

shoots of growing plants. These conditions must have prevailed since the northern half of the continent has had the shape it now has. Whether once the Rockies were too low to obstruct the moisture-laden winds which thus swept far inland across the plains, whether the Laurentian range, the true and ancient backbone of the continent, then reared its lofty head higher than even its younger upstart brother, the Rocky mountain range, does now, thus serving to catch the moisture carried all the way from the Pacific and to condense it in the form of great snow masses and glaciers, the real polar ice-cap of pre-Adamite ages, whether this is true—such a state of things would furnish a solution of some of our problems—mighty glaciers have written their autobiography in marks and deep grooves over the rocks of half our continent, a record before which the works of Memphian kings are as insignificant as they were when compared with Milton's Satanic architects. These glaciers, sliding down to the south and west, would scarcely yield to anything but the periodical visits of great Sol himself. The drippings furnished a supply of pure ice water for the Mississippi. Their grinding action made the soil; and the streams of fogs and rains all along its borders furnished moisture for the coarse and hardy vegetation of the times. But what the sun, unaided, could not accomplish in the lofty rarified air of those primitive peaks, was at last accomplished by the subsidence of the great range itself. Back, slowly back, through successive centuries the glaciers retreated, leaving a great shallow lake between the rear of their baffled columns and the newly elevated coasts whence the shortened Mississippi took its rise. Still further centuries and a further subsidence drained off even the most of this lake, a mere sluggish and tortuous creek serving to mark the deepest part of the lake—the present Red river of the North. The immense uplifting, too, of the Rockies effectually shut off the supply of moisture from the Pacific, and thenceforward came the present climate of our North-west. The old framework of our continent, the very first to appear above the archaic waters, has now sunk so low that we are apt to forget the part it played in the formation of our country.

At the new Cirque Nautique, in Paris, there is an aquatic performance of a very novel character. After the conclusion of the ordinary gymnastic and riding entertainment, the carpet is removed from the floor of the ring, and the latter entirely submerged. A circular pond is thereby produced, and an electric arc lamp illuminates the water from below. The swimming performers appear like mermen and mermaids in the translucent depths of the sea. The general installation throughout the building is a very fine one, and includes both arc and incandescent lamps; the lamps soleil producing a beautiful effect.

FAITH always implies disbelief of a lesser fact in favor of a greater.

BIRDS' NESTS IN JAPANESE HOUSES.

Nothing recommends itself more to the traveler as a national trait among the Japanese than their gentleness and kindness to children and animals.

It is in consequence of this that not only the domesticated, but the so-called wild, animals and birds of this country are far bolder and easier of approach than in other parts of the world. There is here a species of swallow, much resembling the chimney swallows of Europe, which actually frequents the houses, and twitters and circles about the heads of the people in the different apartments, as we have seen tame canaries when set free from their cages in the house where they are kept. Only in this case the swallow is free to come and go through the open window or door, and makes his own living in the open air. Even in Europe and America this beautiful little bird is a favorite. Humphrey Davy says of it: "The swallow is one of my favorite birds, and a rival of the nightingale, for he cheers my sense of sight as much as the other does my sense of hearing. He is the glad prophet of the year, the harbinger of the best season. He lives the life of enjoyment among the loveliest forms of nature. Winter is unknown to him and he leaves the green meadows and forests of England in autumn for the myrtle and orange groves of Italy and for the palms of Africa. He has always objects of pursuit, and his success is sure. Even the beings selected for his prey are poetical, beautiful and transient. The ephemera are saved by his means from a slow and lingering death in the evening, and killed in a moment when they have known nothing but pleasure. He is a constant destroyer of insects, the friend of man and a sacred bird. His instinct, which gives him his appointed season and teaches him when and where to move, may be regarded as flowing from a divine source, and he belongs to the oracles of nature, which speak the awful and intelligible fiat of a present Deity."

Of course this character of symbolic grace and modesty goes far to recommend the bird to so artistic a people as the Japanese, and it is, in consequence, almost a national emblem, being a favorite subject with their decorators, and finding a place with the crane and the lotus as a religious type. It is, however, in the building of its nest and rearing of its young that the Japanese swallow pays the highest compliment to, and exhibits the greatest amount of confidence in, its protectors; for, however incredible it may seem, its habitation is built, and its little family brought up, in the living rooms of Japanese families, and this not only in unfrequented parts of the country, but, as Prof. Morse assures us, in the midst of their largest cities. The professor, than whom no more acute observer of Japanese life exists, in speaking of these nests says that they are not built in any remote part of the house, but in the principal and oftenest visited rooms, where the inmates are the busiest about the household affairs. He adds that the children take great delight in watching the nest in process of construction, and in the rearing and education of the young birds afterward.