

mitted by the mails, such letters are now sent by private expresses, for which they receive a remunerating compensation.

I have briefly suggested some of the reforms which I deem necessary for the improvement of the post-office. It was said last winter by some of our Senators in Congress, in their places, that "OURS IS THE WORST MANAGED POST-OFFICE IN THE WORLD." I can not agree with them in this assertion. But I regret to say that it is not the *best* managed, nor so good as it should and *must* be. The great drawback to its improvement, and, I may add, the curse that rests upon it, is its being made a *political* machine. It was a great and fatal mistake to make the Postmaster-general a member of the Cabinet. The great personal worth of Mr. McLean induced President Monroe to take him into his Cabinet, and the practice has been continued ever since. The consequence is, that the Postmaster-general is changed under every new administration. In less than two years we had *three*, and two assistants. How can it be expected that men, whatever may be their talents, can make themselves acquainted with the business of the office in the short space of three or four years? Before they are warm in their seats they are removed. Besides, after a new administration comes in, it takes six or twelve months to turn out political opponents and appoint their friends. If, instead of this, when intelligent and efficient men are in office (no matter what their political affinities may be), they were continued, it would be an inducement to make improvements, and an encouragement to fidelity; but now there is no security to any man that he will be continued one hour, nor any encouragement to excel in the faithful discharge of his duty. These things ought not so to be.

There is another practice which greatly retards the improvement of our post-office, and that is the manner in which the post-office committees are appointed in Congress. At every session of Congress new committees are appointed by the Senate and House, a majority of which is composed of the dominant political party, without much regard to their qualifications. For a number of years there has been scarcely a single member selected from any of our large cities, where the principal portion of the revenue is collected, consequently, they are persons who have little or no knowledge of post-office business, or the wants of the people. Their principal business is to obtain new post-routes, but any improvement of postal concerns is little thought of. Hence the Post-Office Department may be considered a vast political machine, wielded for the benefit of the party in power; and there is not an appointment made, from the Postmaster-general down to the postmaster of the smallest office, without a special regard to the politics of the person appointed.

The only correction of this evil, under the present system, is to give the appointment of all the postmasters to the people. They are the best

qualified to judge of the character and qualifications of the person who will serve them in the most acceptable manner; and the postmasters, knowing that they are dependent upon the people for their offices, will be more obliging and attentive in the discharge of their duties. This will diminish the patronage of the President and the Postmaster-general, which I have not a doubt they would gladly part with, as there is nothing more troublesome and perplexing to a conscientious man, than the exercise of this power.

In the old world, where monarchy exists, the press is called the "fourth estate;" but with us, where "*vox populi, vox Dei*," the press and the ballot-box may be considered the sovereign. The press utters the wish of the people, and the ballot-box confirms that wish. Hence, if the press speaks out clearly and strongly in favor of postal reform, the people will sanction it by their votes in selecting men to represent their wishes in the councils of the nation. Our post-office, instead of being denounced the "worst," should be made the *best* managed in the world. We have no old prejudices or established customs to abolish, no pensioners or sinecures to support, no jealousy on the part of the government against the diffusion of knowledge through the mails; but we have an intelligent, active, liberal gentleman at the head of the Post-Office Department, who desires to meet the wants and wishes of the people. Therefore we have reason to hope that in due time our post-office will be established on such a footing as to secure the patronage and support of the people, defying all competition, and superior to any similar establishment in the world.

B. B.

SYRIAN SUPERSTITIONS.

THERE are some superstitious observances, which are strictly adhered to by the peasants employed in rearing the silk-worm. Thus, when the eggs are first hatched, the peasant's wife rises up very early in the morning, and creeping stealthily to the master's house, flings a piece of wet clay against the door. If the clay adheres, it is a sign that there will be a good mousoum or silk harvest: if it do not stick, then the contrary may be expected. During the whole time the worms are being reared, no one but the peasants themselves are permitted to enter the khook or hut; and, when the worms give notice that they are about to mount and form their cocoons, then the door is locked, and the key handed to the proprietor of the plantation. After a sufficient time has elapsed, and the cocoons are supposed to be well and strongly formed, the proprietor, followed by the peasants, marches in a kind of procession up to the huts, and, first dispensing a few presents among them, and hoping for good, to which they all reply, "Inshalla! Inshalla!—please God! please God," the key is turned, the doors thrown wide open, and the cocoons are detached from the battours of cane mats, and prepared for reeling the next day.

Monthly Record of Current Events.

UNITED STATES.

THE past month has not been one of special interest, either at home or abroad. None of the great legislative bodies of the country have been in session, and political action has been confined to one or two of the Southern States. The annual Agricultural Fair of the State of New York was held at Rochester on the three days following the 17th of September, and was attended by a larger number of persons, and with greater interest than usual. Hon. STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS, United States Senator from Illinois, delivered the address, which was a clear and interesting sketch of the progress and condition of agriculture in the United States. The number of persons in attendance at the Fair is estimated to have exceeded one hundred and fifty thousand. The State Agricultural Society of New York is gaining strength every year. A very interesting Railroad Jubilee was held in Boston on the 17th of September, to celebrate the completion of railroad communication between Boston and Ogdensburg, thus connecting the New England capital with the Western lakes by two distinct routes. President FILLMORE and several members of his Cabinet were present, as were also Lord ELGIN and several other distinguished gentlemen from Canada. An immense multitude of people was in attendance to celebrate this triumph of business, energy, and enterprise. Brief public congratulations were exchanged between the municipal officers of Boston and their guests, and a grand aquatic excursion down the bay took place on the 18th. The celebration lasted three days, and was closed by a grand civic feast under a pavilion on the Common.

No event of the past month has excited more general interest, than the return of the two vessels sent to the Arctic Ocean a year and a half ago, by Mr. HENRY GRINNELL of New York, to aid in the search for Sir JOHN FRANKLIN. The *Advance* reached New York on the 1st of October; the *Rescue* was a few days later. Although unsuccessful in the main object of their search, the gallant officers and men by whom these vessels were manned, have enjoyed their cruise, and returned without the loss of a single life and in excellent health. They entered Wellington Sound on the 26th of August, 1850, and were at once joined by Capt. PENNY, who commanded the vessel sent out by Lady FRANKLIN. On the 27th, three graves were discovered, known by inscriptions upon them to be those of three of Sir JOHN FRANKLIN's crew. The presence of Sir JOHN at that spot was thus established at as late a date as in April, 1846. On the 8th of September, the vessels forced their way through the ice, and on the 10th, reached Griffith's Island, which proved to be the ultimate limit of their western progress. On the 13th, they started to return, but were frozen in near the mouth of Wellington Channel, and for nine months they continued thus, unable to move, threatened with destruction by the crushing of the ice around them, and borne along by the southeast drift until, on the 10th of June, they emerged into open sea, and found themselves in latitude 65° 30', and one thousand and sixty miles from the spot at which they became fixed in the ice. The history of Arctic navigation records no drift at all to be compared with this, either for extent or duration. The intervening season was full of peril. The ice crushing the sides of the vessels, forced them several feet out of water. The thermometer fell to 40 degrees below zero. The *Rescue* was abandoned, for the sake of saving fuel, and on two occasions, the crews had

left their vessels, expecting to see them crushed to atoms between the gigantic masses of ice that threatened them on either side, and with their knapsacks on their backs had prepared to strike off across the ice for land, which was nearly a hundred miles off. The scurvy made its appearance, and was very severe in its ravages, especially among the officers.

After refitting his vessels on the coast of Greenland, Captain DE HAVEN, who had the command of the expedition, started again for the North. After passing Baffin's Bay on the 8th of August, he became again hopelessly entangled in the vast masses of ice that were floating around, and was compelled to start for the United States. The expedition is likely to contribute essentially to our knowledge of the natural history of that remote region of the earth, as Dr. KANE, an intelligent naturalist, who went in the vessels as surgeon, has very complete memoranda of every thing of interest especially in this department. Although unable to find any distinct traces of him later than 1846, the officers of the expedition think it far from impossible that Sir JOHN FRANKLIN may be still alive, hemmed in by ice at a point which they were unable to reach. They agree in the opinion that a steamer of some kind should accompany any other expedition that may be sent.

A State election took place in GEORGIA, on the 7th of October, which has a general interest on account of the issues which it involved. The old political distinctions were entirely superseded, both candidates for Governor having belonged to the Democratic party—one of them, however, Hon. HOWELL COBB, late Speaker of the U. S. House of Representatives, being in favor of abiding by the Compromise measures of 1850, and his opponent Mr. McDONALD being opposed to them, and in favor of secession from the Union. Up to the time of closing this record, full returns have not been received; but it is quite certain that Mr. COBB, the Union candidate, has been elected by a very large majority. Full returns of the Congressional canvass, which was held at the same time, have not yet reached us; but it is believed that six Union, and two State Rights members have been elected.

The Legislature of VERMONT met at Montpelier on the 9th of October. The House was organized by the election of Mr. Powers, speaker, and Mr. C. T. Davey, clerk. The message of Gov. Williams treats of national topics at considerable length. He insists that the laws must be obeyed, and vindicates the *habeas corpus* act passed by Vermont at the last session of its Legislature from many of the censures that have been cast upon it.

The month has been distinguished by an unusual number of steamboat explosions, railroad casualties, crimes and accidents of various sorts. The steamer *Brilliant*, on her way up the Mississippi from New Orleans, on the 29th of September, while near Bayou Sara, burst her boiler, killing fifteen or twenty persons, wounding as many more, and making a complete wreck of the vessel. A brig on Lake Erie, having left Buffalo for Chicago, sprung a leak on the 30th of September, and sunk within an hour. About twenty persons were drowned, only one of those on board escaping. All but he got into the longboat, which capsized; he fastened himself to the foremast of the brig, which left him, as the vessel touched bottom, about four feet out of water. He remained there two days when he was rescued by a passing steamer.