

vegetable commonly found in the market was as tasteless as white field corn. The market people told us that to obtain sweet corn, it was necessary to plant northern seed every time, while the seed corn grown from northern seed always gave the tasteless variety.

Since, I believe, our sweet varieties of corn are derived by cultivation from the white field corn, this looks very like a case of atavistic mutation. I hope that Dr. White or some other investigators in Washington may be able to give us further information about this matter.

JOHN MURDOCH.

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#### NOTES ON INORGANIC CHEMISTRY.

##### DISCOVERY OF NEW PLATINUM DEPOSITS.

A NEW YORK *World* dispatch from St. Petersburg of the date January 18 announces the discovery of vast deposits of platinum on the river Gusseva. It is said that within a month 25,000 men swarmed to the diggings, and before the police could reach the camp the miners got away with \$1,500,000 worth of platinum. The locality indicated in the dispatch is in the upper, or Goroblagodatsk district, on the eastern watershed of the Oural Mountains. The mines of this region are chiefly owned by Count Shouvalof and a number of companies. About eighty miles to the south is the Nizhni Tagilsk district, which is owned by the Demidoffs, and which has been the greatest producer of platinum in the past. The last few years the northern district has been a larger producer, but the sands and rock have run very low in platinum. While as recently as 1870 the richness of the sands was as high as one ounce to the ton, in 1895 the average was hardly one and a half pennyweights to the ton. The total production of that year was less than 150,000 ounces. If the figures of the *World* dispatch are reliable, it would indicate the production in a month of more than the usual annual output of late years. The platinum problem has become a very serious one, for while the demand has increased rapidly the last few years, the supply has been diminishing. Great efforts have been made to discover new fields, but without

much practical success. Platinum occurs in many places, but generally in insufficient quantities to pay for working. The Goroblagodatsk district consists chiefly of the river Iss and its tributaries. The total length of these streams is about sixty miles, and the Gusseva is one of these affluents. Allowing for all the probable exaggeration of the dispatch, it would seem that deposits have been discovered in this region which must be far richer than any which have been worked for many years. It is sincerely to be hoped that they shall prove to be of considerable area.

J. L. H.

#### CURRENT NOTES ON METEOROLOGY.

##### REPORT OF THE CHIEF OF THE WEATHER BUREAU.

THE 'Report of the Chief of the Weather Bureau' for 1901-1902 (4to, pp. 342) contains a number of interesting facts regarding the work of the Bureau. The storm warnings issued for the transatlantic steamship routes were so successful that the secretary of 'Lloyd's,' in London, conveyed to the Chief of the Bureau the congratulations of his committee 'on the infallibility of the predictions that have been supplied by the forecasts.' On August 1, 1902, 10,025 rural free mail-delivery routes were in operation, serving approximately 1,000,000 families. Of these families, 105,000, served by about 1,000 routes, were furnished with the forecasts of the Weather Bureau. If the necessary funds were available, it would be possible to make the distribution of the daily forecasts coextensive with the rural free delivery itself. Professor Abbe has acted as the general adviser of the trustees of the Carnegie Institution on matters pertaining to meteorology, and has also been charged with the oversight of the aerial research work of the Weather Bureau. A valuable set of nephoscope observations from the West Indies has been secured, from May, 1899, to May, 1902. Among the special studies carried on by the Bureau are the following: Investigation of the intensity of solar radiation by means of Angström's electric compensation pyrheliometer; a new barometric