

late. Bongratia says it is believed that Peter himself used this ring. The first mention of the ring occurs in a letter of Clement IV., written in 1265. Martin V., who was elected in 1417, left three briefs, all sealed by the ring of the fisherman. Eugene IV., his successor, also left letters sealed with the ring. In 1448 Gaetano Cenni wrote a treatise on the ring and published it in Rome. The custom of destroying the seal of the pope immediately after his death is of considerable antiquity. Each pope has had his own ring and seal. It was of plain gold, weighing one and one-half ounces, and had an oval plate, with a very shallow representation of the subject."

NEWSPAPER READERS IN AMERICA HAVE already been told of the peculiar fad of Charles Rothschild, a member of the famous family of bankers. Rothschild is devoting his life to the collection of fleas and now he seems to be zealously engaged in the search for one particular variety. A cablegram to the Chicago Inter-Ocean, under date of London, July 25, said: "There is one form of arctic exploration little known to the general public. The history of famous polar expeditions, the trials of the gallant explorers, and the large sum expended in fitting out and maintaining vessels, is news familiar to all, but the hunt for the polar flea is not so well known as it deserves to be. More than a year ago the Hon. Charles Rothschild commissioned the arctic sailing whaler, Forget-Me-Not, to hunt for the polar flea. The hunt was apparently futile, for Mr. Rothschild now offers a reward, according to the Daily Express, of £1,000 for the arctic fox flea, to add to the collection of those insects in the famous zoological museum in Tring park, where already there are thousands of fleas, which have been obtained from birds and beasts in all parts of the world. It seems that the flea of the arctic fox is to flea fanciers what the egg of the great auk is to collectors of birds' eggs, for only two perfect specimens are known to exist in the collections. In addition to the reward referred to, Mr. Rothschild has again fitted out the Forget-Me-Not, which is already at work looking for the flea."

THE LONDON TIMES IS AUTHORITY FOR the statement that the following interesting memorandum by Lord Roberts has been issued from the British war office: "It has been brought to the notice of the commander-in-chief that, on the conclusion of the recent war in South Africa, a large number of Boer families found, on returning to their farms, that their family Bibles had disappeared. It appears that the Boer inhabitants of the South African colonies set great store by their family Bibles, which often contain family records of some antiquity, and even in some cases are the only repository of such records, in consequence of the unavoidable destruction of church registers. Lord Roberts feels sure that if any persons have in their possession any of these Bibles they will willingly return them when they learn how they are valued by their former possessors; and he thinks it unnecessary to emphasize how much such a kindly act would be appreciated by our new fellow-subjects. He therefore wishes it to be known as widely as possible among all officers and soldiers who are now serving, or have been retired, discharged, or relegated to the reserve, whether they belonged to the regular army, auxiliary, or colonial troops, and also among any of their friends to whom they may have given them as relics, that Mr. W. H. Alexander of 12 Bishopgate Without, London, E. C., has kindly consented to receive and dispatch to their owners any such Bibles which may have been taken from Boer farms. He feels sure that the above facts, and the knowledge that it is his wish that all such relics should find their way back to their former owners, will be sufficient to ensure that their present owners, however much they may value them, will readily part with them for this purpose."

THE AUDITOR OF THE WAR DEPARTMENT recently made his annual report in which some interesting information is given out. During the past year enlisted men of the army made \$21,729 deposits under the act of May 10, 1872, these deposits amounting to \$3,751,618. During the year 158,179 deposits were withdrawn amounting to \$4,802,190, a sum upon which the depositors had received \$262,378 in interest. The Associated press gives the report in full and concludes in this way: "During the year the sum of \$743,139 was placed to the credit of the permanent fund of the home under the act of March 3, 1883, being the sum retained from pay of enlisted men of the army on account of the 12-1-2 per cent fund, fines

by general court-martial and amount due deserters at large and dishonorably discharged soldiers. There was withdrawn from said permanent fund during the year for current expenses \$254,000. The amount of claims filed by the several states on account of the war with Spain was \$6,657,027. Of this amount \$4,223,682 were allowed, \$1,568,359 disallowed and \$864,986 are pending settlement."

A SUBSTANCE KNOWN AS "WOOD SILK" IS the latest invention of an Englishman. Consul John E. Kehl, at Stettin, recently sent an interesting report on the subject to the state department. The Washington correspondent for the Chicago Chronicle gives the report that came from Consul Kehl, who, in describing the new invention, said: "The sample shown me was very soft and of a cream color. Each thread is made up of eighteen single strands. A single strand is hardly perceptible to the naked eye. As to relative strength of a real silk thread and this imitation the real silk is two-thirds stronger. It is said to take coloring or dyeing readily and when woven into pieces has the appearance of real silk. Wood silk seems to have a great demand. I was told that within the last ten days the price jumped from \$3.25 to \$6.81 per pound. How this new artificial article compares with the genuine, in the way of wear and price, I am unable to say. It is impossible to get information here as to the process of manufacture, excepting that no particular kind of wood is required and that the pulp undergoes a chemical process and is pressed through very fine tubes by hydraulic pressure, forming the single strands which go to make up the thread."

ANOTHER INVENTION IS REPORTED BY Consul General Hughes at Coburg. This invention is in the form of a new substance useful in the manufacture of buttons, combs, knife handles, balls and rings. The correspondent says: "The substance is called galalith and it is made out of skimmed milk. The principal albumenoid of skimmed milk is casein, which is the raw material used in the manufacture of galalith. An advantage of the new product as compared with celluloid is the fact that it does not ignite so easily and is entirely odorless. Trials have proved that even when kept for weeks in water it does not distend more than the best quality of buffalo horn. Mr. Hughes says galalith can be made practically any color—black, or imitation ebony, to be used for knife handles; amber-colored, for cigar holders; white or varicolored, in imitation of marble. The name commonly given the substance is "milk stone," and Consul General Hughes says preparations are under way to make it on a large scale. It can be manufactured very cheaply, as the skimmed milk which is now fed to cattle and pigs can be utilized and the German peasants will be glad to dispose of it in a more profitable manner."

PERHAPS THE LARGEST AND MOST COSTLY wardrobe in the whole world was that owned by the late pope. It is said that it required three large rooms at the vatican to contain this wardrobe and a special body of servants were required to keep it in order. Each day in the year had its appropriate garments. The New York Press says: "The slippers alone are innumerable, all being made of velvet and embroidered, and the pope has no excuse for not knowing his left foot from his right, for the design is different on each slipper. The gloves are, if anything, more numerous than the slippers. They are made of the finest white wool, embroidered with pearls. The wool for the gloves and for all the garments of the pope into which wool enters, is the product of a special flock of sheep dedicated for the purpose by a family who have had the special privilege of supplying the pontiffs with wool since the sixteenth century. The pallium, which is the symbol of sacerdotal authority, is usually woven from this wool by nuns, the lambs which supply the wool having been specially blessed by the pope on January 21 of each year. Many of the most magnificent papal vestments, thick with gold embroidery and jewels, have not been worn for a long time, since the loss of temporal power put an end to the great public ceremonies, but they remain in the 'guarda roba,' jealously watched by the guardians."

ONE OF THE BUSIEST MEN IN WASHINGTON, according to a correspondent for the Chicago Chronicle, is Elliott Woods, superintendent of the capitol. Mr. Woods' annual report for the last fiscal year contains some interesting facts. The Chronicle writer tells some of these in this

way: "The statement as to just what the superintendent of the building and grounds is supposed to look after shows that the capitol contains 430 rooms now devoted to office, committee and storage uses, 679 windows, 550 doorways, 140 fire-places, ninety toilets, 261 wash basins, fourteen bathtubs, fifteen ventilating fans and eighteen motors, 2,048 horse power of boilers for heating and lighting, eight steam pumps for boiler and fire service. The lighting service is equivalent to 25,000 incandescent lamps of sixteen candle power each, and there are 14,518 square feet of sky lights formed of iron and glass. 'These items,' states Mr. Woods, 'are those that enter into and are operated in the daily domestic life of the capitol. They are the details that require constant care and attention. To state that 465 minor repairs to various of these features have been made during the past fiscal year indicates the amount of care and attention that is required to keep that domestic life running smoothly along with the daily business life of the occupants of the building.'"

APPREHENSION OF A VOLCANIC eruption is causing the inhabitants of the Melrose district in England much anxiety. In this district are situated the three Eildon hills, famous peaks of Roxburghshire, which for years geologists have held to be extinct volcanoes. It is also believed that the three hills were originally one great mountain which was split into three fragments by an eruption. A cable dispatch from London to the Chicago Inter-Ocean under date of July 25 says: "The three cones are 1,216, 1,385, and 1,327 feet in height respectively, and it is the smaller of the three which has now begun to eject fumes. Should the present phenomenon culminate in an eruption it would probably mean the destruction of the villages of Melrose, Bowden, and Newtown, as well as Eildon hall, the fine residence of the Earl of Dalkeith, situated at the base of the hills. Many interesting local traditions cling round the Eildons. Sir Walter Scott tells of a legend which concerns the Scotch writer, Michael Scott. 'The latter was once on a time much embarrassed by an evil spirit,' to use Sir Walter's own words, 'for whom he was under the necessity of finding constant employment.' On one occasion Michael ordered that Eildon hall, which was then a uniform cone, should be divided into three. It was done in one night. It is satisfactory to learn that the wily Michael finally settled the disquieting demon by setting him to make ropes out of sand!"

THE RECENT ILLNESS OF THE LATE POPE Leo XIII. served to bring attention to at least one person, who is now regarded as one of the most remarkable negroes in the country. The Chicago Chronicle says: "During the pope's illness there was a host of callers at the apostolic delegation in Washington. Their visits brought into notice one of the most remarkable negroes in the country, James J. Mattingly, who answers the doorbell. He is 21 years old and a linguist 'of considerable parts.' James can talk in five different languages and is studying three or four more. The boy talks fluently in English, French, Italian, Latin and Greek, and is now studying Spanish, Portuguese, German and other languages. He has a mania for language studies and Cardinal Satolli, formerly the apostolic delegate to this country, Cardinal Martinelli and Bishop Rooker, who for many years was the secretary of the apostolic delegation, have all helped the jet-black youth to conquer the classic. His parents can hardly read or write."

THE LATE P. M. ARTHUR, GRAND CHIEF of the brotherhood of locomotive engineers, died suddenly at Winnipeg, Manitoba, and just as he was beginning an address at the banquet board. It is reported that when Mr. Arthur began his speech he displayed great emotion. His opening words were: "Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks," and the newspaper dispatches say: "As Mr. Arthur began the sentence, 'I want to say a few things, as it may be my parting words to many of you,' his emotion seemed to be getting beyond his control. His voice was lower, but clear, when he uttered his last words, 'We are here tonight, no one can tell when—' At this point the speaker fell. Several men rushed forward to support him. Dr. MacArthur hurriedly ascended the stairs, and Mr. Arthur was carried off the platform. Dr. MacArthur examined the patient and pronounced him dead. 'Heart failure, due to overemotion,' he said. Strong men who had faced danger at the throttle of their locomotives sobbed like children."