

Last winter the whole of the lake was frozen over, for the first time since 1814. One fine afternoon, when the air was still, I was skating in the neighbourhood of Shand's Castle, when these mystical guns boomed forth their reports every five or six minutes. On the last day of the skating, when thousands of people from Belfast and elsewhere were assembled in Antrim Bay, there were two fearful boomings, that startled every one near me. They seemed to think some dreadful catastrophe had occurred, as the sounds appeared to proceed from not more than half a mile away. I never before heard them so near. The ice in Antrim Bay remained as it was, but I afterwards learned that it was then breaking up six miles away, but with no alarming sounds. Last February, when the ice of Lough Neagh was breaking up, a strange occurrence took place at Ardmore. A great ridge of ice, a mile and a half long, and 10 feet high, and 15 feet at the base, was formed along the shore during three days. There was a dead calm at the time, so that the ice was not thrown up by the waves. The ice along this part of the shore, for a third of a mile out, was intact; the ridge must have consisted of ice brought from a considerable distance, and forced under the shore ice, which was raised every few yards into small archways, and then shot out from beneath to the height previously specified. The pieces of ice were from half a yard square to bits of an ounce in weight, all mingled in the huge mass. Such a sight had not occurred since 1814, when, as I learned from a member of my congregation, who had seen it in that year, the water of the lake could not be seen

tide was quite out. So the "very suggestive coincidence" between the Bays of Bengal and Morecambe loses point! Further, it is seldom that the waves break at all, or even "curl over" on the shores of Morecambe Bay, where it is flat; but the water simply overflows the banks of the channel of the river Kent, whose course is followed by the tidal wave. There are limestone quarries at or near Arnside, Silverdale, Warton, Carnforth and Borwick.

O. FIRTH.

Hawthorn House, Baildon, Yorks.

CHARLES DARWIN, in his "Naturalist's Voyage round the World" (new edition, 1890, p. 346), describes some curious earth-sounds heard in Northern Chile; he also gives references to Seetzen and Ehrenberg as authorities for the occurrence of similar sounds on Mount Sinai, near the Red Sea.

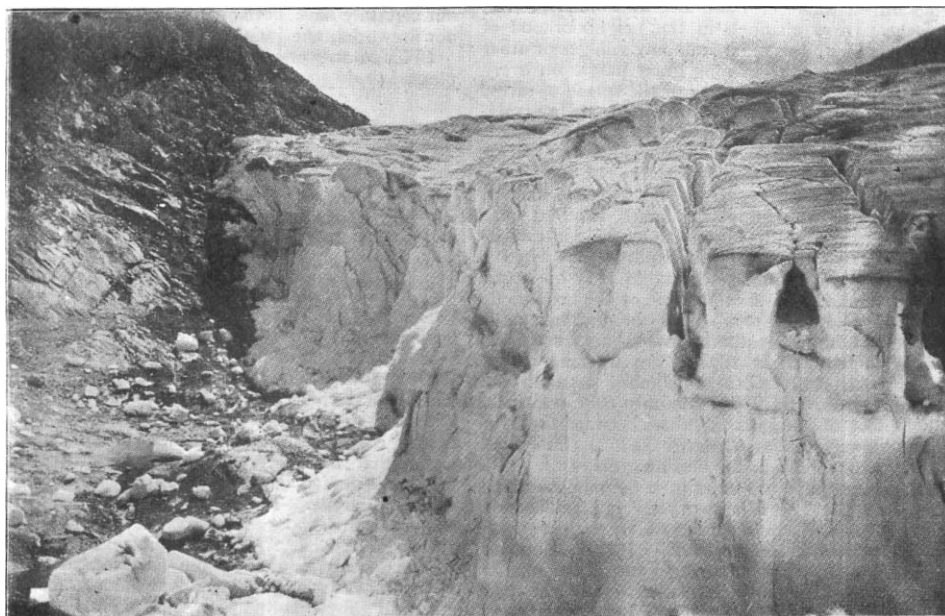
It is stated that the phenomenon is caused by sand in motion.

WILLIAM STONEY.

Civil Service Club, Capetown, December 4, 1895.

The Merjelen Lake.

THE annexed illustration is reproduced from a photograph taken by me on August 16, 1890, when the lake was empty. How long it had been so, or how long it continued, I cannot say. So far as my memory serves me, there was no water whatever in it, and I distinctly recollect noticing the icebergs lying



from the shore-road on account of this icy obstacle. There are currents in Lough Neagh, but I am not aware of any strong enough to produce such an effect.

W. S. SMITH.

Postscript.—In my former letter, an extract was given from Major Head's work, published some fifty years ago, and on again referring to it, I find the following passage:—"The cold increased to a very low temperature, the effect of which upon the extended sheet of ice that covered the bay, was remarkable. It cracked and split from one end to the other with a noise that might have been mistaken for distant artillery." This explains the sound to some extent in winter, but Mr. Smith says that the cannon-like sounds may be heard at any time of the year. This requires explanation.

C. T.

In your issue of November 14 last, Prof. McKenny Hughes appears to favour the idea that the curious sounds heard near the shores of Morecambe Bay, are due to the waves breaking "on the long, flat shore" thereof. I heard these sounds on Saturday, December 21, and could trace them to blasting operations near Carnforth. I heard them between 9.15 and 9.30 a.m., and the

high and dry on the bottom. I walked along what had been the margin of the lake on my way to the Aletsch glacier, which I ascended to the Concordia Hut. I hope the photograph may be of interest to Dr. Preller, and others who know the lake.

GREENWOOD PIM.

Co. Dublin, December 19, 1895.

The Metric System.

I NOTE a call from Mr. John W. Evans, in NATURE for December 5, 1895, for the use of the metric system in meteorology. If this means the substitution of the metre for the yard, there can be no serious objection except this. In meteorological studies "or" of air pressure is an extremely convenient limit, and in most inquiries only two figures are needed. On the other hand a millimetre ('04 inch) is altogether too large a limit, and one-tenth m.m. is too small. The labour of writing, averaging, and studying with the metric scale will be at least one-third greater than with the common inch scale to the same degree of accuracy. It is a very great pity that the French, in looking