ASBESTOS.—The fire-proof nature of asbestos was well known to the Romans, but was only publicly proved in England in the seventeenth century. Dr. Plot records that at a meeting of the Royal Society of London in 1676, a merchant from China exhibited a handkerchief made of salamander's wool, or Linum Asbesti, which, to try whether it were genuine or not, was put into a strong charcoal fire, in which not being injured, it was taken out, well oiled, and put in again. The oil being burnt off, the handkerchief was removed again, and on cooling was observed to be unchanged. The merchant stated that he had received the cloth from a Tartar, who told him that among his people it was sold at a sum equivalent to £80 sterling the yard. Among certain tribes in Central Asia at that time, asbestos cloth was used for wrapping round bodies that were to be cremated, and where known at all in Europe, was believed to be a vegetable product. Asbestos is really a finely fibrous flexible mineral, which occurs in veins in this country, but much more abundantly in other regions, such as Corsica and Canada. It is now regularly woven into cloth and has several other important uses. Its name means unconsumable.

GEOGRAPHY.

STEAMERS ON THE UPPER CONGO.—From July 11 to October 13 last year there was on an average one steamboat every three days at Bengala. These steamers were coming from or going to ten different places between Leopoldville and Stanley Falls. Some were on business of the Congo state, others were engaged in the trade of Holland, Belgium, and other merchants, and some were carrying missionaries and supplies to the mission stations along the Congo and its tributaries.—*The School Journal.*

THE GREAT LAKES AND THE ATLANTIC.—It has been the dream of commercial men for at least three decades to open up a waterway from the Great Lakes to the seaports of the Atlantic. This idea if susceptible of encouragement thirty years ago is much more so to-day. Industrial development and commercial enterprise have redoubled the reasons for establishing a waterway from the agricultural and manufacturing centres of the West bordering on the lakes and tributary thereto, to the open sea line and the commercial ports of the Old World. Investigation and discussion have made this anticipated need a study, and the programme is in correspondence with the intelligence and need of modern times. The projected waterways, or links in the chain of inland seas, are not of the old barge type with tow paths and so many hogsheads of water, but broad and affluent streams on which an ocean ship can float with a draught of 20 feet and a weight of 5,000 net tons. Anything less would in the line of economy be a failure, and as a competitive factor in transport be out of the race with our perfected railroad systems. Speed, capacity and unbroken communication are vital conditions. It must be a through route from the lakes to Europe without transfer of freight or delay in transit. The old canals were only in consonance with local conditions. They were simply rudimentary and provisional, and have in many cases surrendered their ownership and traffic to the ubiquitous railroad. The