

PROSPECTS OF ANOTHER GLACIAL PERIOD

Geologists Think the World May Be Frozen Up Again.

The question is again being discussed whether recent and long-continued observations do not point to the advent of a second glacial period, when the countries now basking in the fostering warmth of a tropical sun will ultimately give way to the perennial frost and snow of the polar regions. The researches of geologists have proved the existence in Greenland and other arctic lands of fossil palms and other tropical plants, which show that these regions were once covered with a rich vegetation, which only equatorial climes can now produce.

Then came the great ice age, which buried this vegetation beneath the mantle of cold which still prevails at the polar extremities of the earth. Is this kingdom of ice and snow again extending its way toward the equator? From the antarctic circles we have no data which supply an answer to the question, but it is asserted that the climate of Norway, Sweden, and Iceland, is annually becoming more severe. Great masses of ice are frequently observed by navigators in far more southerly position during the Summer months in the Atlantic than was the case a few years ago, and the effect of these icebergs is to materially reduce the temperature of Scandinavia and Iceland. The latter island in late years has been suffering so severely that corn no longer ripens there, and the inhabitants, in fear of approaching famine, and a still colder climate, are emigrating to North America.

The influence of the Gulf Stream on the climate of Norway, which has not been less marked than its effects on the coasts of Ireland and Scotland, is being effaced by the intensity of the cold brought by the masses of ice which it is for the Gulf Stream to carry toward the eastern side of the North Atlantic. This extraordinary cold appears, however, to be rather a periodical occurrence than of gradually and annually increasing in intensity, and the existence of larger quantities of ice than usual in the Atlantic rather points to warmer weather in the polar regions than to an unusual intensity and extension of the region of the polar cold. The annals of history show that from time to time since the advent of man into the world, remarkable rigid Winters and torrid Summers have upset the calculations of learned geologists and ruffled the equanimity of the inhabitants of the temperate zones. Several times the Frost King has been known to come down from the heights of Europe and seal the waters of the Adriatic.

In 860 and 1234 the ice formed a secure bridge from Venice to the opposite Dalmatian coast, and in 1709 the Adriatic was completely covered with ice. All the rivers in France were frozen in the years 1305 and 1364, the ice on the River Rhone being in some places fifteen feet thick. The Winter of 1788-9 was rigorous throughout Europe. The Atlantic froze along its coast to a distance of several leagues, and vessels were unable to approach within some miles of Ostend, in Belgium, a port that ordinarily is open throughout the year. The Winter of 1812-13 is memorable for its extreme degree of cold. Snow fell in New-England in every month of the year in 1816, and the weather was so uniformly chilly that scanty crops of every sort were harvested. On the 15th of May, 1834, snow fell to the depth of a foot. From 1849 to 1874 the record shows a total of thirty-seven days of snow in April in the twenty-five years.

In the Winter of 1851-2 the Susquehanna River at Havre de Grace, Md., was frozen so hard that trains of the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad ran over it. The large ferryboat which carried the cars across the river failed to keep the channel open, and there being no bridge at that time, the track for the railroad cars was laid on the ice precisely as it was on land, with sleepers, crossties, and iron rails, and the cars were run across.

Umslopogaas Goes to Law.

It may interest and pain readers of Mr. Rider Haggard's fiction to learn that the original of Umslopogaas, a native resident in Pietermaritzburg, is descending the social scale rapidly. He has recently become a somewhat troublesome frequenter of a butcher's shop, and he has had a "steel" hurled at him by the irate butcher, with such effect that Umslopogaas is bringing an action against his assailant for breach of the peace.