

DESTRUCTION OF ELECTRIC WIRES BY A SNOW STORM.

In the early morning of January 25, New York City and its immediate vicinity was visited by a snow storm which was very destructive of all kinds of suspended wires—electric light, telegraph, and telephone—the falling poles also doing considerable other damage, and temporarily interfering with travel to some extent, although no lives were lost. It had been raining the previous evening, but the rain changed to hail and then to snow shortly after midnight, with a high wind. The wind went down before daylight, but a heavy, wet snow continued to fall until about 9 o'clock in the morning, clinging to everything it touched, weighting down the branches of trees, and lodging on every abutment and in every crevice open to it, presenting everywhere spectacles of marvelous beauty. Such storms have always been especially dreaded by telegraph men, and in this case the wires soon began to feel the effects of the snow accumulating upon them. They constantly grew in size, until each wire became a great white cable, as large in many cases as a man's wrist. The tall poles from which the wires are suspended were not designed to support such weight. From the cross bars of some of them as many as two

railroad station. This pole pulled down others in succession, until not one pole was standing between Ninth and Eleventh Avenues, and the wires became tangled across the railway tracks, impeding travel until they could be cut away. From six o'clock until noon the poles fell in quick succession all over the city, and by Sunday night it was stated that not a single wire could be operated from the Western Union headquarters.

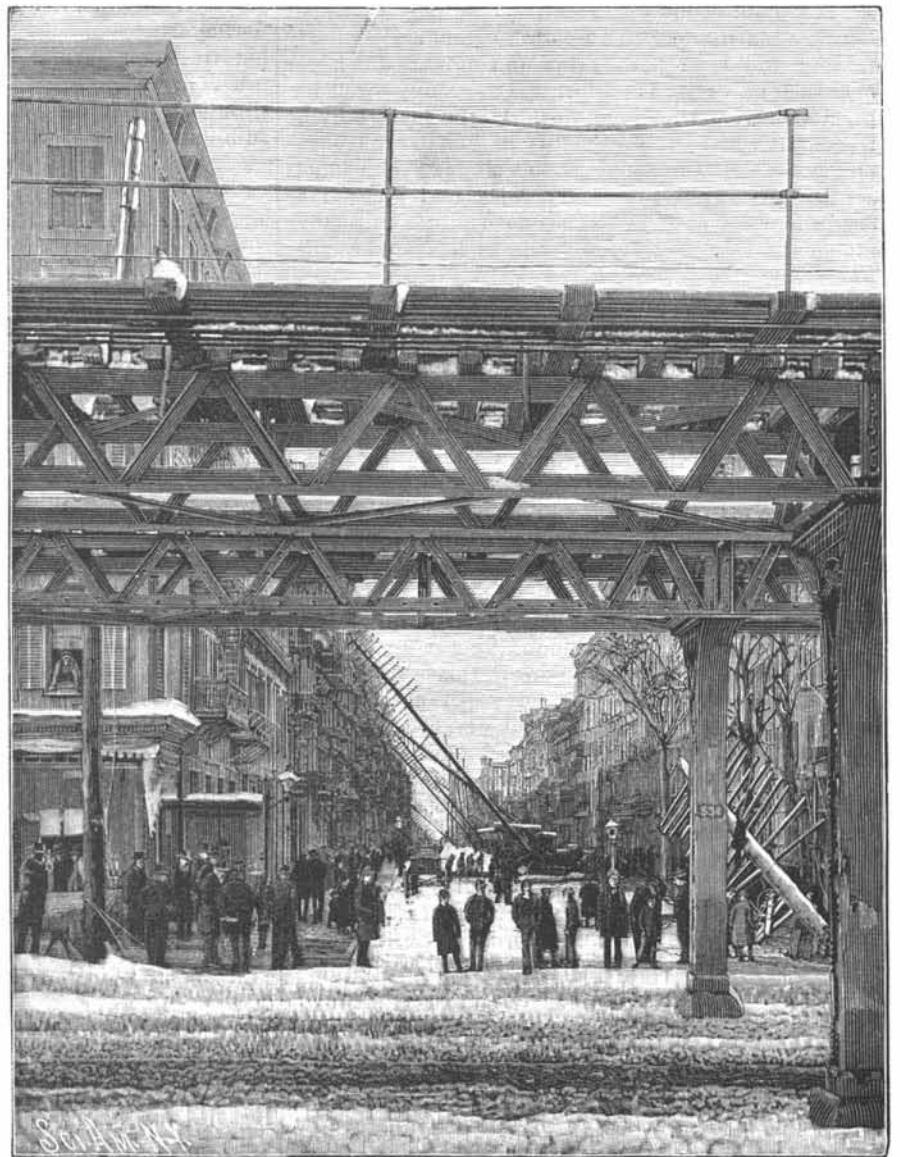
The electric light wires themselves, being mostly buried, escaped with comparatively little injury; but, from fear of accidents from crossed wires, orders were given early in the day, both in New York and Brooklyn, to shut off all current, and the greater portion of this service was thus disabled for two days. Had these wires, in themselves so heavy, been hung on poles, as was formerly the case, the destruction would have been much greater, and the companies, therefore, have to thank the city for compelling them to bury their wires, a work which was carried out only after the prolonged insistency of the authorities. The police and fire department wire service, by which every portion of the city has been thoroughly covered, was so completely paralyzed that patrols were organized to traverse the streets in many localities, and lookouts stationed on high buildings. In this respect, matters

Novel Scheme for Producing Rain.

Senator Farwell, of Illinois, proposes, after his term of office expires, which will be next March, to devote himself to the scientific work of trying to produce rain by the firing of cartridges of gunpowder or nitroglycerine high up in the air. During the last session, Congress appropriated two thousand dollars for carrying on experiments of the kind, but Senator Farwell does not intend to limit himself to this small sum, and will, if necessary, contribute from his own pocket such sum as may be necessary to complete the trial to his satisfaction. The main fact on which the theory of the experiments is based is the circumstance that heavy cannonading is often followed, after a day or two, by rain. Acting on this observation, attempts have been made at intervals, during the last hundred years, to produce rain by firing cannon, and producing concussions of the air in other ways, but without much success. Senator Farwell, however, says that, during the construction of the Central Pacific Railroad through the arid region east of the Rocky Mountains, where a great deal of blasting was necessary, it rained every day that there was blasting. For this reason he thinks that a sharp explosion of nitroglycerine, produced high up in the air, would be more



EIGHTH AVENUE AND THIRTY-NINTH STREET, LOOKING EAST.



NINTH AVENUE AND THIRTY-NINTH STREET, LOOKING WEST.

BREAKING DOWN OF ELECTRIC WIRE POLES BY SNOW.

hundred wires are suspended, and, stout as they are, they soon began to lean over and break under their burden. The weakness or failure of one added to the load of its neighbors on either side, and there followed such a falling of poles, carrying electric light, telephone, and telegraph wires, as had never before been seen in New York City.

Our illustrations represent the scene presented by this breaking down of the poles, as seen from two different points on Thirty-ninth Street. The views are from photographs made just after the storm, by Mr. E. C. Slater, of the New York Society of Amateur Photographers. A branch telephone station and a telephone exchange being near by, many telephone wires ran through Thirty-ninth Street, and one of the views shows a telephone testing box on the upper broken-off end of a pole, the broken pole lying at an angle across the street against the side of a building, and thus supporting a mass of debris.

The falling poles in many cases broke off cornices, punched holes in the walls of buildings, and smashed much glass, while it often happened that the apparent imminence of danger in a particular quarter drew groups of the curious, and seasonable warning was given to those who were threatened. The poles began to fall about 5 o'clock in the morning, when a large one snapped in two near its base and fell on the roof of the Fifty-ninth Street and Ninth Avenue Elevated

seemed as though we had gone back a quarter of a century, to the time when alarms of fire were rung out from a great bell in a tower just behind the City Hall, for among other temporary expedients, the fire department arranged to have fire alarms rung from the church bells in different parts of the city.

Actual figures as to the direct pecuniary loss thus caused are not obtainable. It has been estimated as high as \$4,000,000. One company absolutely lost 3,200 wires, and partially lost 1,300 others; but all the sufferers are inclined to make their loss appear as small as possible, on account of the pressing demands made upon the companies so persistently of late years that all wires should be buried. It is extremely fortunate, if the term can be properly used in such connection, that this breakdown in all electrical service occurred on Sunday. Happening on a regular business day, and in some conjunctions of affairs, it may easily be seen how such a failure of the usual means of communication might have been the cause of great and widely extended disaster. This reason alone should operate to hasten the time when all trunk lines of communication between great cities will be placed beneath the surface.

THE underground system of telegraphs of the German empire has a total length of 3,600 miles, and has cost \$10,219,000.

effective than cannon firing near the ground, and he proposes to send up balloons in the dry portions of Western Kansas and Colorado, furnished with torpedoes and slow matches, by which he hopes to obtain a concussion extending for fifty miles in every direction.

The *American Architect* thinks that while the scheme does not give a very great promise of success, it would be interesting to see the experiment tried and even partial success would be of great value. If the farmers of Colorado and western Kansas could get a shower once a week by sending up torpedoes every day, the result would be well worth the trouble, and there is plenty of reason to suppose that such artificial showers, by fostering the growth of vegetation, would in time produce the conditions which lead to regular natural showers, and the consequent permanent establishment of fertility throughout the region to which the process is to be applied.

THE commissioners appointed by the United States naval authorities to visit and report upon the nickel-bearing districts of Canada report that they are convinced, from the surface indications and the shafts already sunk, that the mineral cannot be exhausted by this generation. The deposits of nickel lie between walls of granite and diorite, and are easily to be distinguished.