

interesting collection; to him it is amazingly interesting. He has ransacked Nassau and Ann streets for years with such industry that it is a rare thing now for him to find an almanac or calendar not already in his collection. Several summers ago Judge Blatchford went to Europe, for a few weeks' vacation. On his return, when he landed at the North river pier, he staggered under the weight of a mysterious looking cubical package or bale, carefully strapped. He would allow nobody to touch it. It might have contained \$100,000 worth of lace or jewelry. The custom house inspector looked over the rest of his baggage and then approached the big bundle. "What have you got there, sir?" he said. Judge Blatchford faintly blushed, as is his habit when embarrassed, and stammered, "Oh, nothing but a lot of—er—publications." "But publications are dutiable," suggested the officer. "Not when published more than twenty years" returned the judge promptly, "and these are all older than that." But he gave no sign of any intention to open the package for examination. "All right, judge," said the inspector, who knew perfectly well with whom he was speaking; "I guess we won't look into the bundle." And he put his chalk mark on the bale, at the same time winking at a brother officer, as much as to say, "There are some passengers into whose little transgressions it is best not to look too zealously." The judge trotted off with his precious burden, greatly relieved in mind. The bundle was innocent enough, containing as it did nothing but almanacs of the eighteenth century, the spoils of Oxford street, the Quais Malaquais and Voltaire, and the dusty shops of Leipsic, Stuttgart and Geneva.

**Star Gazing from a Volcano.**

The astronomical observatory on Mount Ætna has been finished. It stands at an elevation of nearly 100,000 feet above the sea. This is the highest spot in the world occupied by an observatory. Astronomers will watch with great interest the result of the experiment. To plant an observatory near the crest of an enormous volcano would seem at first blush to be a foolish undertaking. Perfect steadiness and freedom from any tremulous motion whatever are among the prime requisites of an astronomical observatory. But Ætna is frequently shaken by the mighty forces pent up within, or under the mountain. Besides, there is great danger, in case of an eruption of the volcano, that any structure erected upon it may be overwhelmed. The builders of the observatory were mindful of this in selecting the site. They chose a little eminence on the side of the central crater, which they think, in case of an eruption, would divide any stream of lava flowing in that direction into two branches, leaving the observatory standing unharmed between rivers of fire. All the inconveniences and disadvantages, not to say perils, of the site are regarded as offset by the advantage to be derived from its great height, which will place the astronomers above the densest and most troublesome portion of the atmos-

phere. Everybody who has used a telescope knows how great such an advantage must be. Owing to haze and air currents there are surprisingly few nights in the course of a year during which sharp and steady vision is possible with high telescopic power. At the height of the Ætna observatory the use of such powers must be much easier.

The observatory has been erected at the expense of the city of Cantania, whose citizens evidently take a broad view of its usefulness, and show no desire to make it a purely local enterprise, or to restrict its use by foreigners. In fact, foreign men of science are especially invited to visit the observatory and make use of it as much as they like. Three bedrooms, a dining-room and a kitchen have been provided for their use, and the telescope of the observatory is furnished with a tube, the length and aperture of which can be changed to suit the instruments that foreign observers may bring with them. This spirit on the part of the builders, and the great advantages that the spot presents as an observing station, give promise of excellent results, and it may reasonably be hoped that from their high perch upon this ancient volcano scientific men will succeed in widening our knowledge of the worlds and sun around us.

The observatory is also furnished with instruments for the observation of atmospheric and terrestrial phenomena.

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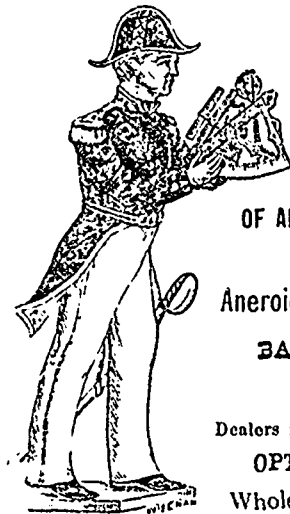
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