

ALASKAN EXPLORATIONS.

JOHN MUIR, the explorer and geologist, says that he has by no means yet completed his explorations in Alaska, and that in regard to certain elephant remains there, the bridging of Behring straits and other matters, he hopes soon to add information that will be of great value to science. Although the bridging of Behring straits has been widely ridiculed, Muir is inclined to believe that such a feat will one day be accomplished. He says: "Senator Stanford's girdle of steel around the earth by way of Behring straits is a perfectly feasible scheme. Behring straits can be bridged. It is only sixty miles across the narrowest place, and there are three islands strung along it. This would divide the bridge up into four divisions. But, besides this, the water is very shallow. In many places it is not over twenty feet deep. I undertake to say that if a man were strong enough to take one of our California redwood trees in his hands, he could put it down anywhere over the 600 miles of Behring sea and yet have 100 feet of it above water. This shows how easy it would be to bridge the straits. The only trouble would be from floating icebergs, but that could be easily overcome by constructing swinging bridges. In this way the straits could be kept clear all the time and trains of cars could run right along.

"There are so many strange things in Alaska," added the discoverer of the Muir glacier, "that have not yet come to the knowledge of the public, that one who has seen them hesitates where to begin. Elephant remains are found all over the great valley of the Yukon. As a matter of fact, they are found everywhere throughout the great western slope of Alaska. Dana and Sir Charles Lyle startled the world by announcing that hairy, frozen elephants were found wedged among the Siberian icebergs, but scarcely anybody knows that throughout Alaska are the remains of countless thousands of mastodons. You can dig them up and find them on the surface everywhere. I saw hundreds of them, possibly, on my last trip, and I am now anxiously trying to get up there to complete my investigations. So thick are the elephant remains, that the native Indians, on finding them buried partially in the ground, decided that they were some kind of great mole that burrows in the soil. This is the story given me. I collected a lot of remains. The collecting of elephant tusks every summer is a regular business in Siberia, just over Behring sea. We have just as many of them on the Alaska side as they ever had in Siberia. Ages ago great herds of elephants roamed over these shores. Perhaps they existed down to a comparatively recent date, too, for the hairy bodies and well preserved bones were evidences of that.

In regard to this latter supposition of Prof. Muir,

there is ample native authority to support it. Indeed, it is said that a native of the Yukon country claims to have seen one last year alive, and to have been frightened nearly out of his frozen wits by the appalling sight.

DESTRUCTION ISLAND LIGHT.

ON THE coast of Washington, some forty miles south of Cape Flattery and a short distance from the mainland, upon which a new light house is being established, a siren fog signal has already been put in. The island was first discovered by the Spanish explorer, Bodega y Cuadra, in the ship *Senora*, in the summer of 1775. Cuadra sent a boat's crew to the mainland at that point to procure a supply of fresh water, and they were attacked by the Indians and killed. The island was named by him "Isla de Dolores" (Island of Sorrows), not because of this incident, however, but for the more potent reason, to the devout Catholic, that the day was the one devoted in the Roman calendar to the "Mother of Sorrows." A few years later an English fur trader lost a boat's crew in precisely the same way, and he bestowed upon the island its present name. It has been a dangerous point in the navigation of that region, and this year two vessels, the *Port Gordon* and *Cassandra Adams* were lost there, one on the island and one on the mainland. The erection of a light tower and the maintenance of a large fog signal will add much to the safety of vessels seeking to enter the Straits of Fuca. The island is surrounded by a reef of rocks at a distance of 200 feet from the shore, through which there is a passage on the east side, into which vessels may sail. It contains some twenty-five acres of deep fertile soil, completely protected from storms by the surrounding ledge of rock. It has long been used as a garden by the Indians, who reach it in canoes from the mainland. These Indians, the Quits, or Quinalts, have a reputation for heroism in rescuing shipwrecked mariners not warrented by the incidents above related nor by those attending the wrecks of the present year.

THE election in Montana will be conducted on the "Australian system" as provided for by the constitution upon whose merits the voters are to pass. All western states and territories will watch the practical workings of the system with much interest, since some improvement in the methods of conducting elections is imperatively necessary. Oregon especially needs something that will lessen the opportunity for political bosses and corruptionists to nullify the choice of the people; something that will render the merry five dollar piece less effective in the hands of the boss's henchmen.