary for a train to stop to enable the engineer to replenish his boilers with water. All travelers have now become accustomed to seeing the narrow trough, 1,200 to 1,400 feet long, at various dead level points along the road and they know that the strip of water which it contains is scooped up by the engine as it speeds over the tracks. But people from foreign countries often ask questions about the water between the tracks and marvel when they hear the story about "drinking" the engine on the fly. What seems a marvelous mechanical contrivance is an extremely simple thing. A pipe with a scoop end is fastened to the tender. It is C shaped, with the top end pointing into the water tank and the bottom curled under the body of the tender. By a series of levers this end may be dropped until it reaches the level of the ties. When the engine reaches the trough the fireman drops the scoop end, which is 3½ inches high and 12 inches wide, into the trough, into which it sinks a distance of about six inches or within an inch of the bottom. It may wabble slightly without doing any harm, because the trough is 24 inches wide. Dropping the end is all that is done, for the motion of the engine does the rest. The water rushes into the pipe and thence into the tank with a rush and force that suggests to the uninitiated the use of powerful engines. "The most remarkable thing about the water-taking scoop," said a railroad official, "is the fact that the speed of the train must be reduced when the water is taken on. It reaches the bend in the pipe with such force that if the train were allowed to go at its regular speed the metal would be seriously strained, so we reduce the speed to about thirty miles an hour and have the best results." While the engine is passing over the trough at the rate of thirty miles an hour it takes up about 4,000 gallons of water—about as much as would be contained in 100 spirit barrels.

AT THE PARIS MORGUE.

Subjecting Criminals to a Terrible Ordeal.

A law that has recently come into operation gives prisoners the right of communicating with counsel within twenty-four hours after their arrest, says a Paris correspondent of the London Standard. One of the immediate consequences of this measure may be to put a stop to those "confrontations" at the morgue, which are so dramatic a feature of French criminal procedure. With a view to bringing a murderer to confess, he is taken to the morgue, and there brought face to face with the body of his victim. Every artifice is used to make the confrontation as impressive as possible, as it is hoped that the terrible sight he is compelled to gaze on will so trouble the murderer that he will lose command over himself and make a clean breast of his crime in his agitation. When he enters the room he can see nothing, as the stone bench on which the body is exposed is concealed by a curtain. The examining magistrate presses him with questions, and then, at what he considers the opportune moment, gives the signal for the curtain to be pulled back. The murderers who have stood this ordeal without flinching have been comparatively few. The majority of them exhibit the utmost terror, and implore to be taken out of sight of the corpse. There is a chair in the room where the confrontations take place, in which the majority of the most notorious murderers of the last thirty years have been seated. Their names are inscribed on its back, one of them being Troppman, who, just before the Franco-German war, butchered an entire family. French criminal counsel have found that these confrontations almost always result in the confusion of their clients, have looked into the matter, and believe they have discovered that the examining magistrate has no legal right to subject a prisoner to this ordeal. For the future they are going to advise their clients to refuse to allow themselves to be taken to the morgue, and it seems that it is a moot point whether the authorities will be able to convey them thither by force.

Died at the Throttle.

Milwaukee Correspondence Chicago Times-Herald: Engineer John T. Gregg of the Milwaukee and St. Paul road died suddenly in his cab this morning about two miles east of Fox lake. His death was not discovered until the fireman had spoken to him once or twice and received no response. The engineer was at the time sitting on his seat, with his hand on the throttle. When the fireman discovered the condition of the engineer he stopped the train and called the conductor, and the remains were taken to the caboose and brought to Beaver Dam. Death is supposed to have come from heart disease. Mr. Gregg had been in the employe of the road for twenty years, and lived with his family in this city.