

roof. It is  $9\frac{1}{2}$  miles long,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles longer than Mt. Cenis tunnel.

The biggest trees in the world are the mammoth trees of California. One of a grove in Tulare county, according to measurements made by members of the State geological survey, was shown to be 276 feet in height, 108 feet in circumference at base, and 76 feet at a point 12 feet above ground. Some of the trees are 376 feet high and 34 feet in diameter. Some of the largest that have been felled indicate an age of from 2000 to 2500 years.

The largest library is the Bibliotheque National in Paris, founded by Louis XIV. It contains 1,400,000 volumes, 300,000 pamphlets, 175,000 manuscripts, 300,000 maps and charts, 150,000 coins and medals. The collection of engravings exceeds 1,300,000, contained in some 10,000 volumes. The portraits number about 100,000. The building which contains these treasures is situated on the Rue Richelieu. Its length is 540 feet, its breadth 130 feet. The largest library in New York is, in respect of separate works, the Astor. About 100,000 volumes are on its shelves.

The largest desert is that of Sahara, a vast region of Northern Africa, extending from the Atlantic Ocean on the west to the valley of the Nile on the east. The length from east to west is about 8,000 miles, its average breadth about 900 miles, its area 2,000,000 square miles. Rain falls in torrents in the Sahara at intervals of five, ten and twenty years. In summer the heat during the day is excessive, but the nights are often cold. In winter the temperature is sometimes below freezing point.

The greatest pyramid is that of Cheops, one of the three pyramids forming the Memphis group, situated on a plateau about 137 feet above the level of the highest rise in the Nile. Its dimensions have been reduced by the removal of the outer portions to furnish stone for the city of Kairo. Its masonry consisted originally of 89,028,000 cubic feet, and still amounts to 82,111,000 feet. The present vertical height is 450 feet against 479 feet originally. The total weight of the stone is estimated at 6,316,000 tons.

The greatest fortress, from a strategical point of view, is the famous stronghold of Gibraltar, belonging to Great Britain situated upon the most southern point of and upon the coast of southwestern Spain.

It occupies a rocky peninsula, jutting out into the sea, about three miles long and three quarters of a mile wide. One central rock rises to a height of 1,485 feet above the sea level. Its northern face is almost perpendicular, while its east side is full of tremendous precipices. On the south it terminates in what is called Europa point. The west side is less steep than the east, and between its base and the sea is the narrow, almost level span on which the town of Gibraltar is built. The fortress is considered impregnable to military assault. The regular garrison in time of peace numbers about 7,000.

The largest inland sea is the Caspian, lying between Europe and Asia. Its greatest length is 760 miles, and its area 180,000 square miles. Great Salt Lake, in Utah, which may properly be termed an inland sea, is about ninety miles long, and has a varying breadth of from twenty to twenty five miles. Its surface is 4200 feet above the level of the sea, whereas the surface of the Caspian is eighty four feet below the ocean level.

The largest empire in the world is that of Great Britain, comprising 8,557,558 square miles, more than a sixth part of the land of the globe, embracing under its rule nearly a sixth part of the population of the world. In territorial extent the United States ranks third, containing 8,580,242 square miles, including Alaska; in population it ranks fourth, with its 50,000,000 of people. Russia ranks second, having 8,351,910 square miles.

The highest monolith is the obelisk at Karnak, in Egypt. Karnak is on the east bank of the Nile, near Luxor, and occupies a part of the site of ancient Thebes. The obelisk is ascribed to Hastau, sister of Pharaoh Thothmes III, who reigned about 1600 B.C. The whole length is 122 feet, its weight 400 tons. Its height without pedestal, is 108 feet 10 inches. The height of the obelisk in Central Park, without pedestal, is 68 feet 11 inches, its weight about 168 tons.

The largest bell in the world is the great bell of Moscow, at the foot of the Kremlin. Its circumference at the bottom is nearly 68 feet, and its height more than 21 feet. In its stoutest part it is 23 inches thick, and its weight has been computed to be 448,722 pounds. It has never been hung, and was probably cast on the spot where it now stands.

A piece of the bell is broken off. The fracture is supposed to have been occasioned by water having been thrown upon it when heated by the building erected over it being on fire.

### CONCERNING THE FORK.

Civilization, it has often been remarked increases our wants. To us of the nineteenth century it seems incredible that people could have managed to exist without the vast array of objects of necessity or luxury which surround us on every side. The generation which is now growing up will wonder how we ever could have lived without a telephone, while we in turn look back and ask ourselves what kind of an existence it was, when the locomotive and the steamboat were unknown, when the telegraph and the cable were yet undreamt of, when medicine and surgery were still in their infancy, when gas, steam and electricity had not been thought of or utilized.

We are apt to conclude that articles in common use to-day have always been employed. Looking over the catalogues of some of the great silver companies of the present, or gazing upon a table all set for the enjoyment of some grand dinner, and noticing the various forms of the forks displayed, from the simple and common *fourchette*, to the delicate and artistically wrought implement fashioned to suit the daintiest taste, we may well wonder at the array. Especially, are we apt to be surprised, when we reflect that great personages of history, whose deeds thrilled the nation of their time and have lived after them, were without such common-place conveniences as a fork, without which the poorest of to-day need not be. The fork, relatively speaking, is not a very old acquisition.

Some interesting items in the history of the fork were recently brought out in a dispute between the eminent French dramatist Sardou and M. Darcel, the director of the Cluny Museum.

In one of the scenes of the piece *Theodora*, lately produced in Paris, the wife of Justinien, finding a friend whom she had known in former days, sits down with her to lunch, and unconcernedly picks up a fork, as if she had been used to it all her days, and commences to manoeuvre upon the delicacies before her.

M. Darcel vigorously objected to the introduction of forks so many years before