

## LITERARY NOTICES.

SCOBIE'S CANADIAN ALMANAC FOR 1852.—An Almanac, in these busy times, becomes almost one of the necessaries of life; although the days are happily past when a large proportion of her Majesty's subjects resorted to the pages of Moore or Murphy as unerring guides to the state of the weather—wet or dry—damp or dusty. Not many years since few excursions were undertaken, no matter whether a jog to market, a wedding trip or a pic-nic, without first consulting the Almanac, and ascertaining that fine weather was predicted at the wished-for period. In the present day we are wiser than our ancestors—at least we think so—and we look to these annual visitants for information of a more matter-of-fact, or, at all events, of a more reliable kind. "Scobie's Canadian Almanac" contains ninety pages, closely filled with a variety of useful information.

## ON DIAMONDS AND PRECIOUS STONES.

In all ages, and in all countries, barbarous or civilized, the higher orders of precious stones have been the objects of attention, and sought after with avidity. In the remotest periods of antiquity they have been selected from among all the productions of nature as emblems of perfection; the most eloquent and imaginative among the poets have found nothing, in the whole range of nature, better adapted to the illustration of their ideas of all that is of incomparable value and absolute completeness.

The wildest extravagance of oriental fiction, when bent on the most prodigious accumulation of splendour, can do no more than multiply and magnify these costly products of the secret laboratory of nature. Staffs of emerald, and cups excavated from a single ruby, are the proudest addition they have given to the real treasures of the Caliphs; and the splendid palaces of imaginary beings, the works of peris and magicians, could only be made to excel the substantial edifices of mortal potentates, by the unmeasured profusion of jewels with which they were adorned by the hand of fiction. Even the talismans by which the powers of another world were controlled, were gems; and the seal of Solomon, and the far-famed carbuncle of Giamschid, were alike rare in substance and tremendous in their properties.

When the glories of the new Jerusalem were revealed to the eye of the rapt Evangelist, and the visions beheld in Patmos were to be commemorated in language not altogether unsuitable to the wonders he had seen, in describing the ineffable splendours of the Holy City he found no imagery more worthy of presenting to the minds of men an idea of the effulgence of its walls, than the united brightness of all kinds of precious stones; the ramparts were of all imagined splendours, and the very founda-

tions an accumulation of sapphire, emerald, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, amethyst, and chryso-prase.

Diamonds, the most rare and most valuable of all precious stones, are sold by a particular standard, which appears to be universally adopted. The integer of weight is termed a carat, and it is divided into four grains.

Diamonds, when well set, always appear larger than when they are loose, and this circumstance gives great advantage to the seller. Shallow brilliants, that have a great surface, are for this reason always in request, and are generally set *close*. A brilliant is said to be *close set* if the setting has a back; it is said to be open, *au jour*, if it has no back. Fine brilliants are always set open. Thus a stone of only a carat may appear as large as a well-proportioned stone of six grains.

The smallest flaw, or *foul* (as it is called) greatly diminishes the price of the diamond; and if it be tinged with yellow, brown, &c., a fault characterised by the technical term of *colour*, its value falls very considerably, and is frequently reduced from a third to one-half. To counteract these defects, and to conceal the appearance of what are deemed imperfections, great ingenuity is exercised, and often with success, so that an inferior stone obtains the price of a perfect brilliant.

White topazes and rock crystal have been exposed for sale as diamonds, and glass has also been made into peculiar forms to resemble the rough gem. These deceptions have often been practised abroad, and sometimes with success.

Brilliants from two grains to three, may be bought in lots at from 7 gs. to 8*l.* per carat; from three to four grains, if fine; they are worth from 8 gs. to 9*l.* per carat; from five to six grains, if pure, worth 13 to 14*l.*

Brilliants of two carats each are worth from 27 to 30*l.* Stones of this weight, if well proportioned, are considered of a fine size, and well calculated for pins, or the centre of clusters. Indeed, well proportioned diamonds from six grains to two carats each, are always in demand, and are retailed at from 20 to 35*l.* each according to their degree of perfection, or as the retailer may think fit to charge them.

For brilliants of three carats, if fine and well formed, from 70 to 80*l.* may be obtained.

Brilliants of four carats, if fine, are worth from 100 to 130*l.*

Brilliants of five carats are not frequently met with in general trade, and are variable in price, as the dealers exact more if they know that such stones are wanted, than they would in the regular course of business. The prices may be said to vary from 130 to 200*l.*

Brilliants of six carats, as before stated, are not common; they are suitable for centre stones of expensive necklaces, and single stone rings, if perfect and well shaped, they sell from 230 to 250*l.* or more.

Rough diamonds, selected as fine, and well formed for cutting, may be estimated as follows: Square the weight of the stone, multiply the product by two, and the result will be the value