The New Orleans Bee.

OFFICE 73 CHARTRES STREET. NEW ORLEANS, SATURDAY MORNING [illegible] 45th YEAR—Vol. XLV.—Whole—15,459

NEW ORLEANS DAILY BEE.

LEPOUR & LIMET, PUBLISHERS.
No. 73 Chartres street.

TERMS OF THE BEE.

Terms of Subscription—Daily, per annum, in advance, $10; half-yearly, $5; quarterly, $3. Price of the paper—single copies, 10 cents.
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NEW ORLEANS:
FRIDAY MORNING, SEPT. 9, 1871.

THE TIDAL WAVE.

We are asked by our readers to give some information about a "tidal wave" which, it is predicted, will submerge between the 4th and 6th of October, on the Southern Atlantic coast, the coast of Florida and the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. The prediction is attributed to the distinguished savan, Professor Agassiz of Harvard University. We do not know that Mr. Agassiz has made any prediction, as we have seen nothing on the subject over his own signature in any authoritative form. It is a newspaper allusions to an utterance which has been made by Mr. Agassiz that we have seen. We are therefore inclined to doubt the authenticity of the report. We have, however, are no new occurrence, and we do not know that the United States have any right to consider themselves exempt from these visitations. Professor, an English scientific writer of distinction, has lately published a book entitled "Light Science for Leisure Hours," from which we make these extracts. He seems to be replying to some question about a tidal wave which it was said would strike the English coast in 1871. Says he:

"During the last few days anxious questions have been heard respecting the coming tides. A certain naval officer believes that he can trace in the positions of the sun and moon the cause of every important change of weather, as described in the columns of the daily papers. Foretelling signifies, he says, the approaching conjunction of the sun and moon. He predicts violent electric disturbances; though in another place he tells us merely that the earth is to be put into some unsettled weather, by reason of matters to which we in England are comparatively well accustomed. People are asking what is the actual peril which is to bring about such terrible events. The matter is very simple. On the 5th the moon will be new—indeed, if it were not for the brightness of the sun, we should see the moon that luminary on the heavens. The sun and moon will pull with united effect upon the waters of the earth, because what are called spring tides are produced. Every new moon, and every full moon, is a spring-tide. Every spring-tide is twice as great as the average tide of the month. Now, the sun is nearest to the earth in September, as we all know, the sun grows farther and farther off, and other things being equal, it is when on the equinoctial line that the sun's power to raise a tidal wave would be greatest. But other things are not equal, for the sun is not always at a fixed distance from the earth. He is nearest in January, so that he would exert his greatest power at the full moon that is in any other if he depelled solely on distance. As it is, mutually stand, it will be obvious that the time between September and January, the sun's tidal power would have its maximum value. Thus it is that October's month of high solar tidal waves."

And all high tides depend very much on other concurrent circumstances. Most of us remember the unusually high tide some two years ago, which ought to be very moderate, or, if we use the expression, a very quiet affair, indeed, because the winds had been quenched, and exerted their force against the astronomers. A long succession of winds blowing off-shore produces a spring tide to a height exceeding the ordinary heap. On the other hand, if we should have a long season of westerly winds from the west before the unprecedentedly high tide, it is certain that a large amount of mischief may be done in some of our river-ports. The wave did little mischief.

Some writer sketches in Frazer's Magazine for July, 1870, the history of the tidal wave ever known. From this account we make these extracts:

"About 15 B.C., one of the most disastrous tides which has ever visited the earth befell the unfortunate inhabitants of Peru. In that land earthquakes are so frequent as earthquakes are to us, and shocks by which cities are changed into a heap of ruins are of every-day occurrence. Yet even in the land of earthquakes, as Humboldt has termed it, no such catastrophe as that of August, 1868, had occurred in the memory of man. It was not a wave which was laid in ruins, but a tempest. Those who perished were not in tens of thousands, while the city was entirely destroyed by the earthquake almost all millions of pounds sterling. Arequipa, at the foot of the Andean mountain Misti, that the terrible effects of the great earthquake were experienced. Within this city, Misti has poured forth no flames, but that the volcano is not entirely extinct is evidenced by the fact that an enormous mass of ice and snow was vomited from its crater. On the 13th of August, 1868, Most showed no signs of disturbance. So far as their evidence was concerned, the 44,000 souls of Arequipa had no reason to suspect the catastrophe which was to befall them. At five minutes past 5 o'clock the shock was experienced. Several seconds, however, seems to have been insufficient. Half a minute, or even a terrible minute was heard the earth; a second shock more than the first was felt; and then a sawing motion, gradually increasing in intensity. In the course of a minute and a half had become general that the inhabitants ran in terror of their houses in the streets and that in the next few minutes the movement had so increased that the lightly-built houses were cast to and fro, and the flying people could scarcely keep their feet. And now, says Mr. Smith, there followed during the next few minutes a terrible scene. The elements which had hitherto produced the fierce vertical throes of the subterranean roaring in the most terrifying manner; the howling, heart-piercing shrieks of the people, the bursting walls, the crashing fall of houses and churches, while over all rolled thick and lurid clouds of dust, which, as it has been poured forth many minutes, would have suffocated all. Although the shocks continued for a few minutes, the whole town was destroyed. Not one building remained uninjured, and there were few that were not in shapeless heaps of ruins. Lucus and Arica, the earth-quake was severe, but strange and terrible to relate, the sea remained almost at its usual level. At the same time, a circumstance occurred, the nature of which yet remains a mystery. About three hours after the first earthquake, an unusual and inexplicable appearance above the mountains. It lasted for an hour, and had the appearance of some as yet unknown Arctic or Antarctic wave produced by the destructive effects than had been caused by the earthquake. About an hour after the first earthquake was seen to retire, as if to leave the shores wholly dry; but in a few minutes returned with tremendous force. A mighty wave, whose height was immeasurable, was seen to rise like a dark wall upon the sea, and like a large part of which seemed to overtop it. Two ships, the Peruvian America, and the Chilian corvette Union, were stranded nearly half a mile from the shore, and there left stranded. This enormous wave was followed by the English Vice-Consul at Arica, who has been fully fifty feet in height.

"It is impossible to contemplate the effects which followed the great earthquake, the passage of a sea wave of which it was fully one-third of the earth's surface, and the force with which the farthermost limits of its course published upon shores 10,000 miles from its starting point fill one with a feeling that those going about wholly that the subterranean forces of the earth are diminishing.

"A earth-thrower will last for a while that the power of earthquakes is altogether less than we consider fairly the share had in those ancient processes, when we see that while mountains were being upheaved, or valleys sunk to their present position, race and type after type appeared on the earth, and lived out the period allotted to it, races and species are recalled to the remembrance of the great work which subterranean forces are said upon. Even now, one is being slowly depressed or raised to their present position. Race and type after type appear