

Scientific American.

ESTABLISHED 1845

MUNN & CO., EDITORS AND PROPRIETORS.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY AT

No. 361 BROADWAY, NEW YORK.

TERMS FOR THE SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN.

(Established 1845.)

One copy, one year, for the U. S., Canada or Mexico. \$3.00
One copy, six months, for the U. S., Canada or Mexico. 1.50
One copy, one year, to any foreign country, postage prepaid, £0 16s. 5d. 4.00

The Scientific American Supplement

(Established 1876)

is a distinct paper from the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN. THE SUPPLEMENT is issued weekly. Every number contains 16 octavo pages, uniform in size with SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN.

Building Edition of Scientific American.

(Established 1855.)

THE BUILDING EDITION OF THE SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN is a large and splendidly illustrated periodical, issued monthly, containing floor plans and perspective views pertaining to modern architecture.

Export Edition of the Scientific American

(Established 1878)

with which is incorporated "LA AMERICA CIENTIFICA E INDUSTRIAL," or Spanish edition of the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, published monthly, uniform in size and typography with the SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN.

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NEW YORK, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23, 1897.

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THE LICENSING OF ENGINEERS.

Our attention has recently been called to a New York State law which seems to have been inspired less with a desire of serving the public and protecting its interests than for some less honest and less disinterested motive. We refer to a law enacted on May 22, 1897, establishing rules of qualifications for those having the care of boilers, steam generators or steam engines.

The particular features of this measure which show the animus which inspired the introduction of this bill are to be found in the qualifications governing the applicant for examination. In the first place, the applicant must be a citizen of the United States and over twenty-one years of age. The application must show that the applicant has been employed as a fireman, oiler or general assistant under a licensed engineer in some building in the city of New York for a period of not less than five years.

This bill, like many others of its class, was passed by the Legislature without proper investigation into its merits or demerits. The bill was introduced to benefit a particular class; it manifestly had no other aim or object. The protection of the public against mischief is entirely of secondary importance. Like much legislation that we have to endure, this tends to make many suffer for the benefit of the few.

It is to be hoped that this foolish law will be repealed. If it is not repealed, it is probable its validity will be tested, and it is more than possible that the act will be deemed unconstitutional.

The interested motives of the promoters of this bill may be noted from the fact that it was to take effect immediately, the intent evidently being to throw hundreds out of employment before they would be able to qualify themselves for passing the required examinations, or even filing their applications therefor.

PRISON ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK EXHIBITION.

The recent exhibition of the Prison Association of New York was held with the idea of giving the public a more intelligent idea of the inner workings of our State prisons than it can glean from the daily press. The objects of the association are practical and humanitarian, and this was evident from the character of the exhibits, in which was very little of a merely sensational character. By far the greater part of it consisted of specimens of the handiwork of convicts in the prisons of New York State.

The clothing worn by the convicts is made on looms in the prison, and the various State institutions for the blind, the deaf and other unfortunates are also entirely supplied from this source. Here were shown specimens of the various suits, both for men and women, together with prison-made blankets, toweling, etc.

The one truly sensational object in the exhibition was the chair used in electrocution at Sing Sing, in which thirteen people have already suffered death. Except for the heavy straps at the arms and legs, there was nothing to suggest its tragic purpose.

In a room devoted to the Elmira Reformatory a surprisingly large number of the arts was represented by specimens of steel engraving, zinc etching, bookbinding, printing, photography, etc., done by the boys in the various classes. Near by was a large board of drawings, mechanical and architectural, which had been made by prisoners who had received only six months' instruction.

In looking over the varied collection of articles, all the results of instruction in useful arts and sciences, one found it difficult to believe that it had come from within the inclosure of State prison walls. The exhibition testified to the great advance which has been made over the old methods in the treatment of convicts, and it is easy to see that, as far as the occupations of prison life are concerned, everything is done to improve the more debased and ignorant among the convicts and give them some reasonable hope of honest livelihood when their terms have expired.

The inmates of the State Penitentiary for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania were represented by a large model of that famous institution, made by themselves. This prison is conducted on the much discussed plan of solitary confinement adopted generations ago by that State. The prison is laid out so that the idea of solitary individual confinement shall be literally carried out. Formerly, from the time the convict entered the massive gate of the prison to the day on which he left it he never spoke to or looked upon the face of any man but his keeper. To secure this result the prison is built on a radial plan. The outer wall of the inclosure is 30 feet high and 640 feet square. In the center of the square is a tower 40 feet in diameter and two stories high, and from this radiate, like the spokes of a wheel, eleven long, low, one-storied structures. Each wing is built with two outer walls and a central dividing wall and covered with a low pitched roof, and it is divided by partition walls into a long double line of cells. Each cellopens out onto a little yard which is surrounded by high walls and is of about the same area as the cell. Light is obtained by a grated window in the roof. Formerly the convict ate, slept and worked in his cell and took exercise in his little yard, absolutely alone. The prisoner is received in the central tower, his pedigree is taken, and he is then taken to one of the cells, which he never leaves except for exercise. The idea of solitary confinement is not carried out so literally as it formerly was; but the convict does all his work in his cell and is never thrown in contact with the other convicts in workshops and classrooms.

Very different from this is the modern steel prison, with its modern provisions for light, heat and ventilation. The methods of this construction were shown by illustrations of the new wing of three hundred cells which is being built at one of the State penitentiaries.

A SEVENTY THOUSAND HORSE POWER CENTRAL STATION.

Work is progressing upon a building in New York City which will contain the largest aggregation of motive power ever gathered together in a single plant. Hitherto that distinction has belonged to the great ocean steamships, the largest power at present being in the engine rooms of the Campania and Lucania, of the Cunard line, each of which is credited with a maximum trial horse power of 33,000.

The new power house is being built by the Metropolitan Street Railway Company of New York and it forms part of the scheme for introducing electric traction on the whole of the 218 miles of street railways owned or controlled by this company. At present there are three different systems at work: the cable, the underground trolley and the horse car. The mechanical power is supplied from four power houses: a cable power house on Houston Street and Broadway, another at Fiftieth Street, a third on East Twenty-sixth