

[From Reynold's Newspaper.]

AWFUL EXPLOSION OF TWO POWDER MILLS NEAR ERITH.

At a quarter to seven yesterday morning the two powder mills of Messrs. Hall and Sons, at Low Wood, Belvedere Kent, exploded, with it is feared a loss of fifty lives and immense damage to property within a radius of seven miles. At the time named three successive explosions occurred, completely demolishing the two mills and three houses near. The bricks and machinery were thrown a distance of a mile, while portions of buildings in Erith, Beadenfield, and Belvedere were shaken down, and there is scarcely a sound pane of glass to be found within a radius of four miles. At Plumstead and Woolwich shop windows were shaken out, and the goods thrown into the street. At these places the scene was indescribable. Those in the streets were shaken, staggered, and several fell, whilst those asleep were thrown almost out of bed. After the first impulse of an earthquake had subsided it became current that a terrific explosion had occurred in the Arsenal, where 40,000 people were at work. The people employed there, on feeling the shock, became uncontrollable, and rushed out in the air, whilst thousands from the town besieged the Arsenal gates—women and children shrieking in expectation of relatives killed, the excitement being only increased by several men being brought out bleeding who had been hurt by broken glass falling, &c. In about ten minutes after the shock the excitement was allayed by the invoices and other papers of Hall and Sons dropping in the Arsenal, showing that the explosion was neither in the Arsenal nor at the Government powder magazine, Plumstead-marshes. A large detachment of Arsenal and the town police were at once despatched to Messrs. Hall's powder mills, and on arriving and rendering assistance, they found nineteen killed, missing, and wounded. Twelve wounded were conveyed by train to Guy's Hospital, where it is feared several will die. The dead, including Mr. Rayner, the foreman, Thomas Hubbard, in the employ of Mr. Cavey, contractor, Elizabeth Wright, a young woman, daughter of a man employed on the premises, and others, were conveyed home. Four men and a boy in two powder barges alongside the mills in the River Thames are missing, the barges and the occupants disappearing with the explosion, being undoubtedly sunk. It is also feared several others are buried in the debris, two human legs and portion of a skull being picked up at distances varying from 100 to 400 yards, and for which no owners are found. Amongst those most seriously injured is the daughter of Mr. Walter Silver, the manager, whose house is blown down, Mrs. York and two children, and a girl named Elizabeth Osborn, daughter of a man employed and living on the premises, whose cottage was also blown down; Mr. Rayner and son (wife and son of the foreman killed,) are also in a precarious position. The Southern Outfall works at Crossness Point had a narrow escape of being blown down, and are somewhat injured. On hearing of the catastrophe, Mr. Webster sent his men to the assistance of the wounded. The damage by the explosion, including the demolition of the Low Wood Powder Mills and premises and mills adjacent, is not less than £200,000, and it is doubted whether a million will cover the total damage, including the thousands upon thousands of squares of glass destroyed in Erith, Belvedere, Plumstead, Woolwich, Charlton, Eltham, Shooter's hill, Blackheath, &c. The shock was distinctly felt at London-bridge, and the fright to persons in delicate health has been most disastrous. The damage by broken windows, &c., in the Royal Arsenal, dock-yard, artillery and marine barracks, and other Government establishments, is very large, the South-Eastern Railway Company having also experienced considerable loss by damage done to their stations on the North Kent line. It is computed that 30,000 barrels of gunpowder exploded, and the smoke did not subside for half an hour. The embankment of the river Thames was blown down, and the most earnest and strenuous exertions were made to repair it before high water.

THE SHOCK IN THE METROPOLIS.

Some idea of the force of the explosion may be gleaned from the fact that the shock was distinctly felt in every quarter of the metropolis and its suburbs, causing the utmost consternation, it being the general opinion it was the shock of an earthquake. In some places women and children rushed from their houses, hundreds of houses being

more or less damaged. From careful inquiries made, the following information has been collected, but does not represent one iota of the damage which was done even at the distance of twenty miles. In the neighborhood of Newington, Camberwell, Dulwich, Peckham, Sydenham, &c., the shock was felt with tremendous violence. In the Walworth-road, at Sutherland Chapel, a large number of the windows were shattered, and at a shop in the same thoroughfare the shutters were hurled down into the roadway, the plate glass front at the same time splitting in all directions. In the streets in the vicinity of Kennington-park the people rushed into the streets from their beds, and the utmost consternation prevailed. The windows of the houses were in many places shattered, and many describe the shock as of that violence that heavy articles of furniture were rocked about. At a large building in the Walworth-road the brick work was found to be split up, and some men going to work describe the shock as something terrible, lasting several minutes, as though the ground upheaved. In Francis-street, Newington, a gentleman describes the effect as truly alarming, the doors of his house being dashed open, locks and bolts being torn away. At other dwellings the result was the same. In the Lucas-road, Walworth, the house No. 22, was so shaken that part of the roof was displaced and the furniture in a back bedroom moved from its position. In Kennington-road and Kennington-lane, the windows in several houses were shattered. In the neighborhood of Norwood some houses in course of construction were so injured by the shocks, that they will have to be shored up to prevent them falling, and in the Norwood-lane some newly-erected stabling was so shaken that fears are entertained of its giving way. The inhabitants of Clapham and Wandsworth also felt the terrible concussion, many persons stating that it resembled an earthquake. One man states that it seemed, as he passed over the common, to roll along and shake the ground beneath his feet. The effect of the explosion was felt at the Crystal Palace and surrounding neighborhood.

At the house of Mr. Simkins, tailor, of New Church-road, Southampton-street, Camberwell, two young children belonging to a lodger were literally tilted out of bed, and the building itself much shaken. Mr. D. Smith, boot-maker, of Edward-street, New Church-road, states that he was standing in his passage, when he was seized with a sensation as if he was about to be suffocated, and believed at the moment that the house was about to fall. In the same neighborhood, at the wood-yard of Mr. H. Fielder a large stock of timber was thrown down, and a portion fell upon the roof of a small house adjoining it, and dashed in the roof. Fortunately, although several persons were in the house, no one was injured, with the exception of a little boy who was asleep in the top room, and was somewhat severely bruised about the head and face. A somewhat singular incident occurred at the house of a poor man named Hughes, living in Lock's-fields. It seems that he was warming some coffee for his breakfast when the stone mantelpiece was broken to pieces, part of which fell upon his head and inflicted a somewhat severe wound. The man states that when the shock took place, and before the stonework struck him, he felt unable to move from the strange feeling which came over him.

SOUTH AMERICA.

Letters from Brazil confirm the magnitude of the failures reported by telegraph. The liabilities of the house of Sonto & Co., the largest bankers in Rio de Janeiro, are stated to be five million two hundred thousand pounds sterling; those of Gomez and Filo, one million pounds sterling; those of Montenegro and Linia, one million six hundred thousand pounds sterling; and others making eleven millions of pounds sterling.

The stoppage of the house of Sonto & Co. appears to have been the cause of the entire mischief.

An extraordinary number of failures of smaller houses are reported to have followed the down fall of the banking houses.

The banking-house of Messrs. Babia, Innes & Co. are said to have held their ground during a drain of many days, paying out six hundred thousand pounds sterling. This established public confidence in the house.

At the closing of the mail there were symptoms of improvement; but during most of the period of the panic the excitement was such that the military and police were called out, and the

banking houses were occupied by the troops.

The convulsion is not in any degree attributed to inherent unsoundness in trade, the position of the leading merchants being considered good.

The house of Sonto & Co., it is said, should have stopped three years ago. Their assets are estimated at from thirty to fifty per cent.

MEXICO.

MAXIMILIAN'S FIRST COINAGE.—The New Orleans *Picayune* says: "We have been shown a Mexican picayune of the Maximilian issue, a very neat little coin of silver, on one side of which appears the familiar eagle of the Mexican republic, with an imperial crown upon his head, and surrounded with the 'Imperio Mexicano.' On the reverse, between two laurel wreaths, is the inscription, 5 Cents. 1864.

CENTRAL AMERICA.

Advices by the Constitution say that the rumor of the intention of the Central Americans to join the Mexican empire is emphatically denied by their journals, and the Congress of Costa Rica expresses its determination to stand by republicanism. President Carrera addresses a circular to the Central American Governments declaring his unalterable determination to stand by the present form of Government.

VOLCANOC IN ACTION.—The Panama Star of October 27th. has the following: The volcano of Turrialba, Costa Rica, has been very active recently, the ashes having fallen for three days and nights in the valley of San Jose, to the great alarm of the inhabitants. A commission was sent by the Governor of Cartago to inspect the condition of the volcano. They found the burning mountain covered with ashes to the depth of three feet, and all the country for nine miles around also deeply covered with ashes. The north peak of the crater had entirely disappeared. The earth rocked and the deep rumbling sound of the volcano and the dense smoke were terrific. After staying four hours on the summit the commissioners descended.

Miscellaneous.

A WARLIKE WORLD.—The *Opinion Nationale* of a recent date gives this dismal picture of the present belligerent condition of the world:

If there be a dead calm in politics as well as business amongst us, it is not the same in all parts of the little planet we inhabit. Three-quarters of humanity, in fact, are living in the barbarous state of war.

There is war in Poland.

War in Algeria.

War in Tunis.

War in Mexico.

War in the United States.

War in Peru.

War in New Zealand.

War in China and Kachgar.

War in Japan.

War in Afghanistan.

War in twenty countries in Africa.

This is, undoubtedly, enough to discourage the friends of universal peace; and who can say they will not meet with still greater disappointment next year? Italy, Hungary, Denmark, and the Slavonian population of Turkey, are not, it must be confessed, in the most pacific humor; and to those who study the general situation of our continent, it is quite evident that the general situation, instead of getting better, goes on from day to day getting more and more complicated.

DECLIVITY OF RIVERS.—A very slight declivity suffices to give the running motion to water. Three inches per mile, in a smooth, straight channel, gives a velocity of about three miles per hour. The Ganges, which gathers the waters of the Himalaya mountains, the highest in the world, is, at 1800 miles from its mouth, only about 800 feet above the level of the sea, and to fall these 800 feet in its long course, the water requires more than a month.

The great river Majdalena, in South America, running for 1000 miles between two ridges of the Andes, falls only 500 feet in all that distance. Above the commencement of the one thousand miles, it is seen descending in rapids and cataracts from the mountains. The gigantic Rio de la Plata has so gentle a descent to the ocean, that in Paraguay, 1600 miles from its mouth, large ships are seen which have sailed against the current all the way by the force of the wind alone, that is to say, which on the beautifully inclined plane of the stream, have been gradually lifted by the soft south breezes, and even against the current, to an elevation greater than that of our loftiest spires.

MODERN CYNICISM.—Here is a dialogue between a lady of fashion and Monsieur Guizot:

My dear Mr. Guizot, you seem weary with everything, as if your heart and mind and spirit were fatigued. How is this? What can you desire? For years you have occupied the thoughts of Europe, inspired your name in history, and been a king of men and leader of monarchy. In your retirement you are honored and illustrious. No other is high enough for you to envy. Then whence this lassitude, this sadness, this hypochondria? Are you ill?"

"No, madam, but I would forget!"

"Forget!"

"Yes, I would tear a thousand pages from out the book of my life—pages filled with the records of others, but which neither gave nor give me any happiness."

"Is it possible you can be dissatisfied with your magnificent career?"

"Were my time to come over again," (it must be understood that this anecdote comes direct from the lady who heard the avowal,) "and I were free to choose my lot, I would be a man without either political or social duties, responsible but for my own conduct, without too many relations or friends, without any endowments of talent, but simply those of common sense; without nerves, and with a good digestion and a little egotism, entirely without ambition, living on a modest solid independence, drawn, say, from rents in the Boulevards of Paris, or Regent street in London; so that I could be a calm, unimpassioned, disinterested spectator of passing events."

"Then," asked the lady, "what would be your dream, your desires, your employment, your pastime?"

"To see the passions and agitations of others. As for glory—Pah."

And this is the verdict of a man who has known all and seen all—who has taken a bird's eye view of empires from the lofty heights of his own genius.—[London Society.

THE DOGS OF ST. BERNARD.—One of the most remarkable of these noble dogs was Barry, who is known to have saved the lives of forty individuals. Beside his cask around his neck, he carried a warm garment on his back; and if he failed to arouse the traveler into some sense of life by his warm tongue and breath he would face back to the house and bring somebody to the rescue. One day Barry found a poor boy asleep, and almost frozen to death in the celebrated glacier of Balore. Barry warmed the boy, licked him, woke him up, gave him something to drink, and carried him on his back to the monastery. The joy of the poor parents who can describe? After a life of service Barry was sent down the mountains to a warm and comfortable home, where he passed the rest of his days in honorable quiet. At his death his body was carefully buried, and his skin was stuffed, and there he may be seen in the Museum of Berne standing as large as life, with collar and bottle round his neck, ready to start on his labors of love. The dogs are short-lived. Many die from disease of the lungs, and others are lost in the falling of avalanches and other accidents. Neither men nor dogs can long stand the severe climate and thin air of so great a height. Both are often obliged to go down into the valley below and recruit amidst milder scenes. The leader of the pack is now named Plato, a brave, big, creature, doing deeds of usefulness and valor which might put to blush the life of many a one of human understanding who never risked a thought, much less a deed, to help his fellow-men.

TORNADO.—A terrible tornado passed over the town of Chester, Ill., at two o'clock a. m., Nov. 9. Over a dozen houses were blown down and completely demolished, burying the sleeping inmates in their ruins. Five persons were killed and twelve or fifteen wounded, several of them severely. A brick church was blown to atoms. Several skiffs on the river were carried nearly the fourth of a mile up the bluff.

The loss of property by the tornado at Chester, is about sixty thousand dollars.

The town of Randolph, seven miles distant, also suffered severely. Nearly all the houses in the place were blown down.

The Union Pacific railroad is said to be rapidly progressing west from Omaha. On the 17th of Oct. twelve miles were graded, and by the introduction of machinery the road is being graded at the rate of half a mile a day. After grading some 40 miles west of Omaha, there will be some 400 or 500 miles that will need but little grading, and one part of that distance has 150 miles without a curve.