

NATURAL HISTORY.

SPEED OF THE OSTRICH.

In the *Annals of Sporting* it is observed:—"If we are to place confidence in traveller's tales, the ostrich is swifter than the Arabian horse. During the residence of Mr. Adamson at Pador, a French factory on the south side of the river Niger, he says that two ostriches, which had been about two years in the factory, afforded him a sight of a very extraordinary nature. These gigantic birds, though young, were of nearly the full size. They were (he continues) so tame, that two little blacks mounted both together on the back of the larger. No sooner did he feel their weight, than he began to run as fast as possible, and carried them several times round the village,—and it was impossible to stop him, otherwise than by obstructing the passage. This sight pleased me so much, that I wished it to be repeated, and, to try their strength, directed a full-grown negro to mount the smallest, and two others the larger. This burden did not seem at all disproportioned to their strength. At first, they went at a pretty sharp trot; but when they became heated a little, they expanded their wings, as though to catch the wind, and moved with such fleetness that they seemed scarcely to touch the ground. Most people have, at one time or other, seen the partridge run, and consequently must know that there is no man able to keep up with it; and it is easy to imagine, that if this bird had a longer step, its speed would be considerably augmented. The ostrich moves like the partridge, with this advantage; and I am satisfied that those I am speaking of would have distanced the fleetest race-horses that were ever bred in England. It is true, that they would not hold out so long as a horse; but they would, undoubtedly, be able to go over the space in less time. I have frequently beheld this sight, which is capable of giving one an idea of the prodigious strength of the ostrich, and of showing what use it might be of, had we but the method of breaking and managing it as we do the horse."

PLANTS IN ROOMS.

It is very difficult to make plants grow in rooms. They must necessarily be deficient in the three important auxiliaries to vegetable life, light, air, and moisture; the latter of which cannot be maintained in apartments that are daily occupied. In large towns, plants cannot thrive even in the open air, as the minute particles of soot, which are constantly floating about, settle upon their leaves, and choke up their pores. The gases produced by the combustion of coal, &c., are also injurious to plants. Sulphurous acid, which abounds in the atmosphere

of London, turns the leaves yellow; and the want of evaporation and absorption by the leaves prevents the proper elaboration of the sap, and makes the trees stunted and unproductive. *Lindley's Lectures.*

POMPEII.—Continued.

In one of the buildings was found the skeleton of a new-born child, and in one part of the square the skeletons of sixty men, supposed to be soldiers, who, in the severity of Roman discipline, dared not fly, and perished at their post. There were several advertisements of gladiators on the pillars, and it appears that at the time of the eruption the inhabitants of Pompeii were principally assembled in the great amphitheatre, at a show.

We left the square, and visiting several small private houses near it, passed into a street with a slight ascent, the pavement of which was worn deep with carriage-wheels. It appeared to have led from the upper part of the city directly to the sea, and in rainy weather must have been quite a channel for water, as high stones at small distances were placed across the street, leaving open places between for the carriage-wheels. (I think there is a contrivance of the same kind in one of the streets of Baltimore.)

We mounted thence to higher ground, the part of the city not excavated. A peasant's hut and a large vineyard stands high above the ruins, and from the door the whole city and neighbourhood are seen to advantage. The effect of the scene is strange beyond description. Columns, painted walls, wheel-worn streets, amphitheatres, palaces, all as lonely and deserted as the grave, stand around you, and behind is a poor cottage and a vineyard of fresh earth just putting forth its buds, and beyond the broad, blue, familiar bay, covered with steamboats and sails, and populous modern Naples in the distance—a scene as strangely mingled perhaps, as any to be found in the world. We looked around for awhile, and then walked on through the vineyard to the amphitheatre which lies beyond, near the other gate of the city. It is a gigantic ruin, completely excavated, and capable of containing twenty thousand spectators. The form is oval, and the architecture very fine. Besides the many vomitories, or passages for ingress and egress there are three smaller alleys, one used as the entrance for wild beasts, one for the gladiators, and the third as that by which the dead were taken away. The skeletons of eight lions and a man, supposed to be their keeper, were found in one of the dens beneath, and those of five other persons near the different doors. It is presumed that the greater proportion of the inhabitants of Pompeii must have escaped by sea, as the eruption occurred while they were nearly all

assembled on this spot, and these few skeletons only have been found.

We returned through the vineyard, and stopping at the cottage called for some of the wine of the last vintage, (delicious, like all those in the neighbourhood of Vesuvius) and producing our basket of provisions, made a most agreeable dinner. Two parties of English passed while we were setting at our out-of-doors table. Our attendant was an uncommonly pretty girl of sixteen, born on the spot, and famous just now as the object of a young English nobleman's particular admiration. She is a fine dark-eyed creature, but certainly no prettier than every fifth peasant girl in Italy.

Having finished our picturesque meal, we went down into the ancient streets once more, and arrived at the temple of Isis, a building in excellent preservation. On the altar stood, when it was excavated, a small statue of Isis, of exquisite workmanship, (now in the museum to which all the curiosities of the place are carried,) and behind this we were shown the secret *penetralia*, where the priests were concealed who uttered the oracles supposed to be pronounced by the goddess. The access was by a small secret flight of stairs, communicating with the apartments of the priests in the rear. The largest of these apartments was probably the refectory, and here was found a human skeleton near a table, upon which lay dinner utensils, chicken bones, bones of fishes, bread and wine, and a faded garland of flowers. In the kitchen, which we next visited, were found cooking utensils, remains of food, and the skeleton of a man leaning against the wall with an axe in his hand, and near him a considerable hole which he had evidently cut to make his escape when the doors were stopped by cinders. The skeleton of one of the priests was found prostrate near the temple, and in his hand three hundred and sixty coins of silver, forty two of bronze, and eight of gold, wrapped strongly in a cloth. He had probably stopped before his flight to load himself with the treasures of the temple, and was overtaken by the shower of cinders and suffocated. The skeletons of one or two were found upon beds, supposed to have been smothered while asleep or ill. The temple is beautifully paved with mosaic, (as indeed are all the better private houses and public buildings of Pompeii,) and the inner court is bordered with a quadrilateral portico. The building is of Roman Doric order. (I have neither time nor room to enumerate the curiosities found here and in other parts of the city, and I only notice those which most impressed my memory. The enumeration by Madame Stark, will be found exceedingly interesting to those who have not read her laconic guide-book.