Scientific American.

ESTABLISHED 1845.

MUNN & CO., Editors and Proprietors. PUBLISHED WEEKLY AT

No. 361 BROADWAY, NEW YORK.

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NEW YORK, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 1887.

Contents

(Illustrated articles are marked with an asterisk.)

Adulterations, bakery, poisonous	200	Graphite carbon	195	
Air, analysis of	199	Holder for ribbons, edgings, etc.,		1
Alumina bleaching compounds		convenient	194	1
Alvan Clark establishment,*.,191,		Inventions, agricultural	202	i
Arclights, odor of	200	Inventions, engineering	202	l
Arrowroot, preparation of, in		Inventions, index of	203	L
Bermuda	192	Inventions, miscellaneous		L
Belt, grain elevator*	195	Jewels, counterfeit	200	L
Belts, rubber, large*	195	Kerosene oil, test of, simple	195	1
Boiler for steam heating, low		Lightning rods, Tyndall on	195	•
pressure*	194 :	Liquids, densities of		£.
Boracic acid for hides	201	'Magnesium light for photogra-		:
British Museum, the	193	phic purposes	199	i.
Centrifugal extractors, speed of.		Minerals at the American Exhi-		L
Clark, Alvan, the late*		bition, London	198	
Coin package, ready-reckoning*.	194			•
Comet of 1815, Olbers', return of.	192	Notes and queries		L
Congress, International Medical,		Pneumonia		l
ninth.		Pulverizing attachment for	100	l
Copper and nickel, coloring	201	seeders, improved*	194	L
Croton water, New York	197	Rubber belts, splendid work	101	L
Dental plates, aluminum	193	done by*	195	L
Engines, triple expansion*		Seat, school, adjustable, im-	100	L
Exhibition, International, Glas-		proved	194	!
gow		Snakes. self mending	197	١.
Fan, palm, Chinese, uses of	200	Star gazers, for		
Fire, a. how to act at	198	Stove bronzes and tiles		
Flower farming and Derfume	100	Tools, fine, annealing and tem-	100	÷
Flower farming and perfume manufacture in Southern		pering	197	ļ
France	196	Volunteer to defend America's	101	L
Gas, natural, possible conse-	100	Cup	192	L
quences of using	194			ļ
quotoco or abiliganamina		Won, oching, aon		

TABLE OF CONTENTS OF

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN SUPPLEMENT No. 612

For the Week Ending September 24, 1887.

Price 10 cents. For sale by all newsdealers.

- PAGE
- 9781 . 9780
- 1V. INSTRUMENTS OF PRECISION.—Temperature Indicator for Machines.—An apparatus for ringing an alarm upon undue heat-ing of shaft bearings and similar parts of machinery.—1 illustra-tion. The Gas Balance.—An apparatus for the automatic determina-tion of the specific gravity and composition of gas.—By FREDERICK LUX.—An interesting contribution to gas apparatus.-3 illus-LUX.-An intercenting control of the Self-Registering Tide Gauge of R. FUESS.-A new apparatus The Self-Registering Tide Gauge of R. FUESS.-A new apparatus for automatic registration of the fluctuations of tide water.-- li-9770

THE RETURN OF OLBERS' COMET OF 1815.

Prof. Brooks announced the discovery of a comet on Aug. 25. It took its place on the cometic annals of the year as "Comet f 1887 (Brooks)," and the discoverer was serenely unconscious that he had found a celestial pearl of great price. Other astronomers observed the new comer, and its elements and ephemeris were computed.

Olbers' comet of 1815 was expected about this time, on its first recorded return after an absence of over seventy years. A surprising resemblance was found to exist in the orbits of the two comets. Indeed, so close is the identity that there is scarcely a doubt that the comets are one and the same. Therefore, those who are fortunate enough to see the comet will behold the identical visitor that looked down upon our planet in 1815.

Olbers, a German astronomer, discovered the comet at Bremen, and Bessel, another German astronomer, calculated its elements. He assigned its next perihelion passage to February 9, 1887, and, wonderful to relate, the comet is but six months behind time.

Thus cometic astronomy has its triumphs. Pons comet of 1812, also discovered by Prof. Brooks, looked down from the celestial depths after an absence of a little more than seventy years. Olbers' comet of 1815 now returns to shine in our sky after an absence of seventy-two years, and the dwellers on this planet in the year 1910 will doubtless behold Halley's superb comet spreading its gossamer train over their heads, on its third recorded return, after an absence of seventyfive years.

The latest comer among the comets is an ordinary specimen of the family, has a stellar nucleus and a faint tail, but will grow brighter until it reaches perihelion, on October 6. It will be seen, by consulting Prof. Brooks' chart, published last week in the SCIEN TIFIC AMERICAN, that it is nearly north of Denebola on September 26 We wish it were larger and more favorably situated for observation ; but we are none the less grateful that, in however humble form, Olbers' comet has made its first recorded return on August 25, 1887.

**** The Ninth International Medical Congress.

The Ninth International Medical Congress opened its sessions in Albough's Opera House, Washington, on Monday, Sept. 5. The attendance at the convention was extremely large, upward of 3,500 medical men being present. The surgeons and medical authorities of the Continent and of England were present in numbers. At 11 A. M. Dr. Henry M. Smith, of Philadelphia, chairman of the executive committee, called the meeting to order, and in accordance with his announcement it was opened formally by President Grover Cleveland amid great applause. Dr. Nathan Smith Davis, of Chicago, was nominated president of the congress. On the stage various notabilities were present, including Secretary Bayard, Surgeon-General Hamilton of U.S. Marine Hospital, and Deputy Surgeon-General Marston of the British service, among others. After the full list of officers, including a long array of vice-presidents, had been selected, Secretary Bayard addressed the meeting in a long address alluding to the vocation of science in the republic. It was very well received. Drs. Lloyd, of the British navy, Leon de Forges for France, Unna for Germany, Mariano Scenola for Italy, delivered short addresses on behalf of the contingents from their respective countries. Dr. Davis then delivered his presidential address.

The following day's proceedings comprised both bus iness and pleasure. Many receptions and excursions were provided for. For the heading of papers the convention was divided into sections, so that comparatively small audiences heard many of the most impor tant ones. Among the essayists may be named : Dr. Austin Flint, on "Fever, its Causes, Mechanism, and Rational Treatment;" Dr. Nicholas Senn, of Milwaukee, on "Intestinal Surgery;" Dr. John Homans, of Boston on "Laparatomy," based on 384 cases within the writer's own knowledge. This operation, involving opening the intestines for the removal of obstructions, has been several times performed successfully by Dr. of Berlin

view of the many courtesies and attentions showered upon them by the society of Washington, the meeting may be pronounced one of the events of the year.

The Preparation of Arrowroot in Bermuda,

According to the last report of the United States Commissioner of Agriculture, it appears that of late vears a considerable impetus has been given to the cultivation and preparation of arrowroot in Bermuda, and large quantities are annually exported from the island. In cultivation, the method adopted is very similar to that practiced in the culture of the common potato. The ground is first well manured and plowed deep; it is then harrowed and laid out in drills about six inches in depth and three feet apart. In these drills the roots are set about eight inches apart, covered with the plow, and the surface smoothed by harrowing. The plants require at least a year to mature, and economical planters set the drills somewhat wider apart, and introduce an intermediate row of the potato, the crop of which is ready for removal before it can injure the arrowroot crop. Indian corn is occasionally planted in these rows, which is cut for forage when green, as, if it is allowed to mature, the main crop would be impaired by it. The mode of preparing the fecula from the roots greatly influences its value, and the superiority of .the Bermuda arrowroot is attributed to the extreme care and cleanliness exercised in the different processes of manufacture. The roots, after being collected, are washed, and their outer skin completely removed. This operation has to be performed with great nicety, as the cuticle contains a resinous matter which imparts color and a disagreeable flavor to the starch which no subsequent treatment can remove. After this process, the roots are again carefully washed, and then crushed between powerful rollers, which reduce the whole mass to a pulp. This is thrown into large perforated cylinders, where it is beaten by revolving wooden paddles, while a stream of pure water carries off the fecula from the fibers and parenchyma of the pulp, and discharges it, in the form of milk, through the perforated bottom of the cylinder, from whence it is conveyed in pipes and passed through fine muslin strainers into large reservoirs, where it is allowed to settle, and the water is drawn off. After being repeatedly washed, it is allowed to settle for some time, when the surface is skimmed with palette knives of German silver, in order to remove any slightly discolored particles which may appear on the top, and retaining only the lower, purer, and denser portion for drying for market. The rollers and cylinders are made of brass and copper, in order to preserve the purity of the material. The drying process is conducted also with great care and cleanliness. The substance is spread in flat copper pans, and immediately covered with white gauze to exclude dust and insects. These pans are placed on rollers, and run under glass-covered sheds when there is any danger from rain or dews. When thoroughly dry, it is packed with German silver shovels into new barrels, these being first lined with paper, which is gummed with arrowroot paste.

.... The Volunteer Chosen as Defender of the America's Cup.

After several unsuccessful attempts, a decisive trial race came off between the Mayflower and Volunteer, at New York, on September 16. The latter won by 16 minutes $2\frac{3}{5}$ seconds over a $41\frac{1}{5}$ mile course. The breeze was a strong one, and the Volunteer gained over 12 minutes of her lead in going ten miles to windward. The race was watched by the Thistle, which went over the course with the yachts. The final international contests are set for September 27, 29, and, if necessary, October 1, 1887. The Volunteer is beyond cavilour best boat, and it is to be hoped that she will win. If defeated, it will be a difficult task to get the cup back to America.

Alumina Bleaching Compounds.

Hypochlorite of alumina has long since been employed in bleaching, under the name of "Wilson's William T. Ball, of this city. Before his work only one bleaching liquid," and has been preferred on the successful case was chronicled, performed by Kocher, grounds that "it accelerates the bleaching process and deteriorates the fibers of the tissue much less than the chloride of lime." Up to the present, the usual method of manufacture has been by double decomposition of alumina sulphate and chloride of lime. "Extyphoid fever by milk, already described by us, and periments have proved that similar but still more energetic bleaching compounds of alumina are produced by the direct action of chlorine on aluminates, opposing the Pasteur treatment, in accordance with and especially on aluminates of sodium or calcium and of magnesium, whereby the use of chloride of lime is The committee appointed to arrange for the next entirely obviated. These bleaching alumina complace of meeting reported in favor of Berlin, Germany. pounds may be prepared either in the form of a solu-The date, as far as the year is concerned, is 1890. The | tion or in a solid form." Chlorine is passed through a solution of the aluminate or over the solid substance The proceedings terminated with a banquet on till no more is absorbed. The inventor claims that the Thursday, September 8, though excursions and trips to alumina compounds prepared in the manner he de-Niagara and elsewhere prolonged the attendance of scribes act as very rapid bleachers "in consequence of the delivery of ozonized oxygen." "The use of acid

195

V. MEDICINE AND PATHOLOGYDr. Corning's System of Ad ministering Cocaine in Painful Nervous AffectionsA new system of producing prolonged local anæsthesia by the external and hypo dermic administration of cocaine9 illustrations Loeb's RespiratorAn appliance of preventive surgery for obvi ating danger from inhalation of smoke10 illustrations	n 9778
VI. METALLURGY.—Progress of Metallurgy in 1886.—Summary of the most interesting and important developments of the year uses and cheapened production of magnesium; the basic steel pro- cess, etc	;;)-

VII. MISCELLANEOUSChinese Plank SawingA most graphic		ų
VII. MISCENERA BOUSChinese Flank SawingA most graphic		I
and interesting account of Chinese handiwork 2 illustrations	9771	I
How to Make an Incubator A paper on the subject of artificial		I
hatching, giving full description of the construction of an incuba-		I
tor - (illustrations	9781	ŝ
The Jubilee of the Telegraph.—The commemoration of the 50th		į
anniversary of the successful establishment of Cooke and Wheat-		
stone's first telegraph line.—The speeches at the London banquet.	9776	÷
Musical Bells.—1 illustration	9777	
Potting the Strawberry1 illustration	0777	ŝ
Printing by Electricity2 illustrations	07777	
	3111	1

VIII. NAVAL ENGINEERING.—The Raising of Bauer's Submarine Boat.—The submarine boatof 1851 recently raised from the bottom of the sea where it sank over 36 years ago.—3 illustrations......

Dr. Cyrus Edson, of the Board of Health of this city, read a valuable paper on the "Milk Supply of Cities." The dissemination of scarlet fever, diphtheria, and the subject of the ptomaine "tyrotoxicon" in milk were treated of. Dr. Whitmarsh, of London, read a paper his well-known views.

day has not yet been fixed.

many of the foreign members.

Taken altogether, as regards the number present and baths is also dispensed with ; also these alumina comthe high rank of many of them in the profession, the pounds deteriorate the fibers much less than chloride quantity of papers read, and their importance, and in of line."-R. Weiss, Oranienburg, Russia.