

an uncommon darkness was perceived here, though at the same time the atmosphere over this city appeared of a fiery, luminous, yellow colour; this was followed by squalls of wind and rain, with severe thunder and lightning, which continued most of the night, a thing uncommon here at this season, it having froze considerably the night before.

"On Saturday, the 15th, about fifteen minutes after three in the afternoon, it became darker than it had been the Sunday before, and the sky of much the same colour: it was succeeded by a heavy shower and very severe thunder and lightning.

"Sunday morning, the 16th, was quite calm and foggy until about ten o'clock, when there arose some wind from the eastward which partly expelled the fog. In about half an hour after it became so dark that ordinary print could not be read within doors. This was followed by a squall of wind and rain, when it brightened up again. From five till about ten minutes after twelve the darkness was so great that the ministers in the English and Presbyterian churches were obliged to stop till they got candles. From two o'clock till about ten minutes after it was as dark as at midnight when there is no moonlight. From forty-three till about fifty minutes after three o'clock it was total darkness, and from thirty-five till forty-five minutes after four it was very dark. The people in this city dined by candle light, and spent a part of the afternoon in lighting up and extinguishing them. Each period of darkness was followed by gusts of wind and rain, with some severe claps of thunder, and the atmosphere looked as before described. It was remarked that on the days before mentioned there appeared to be two adverse currents of air, the uppermost impelling a luminous strata of clouds towards the north-east, and the lower driving with great rapidity broken, misty clouds towards the south-west, and that the rain water which fell on Sunday during these gusts was almost black. As these wonderful phenomena have been the subject of much conversation, and given rise to various conjectures, we flatter ourselves some of the curious, skilled in meteorological observations, will furnish us with their opinions thereupon for our next."

The same phenomena were observed in Montreal on Sunday, the 16th, and are described in the *Quebec Gazette* of the 27th, which also gives the following opinion of a Montreal observer—the only attempt at an explanation which appeared in the *Gazette*:—

"Doctor Serre, who resides in this city, says that having perceived the rain water that fell during the showers to be of a black colour he smelt it, and finding it had a sulphurous smell he placed in the middle of his yard a muslin handkerchief in the form of a funnel, at the bottom of which he found a black sediment. Having rubbed it between his fingers he found that its smell was owing to no other cause but the sulphur which composed its substance. Hence, he is of opinion that the only cause of this phenomena was the inflammation of some neighbouring mines, whose thick smoke being condensed in the air, was driven by the wind over this region."

### READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

#### "THE LEISURE HOURS OF GREAT MEN."

MR. GLADSTONE, as all the world knows, is never more happy than when cutting down trees. But this hewer of wood is also an enthusiastic backgammon player, and in the long winter evenings at Hawarden has had some desperate tussles with Mrs. G. The ex-Premier is also devoted to the drama, and few are the new plays he does not go to see, accompanied by his *fidus Achates*, Sir Charles Forster. Lord Salisbury was a great athlete in the days of his youth, when Leotard himself could hardly have beaten him on the flying trapeze. Now that the joints have got less supple, the noble marquis devotes his spare time principally to his turning-lathe, and few among the presents to Her Majesty are more valued than the set of chessman turned out by the head of the Cecils. Sir William Harcourt's great delight is in lawn tennis, at which game he is a proficient. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain is great as an amateur actor, and invariably chooses the parts made famous by Charles Mathews. His *Young Wilding* in "The Liar" and *Plumper* in "Cool as a Cucumber" are truly masterly performances. When not engaged with his orchids, of which he has a fine collection, "Joe" is generally studying a part. Mr. W. H. Smith devotes a lot of his leisure time to fancy wool-work, being quite an adept with the needle. He scarcely ever reads a newspaper, except the *Sporting Times*, which is brought to his bedside regularly every Saturday morning. Lord Randolph Churchill is pre-eminently domestic in his habits. For two hours at least after breakfast he will read the *Queen* or the *Lady's Pictorial* aloud to Lady R., as she sits at work; and he is her pretty constant attendant out shopping, whilst it is avowed that he does not even know the meaning of curtain lecture. Mr. John Bright is devoted to fishing and billiards, Mr. Bradlaugh, curiously enough, being an adept at both amusements. Mr. Labouchere, when not engaged in making money, or chaffing the powers that be, likes nothing better than to lie on his back on his beautiful lawn at Pope's Villa, and throw stones into the silvery Thames. Mr. John Morley is a great collector of natural history subjects, and is never so happy as when running at full speed, net in hand, to capture an Admiral or a Purple Emperor. The Irish members—if any of these can be called "great" men—are for the most part engaged in drinking and wrangling with one another. They toil not, neither do they spin. Nobody ever saw an Irish member, with the exception of Mr. Parnell (who once kept a pack of hounds and worked a circular saw with much vigour), engaged in any sport or pastime. Some of the great legal luminaries have strange fancies. The Lord Chancellor adores quadrille parties, and is as graceful a dancer as even Mr. Grossmith himself, who for so many nights caricatured that functionary.

Sir Charles Russell is never so happy as when, snuff-box in hand, he is interviewing some owner, trainer, or jockey in a race paddock; and Sir Henry Hawkins would rather hypothecate his black cap than miss a Newmarket meeting. The Attorney-General is an enthusiastic quoit player; and yet another mighty man of law, who shall be nameless—for he follows his bent in secret—never misses a slaughter of rats, a cock-fight, or a "big scrap"—otherwise glove fight—being himself no mean performer with the "mittens."—*Society*.

#### THE ART OF DINNER-GIVING.

DINNER-GIVING has now come to be an art of a very different kind from what it was in the days when the boar's head, with the lemon in his mouth and garnished with sweet herbs as meet flowers for his honourable entombment, formed part of the pageant of serving—the "peacock in his pride" making the other part. Then "it was merry in the hall when beards wagged all," and the server sang more loudly than the trumpets blew:

Caput apri deferro  
Reddens laudes Domino.

These huge joints were the proper food for the coarse if powerful physique and brawny thews and sinews of the feeders. Now, the joint must be out of sight altogether, and dainty little fragments must be laid delicately on the porcelain plate where neither gravy must be excessive nor colour too pronounced. We have got beyond even the milder profusion of our immediate progenitors, to whom the four silver side-dishes, with their hot water plates to keep all stewing, were crucial tests of skill, and the removes, of paramount importance as evidences of taste and hospitable generosity. Now our most *rêcherché* dinners are those where the dishes are comparatively few and the perfection of cookery most absolute. Profusion is barbarism. "Handsome joints" and huge arrays of fish or fowl would condemn the giver of a feast just as much as a badly-cut skirt would condemn the wearer in the eyes of a fashionable milliner; and the exaggeration which must needs be—else should we be more than human—goes now into the perfection of flavour and arrangement. Half a tone too high or low in sauce or salt is an offence equal to boasting or cowardice—a loud voice or a cringing manner; but where the *suprême* is a success and the *filet* without blame, then may the dinner-giver rest in peace—provided always that the clear soup is not muddy and that the ices are not insipid. But in any case the best dinners are those which are given within the means of the domestic staff, where the refinement is natural and the hospitality sincere.—*The Queen*.

#### OUR LIBRARY TABLE.

NARRATIVE AND CRITICAL HISTORY OF AMERICA. Edited by Justin Winsor, Librarian of Harvard University. Vols. II., III. and IV. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company; Toronto: Geo. Virtue.

In these volumes students of American and Canadian history will find a mass of interesting matter of the highest value in throwing light upon the discovery of this continent, in illuminating the pathway of exploration, and in enabling one to realise the fateful story of French, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, and English settlement in various sections of the New World, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Different portions of the work have been assigned to writers whose special knowledge has enabled them to treat their respective subjects exhaustively; while the editor, besides his own extensive and scholarly contributions, has supplied much additional illustrative matter, in the way of maps, plans, charts, portraits, and bibliography—certainly not the least valuable feature in the volumes before us. The editor's research in this department of the work, and his intelligent and painstaking industry, in unearthing from French, Colonial, and other sources, the mass of matter, and the illustrative cartography, which enrich the work and enable the reader to follow clearly the lines of discovery, are well-nigh beyond praise. The first volume has not yet appeared. The second deals primarily with early Spanish and Portuguese discovery, and tells anew the story of Columbus, Amerigo Vespucci, Magellan, and the other sixteenth century explorers of the New World. Later on it recounts the adventures of Las Casas, Cortez, and Pizarro, with what the writers have been able to glean of the exploration of New Mexico, of the Amazon, and of the coast and the vicinity of the Gulf.

Volume three opens with an account of the voyages of the two Cabots, of Hawkins, Drake, and the explorers of the northern waters of the continent—Martin Frobisher, John Davis, Wm. Baffin, and Henry Hudson. This volume also deals with the records of settlement on the Atlantic coast, from the Pilgrim colony in New England to that of Raleigh in Virginia, with the intervening settlements of Pennsylvania and New Amsterdam. The fourth volume, which to Canadians will be found the most interesting, takes up the explorations of Cortoreal, Verrazano, and Jacques Cartier and his successors, prefaced by an able and most instructive paper on the Physiography of North America, from the pen of Prof. Nathaniel Shaler, of Harvard. In illustration of this section of the volume, the editor supplies beautifully engraved reproductions of the early cartography of the eastern and north-eastern coasts of the continent, besides