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SEEKING EARTH'S CENTRE AND COMMUNICATING WITH MARS.

A REPORTER of the *Washington Star* learned recently that a scientific scheme of some importance was being agitated among men of note in that city. During the last two congresses efforts have been made by several members to obtain an appropriation for boring a hole in the earth several miles in depth. The belief prevails among many that immense treasures lie hidden in the bosom of mother earth, and that boring is the only method by which its secret stores can be disclosed.

According to the theory of geologists the center of the earth is largely composed of metals. It is held that during the process of cooling, the heavy substances sought, or gravitated to the middle, while those found on the surface are but mere accidental detritions, or fragments of the main bodies. It is supposed that because of the lightness of the earth's crust, which only weighs two and one-half times as much as water, and of the heaviness towards the centre, where the average weight of things is eleven times that of water; therefore iron, gold and platinum must abound in the interior of this globe or planet.

At a place called Spelling in Germany a pit for scientific purposes has been sunk to the depth of one mile, but water rushed in so rapidly that operations had to be suspended, and nothing of importance has been learned. At Wheeling, W. Va., a well is now being bored, which is already three-fourths of a mile in depth. But all that has so far been learned from deep borings is that the heat of the globe increases one degree for every 80 feet in depth.

The theory of scientists is that at twenty miles beneath the earth's surface all is liquid. The purpose of the present scheme is to bore to that depth, and ascertain the truth of that theory. The boring is to be made on some vast prairie so that in case the liquid fire when touched should rush to the surface neither life nor property would be endangered. It is said that the proposition will come before the next

Congress in a matter of fact form, and that there is a good chance for an appropriation.

The *New York Journal* has an article on another subject which is more astonishing than that of boring to the earth's centre. The planet Mars is 224,000,000 miles from the earth. It is thought by scientists that Mars is inhabited by human beings, and the investigations made with recently constructed high-power telescopes seem to confirm the belief. It has a twenty-four hour day, and a climate adopted for human beings to dwell in. The theory that it is inhabited is more than a century old. Sir William Herschell some sixty years ago announced that he had observed a series of bright flashes from the surface of Mars, the result either of a volcano or of attempts by its people to communicate with this earth.

Recently the niece of the great Severrier in her will bequeathed \$20,000 to the person who would succeed in communicating with another planet or star. This bequest has caused a renewal of interest in Mars, and astronomers are taking up the matter seriously. The Russian government will be asked for the use of Siberia to carry out signals which will be likely to attract the attention of astronomers on that planet if any such exist there. The plan is to construct a vast isometrical triangle, which cannot be mistaken for a volcano, and which must challenge the astronomers in the other sphere. They will be likely to respond in some similar way, and a system of flash telegraphy can be established.

It would be refreshing to know what the people of Mars are doing, and what the political situation there is. It would be delightful to learn that Congressmen there do not wear socks, and that there is no bribery at elections. In addition to this we might have a stream of molten gold flowing into the basin of the Colorado desert. What more could the most ambitious or avaricious of us desire.

PRISON POPULATION.

ACCORDING to census bulletin 95, the total number of prisoners in county jails June 1, 1890, was 19,538. In 1880 the number reported was 12,691. These figures show an increase in ten years of 6,847 prisoners in county jails in the United States. The increase in the total population was about 25 per cent. but the increase in prisoners in county jails was very nearly 54 per cent. In 1880 the ratio of prisoners in county jails to the population was 253 in each million; in 1890 it was 312. The in-

crease, therefore, has been 59 to the million. The largest increase has been in the North Atlantic division, where it was 95 to the million.

The tabulation of prisoners according to color shows 13,961 white and 5577 colored. In the latter category are included Chinese and Indians. The figures are 4427 pure negroes, 901 mulattoes, 131 Chinese and 118 Indians.

In respect to nativity, not including the colored prisoners, who may all be supposed to be natives (except the Chinese), of the 13,961 white prisoners 9684 are native born, 3765 foreign born, and the place of birth of 512 is unknown.

The native white prisoners are divided into four sub classes, as follows: 5265 had both parents native; 625 had one parent native and one parent foreign born; 2734 had both parents foreign born, and in 1056 cases the birthplace of one or both parents is unknown. Of the prisoners with one parent foreign born, 259 had a foreign-born mother 380 had a foreign-born father.

It was stated in the bulletin with regard to the penitentiary convicts whose birthplace and parentage are known, that the foreign-born element, the colored element, and the native white element each furnished about one-third of all the inmates of our state prisons and penitentiaries. The same remark applies to the County jail, the preponderance being slightly in favor of the foreign-born element.

In respect to sex, 17,801 are men and 1,737 are women.

The only State in which there has been an absolute decrease of Jail prisoners is Vermont. There has been a decrease relatively to the total population in nine other States and Territories, namely, California, Dakota, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Maryland, Ohio, Oregon, Texas and Wyoming. The decrease has been slight.

The relative as well as absolute increase in the other States and Territories is a striking fact in the prison statistics of 1890. Generally speaking it has been largest in States with small population, as may be seen by the following test, in which the figures given represent the relative increase compared with each million of the total population: Arizona, 1,058; Montana 873; Rhode Island 493; Nevada 393; Florida 371; Delaware 273; Colorado 235; Idaho 226; New Mexico, 218; Maine and Utah (each) 172; Michigan and Tennessee (each) 57; Pennsylvania 47; New York 46; Washington 45 and Iowa 14.

The debt of New York City is \$60,000,000.