

are thousands of sealskins mixed with the bird manure, and not long ago 500 tons of such skins were excavated from one guano deposit. The birds which make the guano are of many kinds. One of the chief species is the pelican. I have seen those ungainly, big-billed birds in such flocks that they fairly darkened the face of the ocean as they flew over it. They feed upon the fishes, and wherever you see a flock of pelicans you may be sure there is a school of fish near by. The bills of the pelicans have great bags of yellow skin under them and they use these as nets to scoop up the fish. They are the gluttons of the sea and air, and often gorge themselves to such an extent that they cannot rise from the water, but remain there until sufficient of their food has digested to lighten their weight. About the Lobos Islands there are always millions of pelicans. The waters are back with them, and as you near the islands you see them by the thousands seated on the rocks. They seem to be sociable creatures and they hunt in flocks. They are but little afraid of man, and as you near the islands they seldom move without you go right among them. The guano of the Lobos Islands is found in pockets covered with layers of sand which often vary in thickness from two to fifteen feet. The sand is shoveled off and the guano is then taken out. As it is dug into a strong smell of ammonia rises, and the men generally wear iron masks over their faces to keep the ammoniac dust out of their mouths, noses and lungs. The stuff is a good deal like fine sand and it is very penetrating. The guano is first loaded on trucks and carried on a tramway to the shore, where it is transferred to the ships, to be taken to Europe or America. I am told that a shipload of guano does not smell at all badly after a few days. The ammonia of the upper crust passes off and you cannot notice the filthiness of the cargo without going down into the hold.

When Humboldt visited South America, in 1804, he called attention to the value of the guano beds on the Chincha Islands. They were then sixty feet deep, and he said there was enough manure on them to enrich the worn out lands of the old world. The deposits, however, were not thought to be of value by the Peruvians until nearly half a century later, when a Frenchman named Cochet called attention to them and claimed one-third of all the product by right of discovery. He traveled from place to place and picked out islands from which it is said that more than \$1,200,000,000 worth of guano was sold. He was declared by the Peruvian congress as the true discoverer of the beds and uses of guano, and in 1849 a grant of 5,000 tons of guano was voted him. He never got it, however, and, although his claim by right of discovery, which, according to their Peruvian law, gave the discoverer one-third, aggregating over \$400,000,000, he died in a poor house in Paris. Another discoverer of some of the guano islands was treated in the same way by the Peruvian government. This was a naturalized American citizen named Landreau. He discovered guano deposits which were worth about \$400,000,000, and, according to the Peruvian law, should have had \$133,000,000 from them. It was, it is said, through his discoveries that Peru was able to get a loan of Europe of two hundred million dollars, but when it came to the question of paying Landreau he was cut off without a cent. Just before the war between Chile and Peru a number of Americans had formed what was called the Peruvian company. They had bought up the rights of the heirs of Cochet and Landreau and were at-

tempting to make the Peruvian government pay back something of the enormous sum claimed by them as heirs of Cochet and Landreau. It is from the prospectus of this company, which was given me before leaving the United States by Col. Dick Thompson, our former secretary of the navy, that the above statements are taken. This prospectus was not intended to be given to the newspapers, and the extent of the scheme has, I think, never been published. Its advocates brought the matter before Congress. Secretaries of State Fish and Evarts both made reports upon it, and President Hayes in one case called the attention of Congress to it. It never made any headway out here, and it is now, I suppose, dead, for the guano islands were given over to the Peruvian Corporation, an English syndicate, years ago as a part consideration of its assuming the Peruvian foreign debt. Peru is practically a bankrupt country, but when the claim was made it was rich, and the claimants expected to get at least a large part of the half billion dollars to which they said they were entitled under the law.

Guano is not worth so much today as it was years ago. The product is now comparatively nothing. Other fertilizers have taken its place, and its price is less than half what it once was. There have been times when this bird manure was sold for \$100 a ton. Today it can be bought, I am told, for \$30 or \$40 a ton. The first shipment to Europe was made more than fifty years ago. At that time twenty barrels of guano were taken to Liverpool and tried on a farm near that city. The result was such that orders were sent back for more, and soon hundreds of ships were employed in carrying guano to Europe. Often 200 ships would be at the different islands at one time. Chinese coolies were imported to get out the guano. They were horribly treated, and today it is not uncommon to find dead Chinamen mixed with the new deposits. For a long time the Guano Islands gave Peru the greater part of its revenues, yielding about \$15,000,000 a year for a number of years. Now they are practically exhausted, and Peru has fallen from great riches to poverty.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

SPANISH DEBT AND THE WAR.

[Bradstreet's, Aug. 13.]

In spite of the rigors of the censorship sufficient information comes from Madrid to make it plain that it is the financial position more than anything else that has brought all parties in the peninsula to an appreciation of the necessity for an immediate peace. A brief dispatch, which came early in the week, stating that the note issues of the bank of Spain were to be increased from \$300,000,000 to \$5,000,000,000, evidently indicates that the last lunge has been made and that the bank and the Spanish treasury have gone upon a paper basis. By its charter the bank of Spain is bound to keep in cash the equivalent of 33 per cent of its note issues, half in gold and half in silver. Last May this was modified by providing for note issues up to \$400,000,000, provided a reserve of one-half of the additional notes above \$300,000,000 was maintained. It is hard to say whether this provision has been observed and still more difficult in the absence of information to determine whether the present plans contemplate an observance of the reserve clauses of the bank of Spain's charter and its amendments.

Another significant indication is in the form of a statement made by one of the organs of the present Spanish cabinet to the effect that since the revolution began in Cuba the total cost of the operations there and of the war

with the United States has been not less than \$350,000,000. For a country already so seriously involved as is Spain this is simply a crushing expense, and the probability is that the figure in question underestimates rather than exaggerates the real situation. An analysis of the Spanish financial situation, recently published in the London Economist, puts the issue of treasury obligations and bonds by Spain and the fiscal administration of Cuba and the Philippines since the war began at \$550,000,000, representing increases in the bond issues both of the peninsula and of the bankrupt colonial treasuries. The same authority, however, points out that these creations of indebtedness do not by any means represent the full amount of the cost of the colonial and foreign war. It seems that, according to the admissions of the Madrid authorities, more than \$80,000,000 is due in Cuba alone to the army, navy, civil service and contractors of all kinds, the arrears amounting to anywhere from six months to a year. It is the same in Porto Rico and the Philippines, and while the amount which Spain is thus in debt to its military and civil service is enormous, no one seems able to form even an approximation of the total. Under these circumstances it can readily be understood that the Spanish colonial authorities, civil and military, are quite ready, as they have shown, to give up a struggle which involves the practical certainty that the government's necessities would involve a repudiation of their pay. The financial difficulties of the Spanish government have been the controlling factor in determining its action in regard to peace. Those who have examined the subject have held from the first that this would be the outcome. They have not been disappointed, and they furthermore see in the action of the French government as mediator the hand of Paris banking interests, which have given financial support to Spain in the past and which in the crisis have evidently enforced upon all parties in the peninsula the necessity of seeking peace on any terms.

IDAHO WEATHER REPORT.

The weather of the week ending Monday, August 15, 1898, was generally favorable in most sections for the maturing of crops and harvesting. The days were hot and dry and the nights somewhat warmer than usual.

Harvesting progresses in all sections; much of the fall sown grain has been cut and stacked, and some of it threshed; the yield is above the average generally. Late sown grain is ripening fast, and farmers will soon be busy cutting and stacking the crop. Oats, barley and rye are expected to turn out well, and at least average yields are looked for. Fruits and vegetables are doing well, notwithstanding the unfavorable effects of hot, dry weather. Potatoes for the most part are looking fine and from present indications the crop will be very satisfactory. The second crop of lucern is being cut.

The police department of Los Angeles is endeavoring to secure trace of little Vera Nelson and her grandmother, Mrs. Jennie McNeill. The grandmother abducted the child Wednesday, and it has been learned, left with her on the northbound Southern Pacific train. The child is legally in the possession of her mother and step-father, Mr. and Mrs. A. H. Miksell, who came here from Utah. This is the third time the child has been abducted, Miksell getting her away from her father, Nelson, once in Utah and once in Rawlins, Wyo.