

—*Price of Rare Books*—At the sale of the library of the late Rev. W. Moore Brabazon, at Messrs. Puttick and Simpson's, Leicester-square, the following curious works were sold:—Lot 92. D'Urfey's "Pills to Purge Melancholy," 6 vols., "uncut," sold for £42; another copy, in the last day's sale, in the ordinary state, produced £10. 5s. Lot 310. "Common Prayer," printed by Jugge and Cawood in 1559, being the first edition in Elizabeth's reign, although not quite perfect, sold for £43.

—It is stated that on the 4th ult. her Majesty had the pleasure of becoming personally acquainted with two distinguished writers of the age, Mr. Carlyle and Mr. Browning. These eminent men were invited to meet the Queen at the residence of the Dean of Westminster, and the interview was one of a very pleasing and characteristic kind. Mr. and Mrs. Grote were also of the party.

—*Good and Bad Handwriting*.—I have heard illegible writing justified as a mark of genius. That of course is a very flattering theory. I wish I could think it true. But, like most of these flattering theories about disagreeable eccentricities, it has one fatal fault,—it is inconsistent with notorious facts. Men of genius do not, I believe, as a rule scribble. They write legibly. Thackeray, we all know, was a beautiful penman. He prided himself on his writing. He could write the Lord's Prayer in a legible hand on a bit of paper not bigger than a sixpence. I never heard that Charles Dickens had a contribution returned because it was illegible. "Douglas Jerrold's copy was almost as good as copperplate," and my friend, who, in his own graphic style, is sketching the career of "Christopher Kenrick" in these pages in a masculine, clear, and flexible hand, tells me that one of Jerrold's friends, "Shirley Brooks, writes plainly; and with very little revision." Lord Lytton's manuscript is written in a careless scrawl, but it is not illegible, though from interlineations and corrections, perhaps now and then puzzling to printers; and Mr. Disraeli writes in a large and angular running hand, legible enough if not particularly elegant. And most of our leading politicians are excellent penmen. Mr. Gladstone seems to write as he generally speaks, in a hasty, impetuous manner. But with all his haste and impetuosity his writing is perfectly legible. It is an Oxford hand. Lord Derby writes, what I may perhaps call, an aristocratic hand et once elegant and legible. Lord Russell writes a lady like hand. It is like everything else about the Earl, small, and occasionally puzzling, but not inelegant. Mr. Bright's letters are as distinctly and regularly formed as this print. Lord Stanley's despatches are as legible as large pica. You may run and read them. Every character is fully formed; every "i" is dotted, every "l" crossed. You will find no sign of haste or slovenliness in his MS. I might go on in this style through a dozen more names. But it is not necessary. I have cited enough cases to prove my point, that illegible hand writing is not a mark of genius, or even of superior intelligence. I know, on the other hand, that there are many men of genius who write and have written execrably. Sir John Bowring is one of these. It is said that Lord Palmerston once sent back an important despatch of Sir John's to China, with a request that it might be copied in a readable handwriting; and Lord Cowley, our late Ambassador at the court of France, wrote so hastily and so illegibly that Lord Granville, I believe, once asked his lordship to keep the originals of his despatches for his own information, and send copies to the Foreign Office. "Lord Lytton, who moved a clause to the Reform Bill that nobody should have a vote who could not write a legible hand, writes so illegibly that the clerks at the table could not read the resolution which he handed in," and Christopher Kenrick adds, that "Tom Taylor writes as if he had wool at the head of his pen." And these men are the types, I fear, of a far larger class than the first set of politicians and authors whom I have enumerated.

—*Gentleman's Magazine*.

SCIENTIFIC INTELLIGENCE.

—Dr. Livingstone has been elected corresponding member of the French Academy of Sciences. There were fifty-six voters, forty-four of whom gave their suffrages in favor of Livingstone.

—Messrs. Salt of Birmingham, have constructed a very ingenious and well-designed apparatus for the vaporization of carbolic acid, by means of which that valuable disinfectant can be diffused through the rooms of a house without any of the disadvantages attending its use in its ordinary liquid state. The apparatus consists of a receptacle for the acid covered by a finely perforated lid. Beneath the receptacle is an air chamber, and beneath this chamber is a recess for a spirit-lamp. Two or three tablespoonfuls or more of carbolic acid, if in the liquid form, or a portion of the crystals having been placed in the upper receptacle, the lamp is lighted, and in a few moments the acid begins to evaporate and the vapour is diffused into the atmosphere of the apartment through the perforated plate. The apparatus will be found an excellent addition to the sick room where it is found desirable to use carbolic acid as a disinfecting agent. Its great advantage is that it can be so manipulated as to keep the atmosphere charged with a distinct but not unpleasant

odour of the acid by increasing or diminishing the supply as may be required, and it will thus be found particularly handy and useful in private houses.

—*Meteorology*.—Meteorology has of late years made great progress in France, so far at least as regards the organisation of a regular system of observation. This, it must be allowed, is in a great measure due to the enlightened exertions of Mr. Duruy, the Minister of Public Instruction, who, in 1864, provided all the primary Normal schools with good instruments, and recommended the pupils to keep registers of barometrical and thermometrical readings, the fall of rain, the state of the weather, &c. The system is now in full activity at all those establishments, where observations are now taken every three hours between 6 a. m. and 9 p. m.; but at seventeen of these schools also at midnight and 3 o'clock a. m. The average annual temperature is obtained by eight observations daily. As for the barometrical observations, they have been turned to good account, in obtaining forecasts of the weather, according to Admiral Fitzroy's system, which has been adopted and improved in France. The barometrical readings registered at the normal schools are of great public importance, as every storm announces its proximity by a considerable depression. Nor do these readings stand alone; they are combined with hygrometrical observations, testing for manifestations of ozone, &c. Nothing is omitted, and at the end of each year the loose leaves on which the various data have been registered, are made up into books. Here again there is a decided improvement; that of 1865 only comprising the path of common storms and hurricanes, while that of 1866 also gives the zones visited by hail-storms, and special remarks on the climate of France, and that of 1867 contains a fourth part, consisting of various papers and documents on the general results obtained. The latter are peculiarly interesting; from them we learn that the storms visiting France chiefly come from the Atlantic, with the exception of local ones engendered by the winds of the Mediterranean, when they skim the declivities of the south-eastern coast. Another remarkable result is this: that hail is produced by two clouds, one above the other, with a considerable distance intervening between them. These clouds cross each other at a certain angle; a noise is then heard like the rumbling of a cart, and is immediately followed by a shower of hail. With the straitened means at his disposal, Mr. Duruy has indeed done wonders, and he may well be proud of the result.—*Museum*.

—*Novel Application of Gas*.—Mr. James Allison Hogg, gas engineer, Edinburgh, has discovered a method of producing intense light with coal gas by mixing it with atmospheric air. The mixture of gases is lighted after passing through a tissue of iridio-platina wires at a determined pressure. In a few seconds the metal becomes heated up to a white heat, the flame disappears, and an intense white light is the result. An enlarged picture has been taken by its aid on prepared photographic paper. The light will burn in a gale of wind without any protection round it, and a downpour of rain will not affect it.

—*The Colour of the Sky*.—Professor Tyndall, the Engineer says, is now engaged on the chemical action of light upon vapours, and he has quite recently handed in a paper to the Royal Society on the colours of the sky, on the polarization of light by the sky, and by cloudy matter generally. By the condensation of liquids of various kinds into particles so small that their diameters are measured, not by tens of thousandths, but by hundreds of thousandths of an inch, he succeeds in producing a blue which equals, if it does transcend, that of the deepest and purest Italian sky, and this blue exhibits all the effects of polarization which have been hitherto observed in skylight.

—*Curious Production of Cold*.—Dr. Phipson has recently discovered, says the *Scientific Review*, that an intense degree of cold is produced by dissolving sulphocyanate of ammonium in water. Many salts, more especially salts of ammonia lower the temperature of water whilst dissolving; but according to Dr. Phipson, no compound produces this effect in so marvellous a manner as sulphocyanate of ammonium. In one experiment 35 grammes of this salt, dissolved rapidly in 35 cubic centimetres of water at 23 degrees Centigrade, caused the thermometer to descend in a few seconds to —10 degrees, C. The moisture of the atmosphere instantly condensed itself on the outside of the glass in thin plates of ice.

—*The Right Hand*.—An American curioso asks, with reasonable wonder, why we use the right hand in preference to the left. Nature appears, remarks a writer in *Once a Week*, to have dictated the habit; its universality goes far to prove that it is instinctive; for among existing nations none seem to be gifted as were the Benjamites of old. The left arm is the weaker, but whether naturally or only from disuse remains to be ascertained. It would appear that the difference of strength extends to the organs of locomotion. When we meet an obstacle in walking, it is easier to turn to the right than to the left, as if the right leg had the most power and freedom of motion; and it is said that if a man lose himself on a plain, without any guide or landmarks, he will, in his efforts to go straightforward, invariably bear to