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SCIENCE MISCELLANY.

PARAGRAPHS RELATING TO PROGRESS IN SCIENCE.

The Darkest Continent, A Bacterial Fertilizer, etc.

One of the most notable gatherings of geographers ever assembled was the recent special meeting of the London Royal Society to consider exploration at the South Pole. The Antarctic region is the greatest unexplored area on the globe, and it is so unlike any other, that, while it offers no commercial inducements, light on its mysteries is of unusual scientific importance. There is almost certainly a continent which is completely surrounded by a vast ocean, the reverse being true of the North Pole. The meteorology is remarkable, a zone of exceptionally low pressure existing beyond 450 south latitude, with indications that the South Pole is covered by a great permanent anticyclone or area of high pressure. The summer is extremely cold. The geology is of great interest not only because of our utter lack of knowledge of the rocks and fossils, but also because nowhere else is there such an accumulation of ice, and observations of the immense glaciers creeping outward into the sea along the face of one of which Ross sailed for 300 miles, and from which broke flat-topped icebergs 1200 to 1500 feet thick—may put to the test our glacial theory. The eminent scientists thought the Government should grant £150,000 for the proposed expedition.

An ingenious waterfall for the theatre stage, giving a truly magical effect when the electric light is thrown on it, has been brought out in Paris by M. Gailhard. It is made of tulle, which is stretched on frames imitating the curves of the cascade and upon this spray is thrown from behind by little streams of water discharged through perforated pipes against a metal plate.

A singular accident at Herne, Westphalia, resulted from administering chloroform near a gas jet. The burning gas decomposed the anaesthetic, with the evolution of chlorinated vapors, which incapacitated the two surgeons performing an amputation, and resulted in the death of one of the nurses on the following day.

Slate finished to resemble fine black marble is a Belgium export. Slate suitable for the purpose is first polished with sandstone, then with artificial pumice-stone. This gives a soft, velvet-like appearance. The surface is next heated, and covered with a mixture of oil and fine lampblack for twelve hours, the process being repeated until all graininess disappears. Polishing with emery on a linen rag follows with final polishing with tinashes and a little lampblack. The process is completed by coating for a little time the heated plate with a mixture of wax and turpentine, to which some lampblack has been added, and then rubbing off vigorously with a clean linen rag. The fine black surface can be etched, engraved, gilded and silvered like genuine marble, while the polish and color are claimed to be as brilliant and durable as those of the costlier material.

Moving pictures offer new possibilities in scientific instruction and entertainment. The cinematograph was successfully employed in following the recent solar eclipse and M. Camille Flammarion has gone further by photographing the heavens from different times from sunset to sunrise, securing views by which the spectacle of the mighty passage of moon and stars may be shown on a screen in a few minutes. He proposes to photograph sun-spots, exhibiting by their movement the rotation of the sun. The earth has not been forgotten, and remarkable pictures of it in motion have been obtained by rotating before a cinematograph a large model, illuminated by a lamp, giving the effect of the sun.

A most impressive phenomenon seems to have escaped general notice. It is the earth's shadow in the sky, which, according to Prof. W. R. Brooks, of Geneva, N. Y., first becomes visible about half an hour after sunset, as a dark purplish haze on the eastern sky, and gradually rises until lost in the gloom of early night. The shadow, which is doubtless usually mistaken for clouds or haze, is seen equally well on the western sky before sunrise.

The latest x-ray sensation is the report from Havre of the cure in three sittings of a case of elephantiasis—or enormous enlargement—of the hand.

A new manure, suitable for grains of all kinds, is being made by a firm of German color-makers already famous as producers of nitrogen and diphtheria anti-toxins. The new material is known as "alimit," and is a creamy-white powder having 25 per cent of nitrogenous constituents and found to be composed of spores of an organism belonging to the well-known group of hay bacilli. This particular bacillus is to be called *Ellenbachensis* alpha. It was discovered by Herr Caron, of Ellenbach, in the course of four years of investigation into the bacteria of different soils, and his experiments have shown a remarkable effect upon crops from ground treated with pure cultures of this bacillus.

An interesting method of measuring the diameter of the earth was lately described by Prof. Porter to the London Physical Society. It consists in observing the shadow cast by the Peak of Teneriffe upon

the sea, and measuring the time that elapses between the moment when the apex of the shadow touches the sea horizon and the instant when it is eclipsed by the shadow of night. A phenomenon hitherto unnoticed is the shadow cast by the heated air rising from the Peak, giving a faint oblique prologation of the shadow of the apex.

The illusion of feeling in amputated limbs has begun to receive scientific attention. It appears that the victim of accident is often more conscious of the existence of the missing limb in its proper place than of the other, and accidents sometimes result, as in the case of a heavy one-armed man who put out his phantom arm to aid in recovering his lost equilibrium, and in consequence had a bad fall. An old soldier who had lost part of both feet would rub his artificial toes for half an hour at a time and groan over the pain he declared he still felt in his corns.

A cheap method of duplicating concave mirrors, for search-light reflectors and even telescopes, has been proposed by an English engineer. A well made convex glass mould is silvered, then the silver is backed with copper in an electrolyte of copper sulphate, and the mirror is separated from the mould by gentle heat in a water-bath.

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Jan 14—135

NEAR AND FAR.

The air is full of perfume and the promise of the spring;
From wintry mould the dainty blossoms come;
There's not a bird in all the boughs but's eager now to sing,
And from afar a ship is sailing home.

The cherry blooms, all lightly blown about
With silver fleck the dandelion's gold,
The jasmine and arbutus breathe the fragrance they have stored,
The crumpled ferns, like fairy tents unrolled.

And now the rills are laughing, and the rivers in the sun
Are gliding on, impatient for the sea.
The wintry days are past and gone, the summer has begun.
And love from far is sailing home to me

Ah, blessed spring! How far more sweet than any spring of yore!
No note of all thy harmonies is dumb.
With thee my heart awakes to hope and happiness once more,
And from afar a ship is sailing home.
FLORENCE EARLE COATES, in April Lippincott's.

A RASH UNDERTAKING.

"The Buccaneers of Our Coast" are described by Frank R. Stockton in St. Nicholas. In the story he tells of one of the adventures of two noted pirates who thought they would vary their plan by turning from the sea and making a land expedition. Mr. Stockton says:
The town which Roc and Tributor had determined to attack was Merida, in Yucatan, and although this was a bold and rash undertaking, the two pirates were bold and rash enough for anything. Roc had been a prisoner in Merida, and on account of his knowledge of the town he believed that he and his followers could land upon the coast and then rush upon the unsuspecting garrison, and, having annihilated these, make themselves masters of the place.

But their plans did not work very well. They were discovered after they had landed by some Indians, who hurried to Merida and gave notice of the approach of the buccaneers. Consequently when Roc and his companions reached the town they found the garrison prepared for them, cannons loaded and all the approaches guarded. Still the pirates did not hesitate. They advanced fiercely to the attack, just as they were accustomed to do when they were boarding a Spanish vessel, but they soon found that fighting on land was very different from fighting at sea. In a marine combat it is seldom that a party of boarders is attacked in the rear by the enemy. But on land such methods of warfare should always be expected. Now, Roc and Tributor did not expect anything of the kind, and they were therefore greatly dismayed when a party of horsemen from the town, who had made a wide detour through the woods, suddenly charged upon their rear. Between the guns of the garrison and the sabers of the horsemen the buccaneers had a very hard time, and it was not long before they were completely defeated. Tributor and a great many of the pirates were killed or taken, and Roc the Brazilian had a terrible fall.

This most memorable fall occurred in the estimation of John Esquemeling, who knew all about the attack on Merida and who wrote the account of it. But he had never expected to be called upon to record that his great hero, Roc the Brazilian, saved his life after the utter defeat of himself and his companions by ignominiously running away. The loyal chronicler had a firm belief in the absolute inability of his hero to fly from danger, and Esquemeling could scarcely believe that Roc had retreated from his enemies, deserted his friends and turned his back upon the principles which he had always proclaimed.

An assistant in the British Museum, Kenyon by name, is said to have made a discovery of great value to students of Greek in the piecing together and translation of the papyrus of the poet Bacchylides. The deciphering of the manuscript, which occupied many months, gives to the world about 100 Greek words not included in the vocabulary heretofore known to moderns.

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