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NEW YORK, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1898.

Contents.

(Illustrated articles are n	narked with an asterisk.)
Automobile test, Paris	Knife sharpener, Nielsen & Thomsen's* 132
Bicycle tires, repairing 138 Bristles from China 138	Lightning, forms of 140 Locomotive, an experimental* 136
Cardamom, varieties of 132	Maine, disaster to the 130
Cathedral, the Havana* 133 Cavalry in future wars 140 -	Moths and chrysalis* 135
Copy holder, Paxton's* 139 Coral theory, a new	Ordnance, large, finishing*136, 137 Patents granted, weekly record
Document file, Derby's* 132	of 141
Electric towboat in a sewer* 139 English, spoken and written 135	Pneumatic postal tube test 131 Purdue University 136
Fire losses, 1897	Ring set holding clamp, Thomas'*
Flames in a tall building 131	Science notes 134
Gun factory at Washington*.136, 137 Havana Harbor, view of* 129	Sensationalism not science 139 Sewer, towboat in a* 139
Heart, new movement of	Ship bottom paint
Ink, India 138	Silverware tarnishing
Insect grafting*	Smithsonian Institution, the 131 Telegraph cable, new West In-
Irrigating canal head gate, O'Donnell's*	dian

PAGE

TABLE OF CONTENTS OF

Scientific American Supplement

No. 1156.

For the Week Ending February 26, 1898.

Price 10 cents. For sale by all newsdealers.

1. ARCHITECTURE.—The New Palaces of the Champ Elysee Paris.—2 illustrations The Bank of France.—I illustration..... 18475 18476

11. ATHLETICS.—An Athletic Feat.—I illustration. 111. BIOGRAPHY.—EDUARD LINDEMANN and OSCAR STUMPE. Brief biographical sketches of two astronomers.... 18477 . 18483

IV. CIVIL ENGINEERING.-A Course of Instruction in Road Build-18473 ing. V. ELECTRICITY.-The Magnetic Properties and Electrical Resistance of Iron at High Temperatures. 18451

VL FINE ARTS.—Falize's Bust of Gallia.—1 Illustration..... 18481 VII. MARINE ENGINEERING.-The Portuguese Cruiser "Adam-sstor". 18472

THE DISASTER TO THE "MAINE."

the loss of one of its finest ships, with over two hun- and sea. dred and fifty of its brave and ever popular blue had been blown up at the dead of night in a Spanish ried out of our various shipping ports on the coast. harbor.

the highest exhibition of courage, and, after the first cold waves by means which insure its reaching the shock of the calamity was passed, the public realized | largest possible number of people. The daily report is that it would be fatal to make charges of crime in the given to the press associations of the country and its absence of any proof that a crime had been committed. bulletins are posted at the various bureau stations and It was felt that the timely suggestion contained in in thousands of public places where they will be readily the dispatch from the captain of the ship, that judg- accessible to the public. So complete is the distribument be suspended, must be followed.

vessel was struck by a torpedo, the effect would have 'more widely distributed than this. been the bursting in of her underwater plating, accom- In the event of the approach of a hurricane along the panied by a dull, muffied roar. It is claimed that, as coast warnings are sent to all port stations, from which the action of high explosives is chiefly downward, the signals are displayed, flags being used by day and lanexplosion of the gun cotton charge in the head of a terns by night. General information is sent to all shiptorned would not produce sufficient shock to detonate ping interests and bulletins are posted at the maritime opinion that if a torpedo or mine exploded immediately movement of the storm. By the co-operation of the without any concurrent explosion of her magazines, as for the benefit of coastwise or inward bound veswere other ships before, and since in the China-Japan' sels. All foreign maritime exchanges receive cablethe idea that the "Maine" was lost in this way.

within the ship, either in coal bunkers or magazine, is tions according to the warnings given.

more than once that fires have occurred in the bunkers or hurry them on to their destination. exploded by detonation.

magazine was the first to explode.

It is to be hoped that every possible effort will be pamphlet entitled "Temperatures injurious to food made to clear up this terrible mystery. Officers and products in storage and during transportation, and men alike will want to know whether the death-deal- methods of protection from the same," which was coming contents of their ships are subject to laws which piled by H. E. Williams, chief clerk of the forecast diare thoroughly understood, or whether they walk vision, to supplement the work of the bureau in this above a sleeping volcano which may hurl them un-i direction. It contains a list of eighty-four perishable warned to a death whose actual cause may never be goods, and opposite each item is recorded the temperaascertained. tures which it will stand without injury when protected by the various systems of packing and transportation. WEATHER BUREAU WARNINGS. Of the direct benefits of the bureau forecasts to the farmer and the fruit grower it is almost superfluous to It is likely that if the average citizen were asked to speak-so well are they known and appreciated. The fruit farms of Florida and California, the sugar plantations of Louisiana and Texas, and the truck growing interests of the eastern seaboard, are not slow to express their indebtedness to the warnings received from the bureau. The San Francisco office reports that during the last three years not a single rain occurred in the raisin drying region without warning, and that in only one instance was an unnecessary warning issued. If this may be taken as a sample of its efficient work in a single department, we may form some idea of but this represents only a portion of a great system of the far-reaching benefits of this deservedly popular ser-

meteorological forecasts which are directed to the pro-The great calamity which has befallen the nation in | tection of life, property and merchandise both on land

What might be called the protective work of the jackets, has brought mingled feelings to the hearts of bureau is felt in every community throughout the the American people, feelings in which bewilderment country. It safeguards the crops of the farmer and the and deep sorrow predominate. The perplexity and $_1$ fruit grower; warns the shipper of perishable goods of anguish which such marine disasters produce are here the approach of hot or cold waves, and tells him how intensified by the extraordinary coincidences of time long to keep his merchandise under shelter and when and place which render the loss of the "Maine" sus-¹ it is safe to let it go forward; gives timely warning picious and grimly suggestive. In view of the strained to the railroads of the approach of storms which will relations existing between the Spanish government probably call for emergency work with snow plows, and our own, and having fresh in mind the inexcusable special engines and crews; and by its timely warnings incident of the De Lome letter, the American people throughout the country probably preserves an amount were fully justified in their first exclamation of of merchandise from destruction, damage or delays Treachery !" when they learned that their warship which would compare in bulk with that which is car-

The Weather Bureau disseminates its daily prognos-Self-control and moderation, however, are frequently tications of cyclones, hurricanes and storms and hot or tion that it would be difficult to find a regularly recur-Theory is rife as to the cause of the disaster. If the 'ring item of daily news which is more accessible or

the explosives within the magazines. We are of the exchanges giving full notification of the position and in the vicinity of the magazines, the shock would be shipping interests, the steamers leaving the port of quite sufficient to detonate its high explosives. It is New York or any ports at which the warnings have true that the "Blanco Encalada" was struck and sunk been received display the signal flags of the bureau war, and this fact is pointed out by those who scout grams from this country relative to the movement of ocean storms, their course and probable duration, and If the explosion was due to causes within the ship, it this information is posted at the various exchanges was either intentional or accidental. That any agent and custom houses, so that commanders or masters of either Spain or Cuba could have placed explosives leaving foreign ports are prepared to encounter condi-

rendered extremely unlikely by the extra precautions Similar care is exercised by the Weather Bureau over which would be taken to safeguard the ship. The the internal mercantile interests of the country. In magazines themselves were inspected at eight o'clock addition to the usual forecasts, special warnings are that night, or only about an hour and a half before sent out at the approach of any storm of unusual the explosion occurred, and the keys were hanging at severity. Thus the railroad companies are warned of the time in the captain's stateroom. The coal in the coming snowstorms in time to enable them to overhaul bunkers had been brought from home ports, and it is snow plows and gather together the necessary crews stated that only necessary supplies in the way of pro- for "fighting snow." Special engines are held ready visions had been taken on day by day in the harbor. with banked fires, and men are distributed to keep the The accidental causes may have arisen from fire, due, switches, signals, etc., clear of snow, so that when the to spontaneous combustion of coal in the bunkers, or storm breaks it finds, thanks to the bureau, an organfrom a short-circuited electric wire, or there may have ized equipment ready for all emergencies. The railbeen an explosion due to the decomposition of the high roads are also given due warning of the approach of explosives on board. There are coal bunkers on three cold waves, and these bulletins are of inestimable value sides of the 10-inch magazine, and it has happened in enabling them to protect perishable goods in transit,

of our warships which have become fierce enough be- Nowhere, perhaps, is the work of the bureau better fore they were discovered to make the steel plates in-appreciated than among the shippers of perishable closing the bunkers red hot. If such a fire occurred in merchandise, and it is a fact that the movement of this the adjoining bunkers, it is inconceivable that it should class of goods is largely controlled by the forecasts of not have been discovered when the nightly inspection, hot or cold waves. We are informed by Mr. Elias P. to which we have referred, was made. The brown | Dunn, the local weather forecaster. that he is in conpowder, however, of which the 10-inch ammunition is stant receipt of inquiries from shipping merchants relamade up, can be heated to nearly 600° F. with impu- tive to the probable weather conditions during the nity, and the gun-cotton of the torpedoes can only be transit of consignments of fruit, liquids or other commodities which would be injuriously affected by ex-There remains the theory that the boiler which was tremes of temperature. This particular feature of the supplying the electric light dynamos exploded, and set service is of great value in the port of New York, esoff the magazines. This would fully account for the pecially in the fruit and kindred trades. A forecast of double reports spoken of in many of the accounts by extreme cold will sometimes cause the hatches of a veseye witnesses. If this was the first cause of the sel to be kept closed for several days, and the work of disaster, it will be a difficult matter to prove from the bureau results in the annual saving of many thouthe appearance of the wreck whether the boiler or the sands of dollars worth of merchandise in this particular branch of trade. Mr. Dunn has placed in our hands a

VIII. MECHANICAL ENGINEERING.—The Clinker Filter.—1 illus-	
tration. A Hydraulic Engine.—By Mr. ARTHUR RIGG.—3 illustrations	18473 18474
IX. MEDICINE AND HYGIENE -Electric Arc Injurious to Eve-	
sight The Modern Novelist and Medical Subjects	18476
X. METEOROLOGYThe Effect of the "Bora" in the Duga Pass, Montenegro -1 illustration	18480
Montenegro1 illustration. An Improved Sunshine RecorderBy D. T. MARING4 illus-	
trations. Modern Views of the Rainbow	18479 18480
XI. MILIT'A RY ENGINEERINGMachine for Throwing Grenades	
with Greater Accuracy and to a Greater Distance than Can be	
Done by Hand.	18478
XII. MISCELLANEOUS: Engineering Notes	18479
Miscellaneous Notes	18478
Selected Formulæ	18478
XIII. NATURAL HISTORYA Humbug-Art versus NatureBy GEORGE ARCHIE STOCKWELL-A description of composite mer-	
maids, etc., made by the Japanese. —6 illustrations	18483
Hibernation	1648
XIV. ORDNANCE AND ARMOR. – Armored Cupola for Fort Waelhem.—1 illustration	
XV. PHOTOGRAPHYA New Basis for Photo-Mechanical Pro-	
cesses.—A description of the new Liesegang process	
XVI, RAILROADINGRailroading as a ProfessionAn interest-	
ing article, giving practical advice from the pen of Dr. CHAUN- CEY M. DEPEW.	1047
XVII. TECHNOLOGYGutta PerchaIts properties and usesAn	
illustrated description of various methods of making physical	
tests of gutta percha and the manufacture of gutta percha	
covered wire and cables.—5 illustrations The Artificial Silk Industry.—An illustrated description of a	104/(
new industry that is reaching a period of heavy production4	
illustrations	1840
T ALCONGOLO TECONITIOL DE ALCHUIGCHIE OF DACHE ACH.	10101

define the work of the United States Weather Bureau, he would say that it consisted in taking observations of the weather and in affording protection to shipping interests by giving due warning of impending storms. As a matter of fact, however, the work of this bureau is felt over a far larger field than is included under the term "shipping interests," and its range of observations takes in a much wider variety of subjects than the public generally supposes. It is true that the captains of vessels consult the bureau forecasts and freouently defer their sailings as the result of its warnings;