

THE SATURDAY READER.

VOL. II.—No. 30.

FOR WEEK ENDING MARCH 31, 1866.

FIVE CENTS.

CONTENTS.

A FEW STRAY NOTES
ON ENTOMOLOGY.
LITERARY GOSSIP.
STRAHAN & Co., PUBLISHERS.
THE FAMILY HONOUR.
FERNIPHOBIA.
WAGER OF BATTLE.
AN UNINVITED GUEST.
ALL'S WELL (Poetry).
CARRIE MORTON.

HOW I MADE A FORTUNE
IN WALL STREET,
AND HOW I GOT
MARRIED.
PERPETUAL MOTION.
PASTIMES.
CHESS.
TO CORRESPONDENTS.
MISCELLANEA.
SCIENTIFIC AND USEFUL.
WITTY AND WHIMSICAL.

Continued from week to week, the NEW STORY,

"THE TWO WIVES OF THE KING."

TRANSLATED FOR THE SATURDAY READER FROM
THE FRENCH OF PAUL FEVAL.

A FEW STRAY NOTES ON ENTOMOLOGY.

IN a few short weeks the gloomy winter will have passed away: and blustering Boreas, with his snow and his hail, causing shivering limbs and chattering teeth to the sons of Adam, will have departed to revel among the icebergs and frozen waters of the Northern Seas, and have given place to the mild and gentle Zephyr, with its soft and genial showers. Our rivers and streams, which now appear bound with iron fetters will be loosened, and will again slip and slide, and gleam and glance among the water lilies. The trees now apparently withered and dead will burst forth into leaves and flowers; and all nature will awake and put on her most glorious attire, and all the tribes of the animal kingdom will rejoice, and among the first and the loveliest to shake off dull slough will be the insect hosts.

Ere long the butterflies will be flitting gaily and joyfully over the green fields: the bee will be bustling among the early flowers, buzzing and humming, as if anxious to make up for lost time, and redeem the golden moments it has wasted during its long winter nap; the beetle will be crawling and flying along the sunny roads, or lurking under stones and sticks and the bark of trees; and the cruel and ferocious mosquito, of the feminine gender, like an Amazonian warrior in days of yore, will be fashioning and burnishing her weapons for active service, while her gentler and less blood-thirsty husband is peacefully dancing over the swamps and creeks of our glorious Canada, lifting its tiny voice to sing the Great Creator's praise: Therefore I crave the liberty of taking up a little space of the Reader with a few stray notes concerning insects, hoping, thereby to attract the attention of some of my readers to the wonders of nature, as exhibited in these little creatures. No one need imagine that he is here to have a long article concerning the number of joints in the hind leg of a beetle, or tedious enquiry as to where the organ of hearing is placed, nor yet any other learned or deep disquisition or discussion on some such knotty and important point, for I will confine myself to a few stray notes of a very rambling, unconnected and simple character.

"Exceeding in amount of species all the other subjects of zoology; unrivalled in dazzling brilliancy of their colours, which combine the clearness and decision of tint possessed by flowers, with the exquisitely varied markings of the feathered races, and the metallic splendour of the mineral kingdom; surpassed by no other work of creation in the wonderful structure of their parts, and certainly surpassing all in the adaptation of that structure to the perfect fulfilment of those natural, but to us still mysterious instincts, which in every age have excited the admiration of man-

kind," is it to be wondered that many in all ages have become so enamoured of these fairy and elfish creatures as to make them their study and delight, catching them by day, and setting them by night; that such men as Swammerdam, Huber and Reaumer should devote their lifetime to the investigation of their natures and structures; that Madame Merian should travel to distant and tropical climes to copy with her magic pencil their graceful shapes and gorgeous colours, and that others should spend their time and money in making collections of

"the painted populace
That live in fields and lead ambrosial lives?"

Is it not rather a matter of surprise and astonishment that many more do not turn entomologists, and seek to learn more about the formation, habits and doings of these our fellow creatures? Sometimes, no doubt, whether we will or no, we are forced to take an interest in these creatures, as when we find our fruit destroyed by the curculio, our wheat blighted by the midge and fly; and as a punishment for our transgressions the Creator has spoken the word "and the grasshoppers come and caterpillars innumerable, and eat up all the grass in the land and devour the fruit of the ground." Often we are compelled to listen at the dead of night to the dread war-whoop of some ferocious mosquito, who like a bloodthirsty savage performs the most hideous and fantastic dance around our couch ere it plunges its sharp knife into our unprotected bodies: and sometimes, too, much to our disgust, we make some such interesting discoveries as did Douglas Jerrold who, after having been kept awake all night at a country inn by hosts of little black bandits, and being told the next morning by the indignant landlady that she had "not got a single flea in the house," instantly retorted, fatigued with his entomological pursuits and captures, "a single flea—perhaps not, for I am sure they are all married, and have large families too." From a close and attentive study of the nature and habits of these fairy and bewitching creatures, I am sure that every one will derive much of instruction and profit, as well as of amusement.

The insect hosts far exceed in number those of all the rest of the tribes of animated nature. It is supposed that not fewer than one hundred thousand are preserved in the different collections; and as on every tree and flower, under every stone and stump, in every puddle and stream, and creeping on every road, and dancing and waltzing over every field throughout this world, there are to be found insects of different kinds, natures, and shapes, it is computed that the number of species actually existing in nature is not greatly short of four hundred thousand. Of these, about a third are beetles, and a quarter flies. Far more attention has been given to the study of the butterflies and beetles, than to the other insect tribes; their beautiful and brilliant colours have always rendered these insects objects of peculiar delight and interest to entomologists. General Count De Jean, one of Napoleon's aide-camps, had about twenty-three thousand different species of beetles in his collection; and, so anxious was he to increase his cabinet, that even in his military campaigns he was continually occupied in capturing, and pinning these insects to the outside of his military cap, which was generally covered with them. The General was accustomed to rush into the midst of battle with his head thus singularly adorned with the trophies of his entomological victories. At the battle of Wagram he was hit on the hat by a cannon-ball, and knocked head over heels off his charger. After remaining stunned for some time, he opened his eyes, and the Emperor asked him if he was much hurt; "I am still alive," replied the gallant General, "but, alas! my in-

sects are all gone," and so, indeed, they were, for his hat was shivered to a thousand atoms.

Some insects are extremely prolific; for instance, according to calculations based upon actual observation, the whole brood, from a single aphid or plant louse, in a season, will amount to the immense number of 1,000,000,000,000,000,000. (For fear the reader should imagine the printer has added in a few extra cyphers, I had better state that eighteen is the proper number!) Were it not that these insects are extremely feeble, so that the slightest touch destroys them, and the winds, rains, and cold sweep them off by hundreds of thousands, and that myriads form the daily food of higher and larger creatures, in a short time vegetation would be totally destroyed by these mites—the empire of Flora completely annihilated, and chaos again reign supreme. Another insect, which enjoys among the scientific few the high-sounding and euphonious name of *Cimex lectularia*, but among the ignorant many may bear a shorter and less agreeable appellation, lays its eggs four times a year, and fifty of them at a time; and as its young arrive at maturity, and are ready to become parents in eleven weeks, it will appear from a little simple cyphering that about twenty-two millions will be the offspring of a single pair in one year. No wonder, then, that careful housewives are occasionally horrified by finding swarms of these light-footed but not sweet-scented gentry in places whence they can easily make forays and attacks upon weary mortals, who wish to court

"Tried nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep."

The female white ant lays about forty millions of eggs in a year; the queen bee sometimes fifty thousand, but generally not more than five or six thousand; but luckily for man, in the vast majority of cases, the number of eggs laid by a single insect in a year is less than an hundred.

Did you, my reader, ever think why it is that man (called, by courtesy, "the monarch of all he surveys," is so continually harassed, annoyed, and tormented by little things, by flies, mosquitoes, fleas, and those creatures before referred to, which should not be mentioned by their English name to ears polite, when we have it on very good authority that into the blissful bower of Adam or Eve,

"Insect or worm, dare enter none."

such was their dread of man?

If you have never thought on this deep and abstruse question, or if you have exercised your powers of ratiocination without effect, come with me, and you will hear the reason why. We will have to journey far to the east, and near the foot of that mountain on whose summit the Ark probably still rests, imbedded in the ice and snow of more than forty centuries, we will find some venerable Turk surrounded by his family and dependants, by his flocks and his herds, living in the same primitive and happy style as did his ancestors thousands of years ago, and to him we will propound this query, and ask for a solution of the mystery. He, after he has in most courteous, though foreign accents, invited us to be seated, after he has lighted his hookah, stroked his long, snowy, venerable beard, and solemnly emitted several clouds of smoke, as fragrant as the summer breezes of Araby the Blest, will tell us that Allah is Great! that ages ago, long before the birth of the Prophet, when the righteous Noah was safely floating over the troubled waters of the angry flood in his "allotted ocean-tent," the ark, driven hither and thither by the fury of the winds, striking against a rock, sprung a leak: Noah in vain tried to repair the damage done, and avoid what seemed to be the destined fate of