

NATURAL HISTORY.

"All are but parts of that stupendous whole,
Whose body Nature is, and God the soul."

FOR THE CASKET.

NATURAL CURIOSITY.

In the township of Clinton, district of Niagara, is perhaps one of the most curious caves in America. It is situated about two miles from the main road from Niagara to Hamilton, a little above the base of a mountain. The scenery near the cave is singularly romantic, and aside from the cave, would richly repay the admirer of nature's wonders for the pains of a visit. From the circumstance of the cave containing ice always during summer, it is called the Ice Spring.

Having twice visited the Spring during the greatest heat of summer, which is the only time when the ice accumulates, I will endeavor to describe the place, although my pencil will command but an imperfect sketch. The entrance to the cave is under an immense rock apparently solid; its depth or distance to the extremity is about twenty five feet; the sides are of hugely large solid rocks extending into the mountain, some of which lie partly above the surface. The water which congeals into ice, oozes out of the rock that hangs over the cave: it forms into icicles above, and may be found on the bottom frozen in cakes. A sudden transition from an atmosphere where the thermometer will rise ninety degrees, into a region where it will fall several degrees below zero, on entering the cave in summer, renders great caution necessary to visitors, who should never enter in a state of perspiration nor remain too long. Near the cave are great numbers of rocks, apparently solid, and of the largest size that I have ever seen lying above the ground; they all have the appearance of having been thrown out by some great convulsion of nature. The wild aspect of these rocks softened by a festoonery of ivy and other beautiful vines, and the corresponding grandeur and rarity of all surrounding objects, renders the scene highly picturesque.

Frequent calls, through the public press, have been made upon the scientific, to account for the ice appearing only in the hottest weather, and dissolving as soon as the weather grows cool; but none, I believe, have yet risked a public explanation of the cause of so singular a phenomenon. I may, therefore, hazard my own opinion, at some future time, though I am far from making scientific pretensions. I only hope to be the means of exciting some of our physiologists to the elucidation of a subject, which to thousands who never saw the cave may seem incredible, and perhaps to all who have, an insoluble mystery. There are many places in America where ice and snow remain during summer; but it is believed that this spring is the only one that apparently acts directly contrary to the principles of freezing and thawing, and which remains to be accounted for upon principles satisfactory to the enquiring mind. P.

Selected.

THE CAMELION.—There are varieties of small Camelions. They are apparently harmless animals; though when we have caught them, they show every disposition to bite. They will change in half an hour to all the colors of the prism. Green seems to be their favorite color, and when on a green tree that is their general hue.—While in this color, the under part of their neck becomes a beautiful scarlet.

Their throat swells, and they emit a sharp note, like that of one of the larger kind of grasshoppers, when singing. We have placed them on a handkerchief, and they have gradually assumed all its colors. Placed on a black surface, they become brown: but they evidently suffer, while under this color, as is manifested by uneasy movements, and by strong and quick palpitations, visible to the eye. They are very active and nimble, animals, three or four inches in length.

SNAKE FIGHT.—The late Major T. of the army was a gallant officer, who was severely wounded at the siege of Fort Erie, and died afterwards from the effect of his wound, while a representative from his native state in Congress, used to relate the following account of a battle which he witnessed, between a black and rattle snake. He was riding on horseback when he observed the snakes in the road, a short distance ahead of him. They were moving round in a circle, and apparently following each other. A gentleman who was with the major, and who had witnessed a similar scene before, remarked that it was a prelude to a fight, and worthy the loss of a little time to witness. They accordingly stopped their horses, and watched the snakes. The cautious manœuvres of following each other, in a kind of circle, was pursued for some time, closing at each round, until, when within a few feet, the black snake was observed to stop, coil, and place himself in an attitude to strike. The rattle snake now passed round his antagonist two or three times, lessening the distance each round, when he also stopped and began to coil. But before he was ready to strike, the black snake suddenly darted upon him. His evolutions were too rapid to be detected, and when he was again distinctly observed, both snakes were stretched out at full length, the rattle snake enveloped in the fold of the black snake, which had also seized the rattle snake at the back of the head and held him there. After a short interval, the black snake gradually unfolded himself loos-

ened the gripe with his mouth from the rattle snake's head, and moved away. On examination, the rattle snake was found to be dead, and apparently every bone in his body was crushed. The black snake is a constrictor, and usually destroys its prey by enfoldng and crushing it.

GEOLOGY.

Among the numerous interesting facts which the researches of modern geologists have brought to light, there is none more extraordinary and imposing than the discovery, that there was a period when the earth was peopled with oviparous quadrupeds of a most appalling magnitude, and that reptiles were the *Lords of the Creation*, before the existence of the human race. Mr. Mantell, in his "Geology of Reptiles," first published in the Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal, and re-published in Silliman's Journal, gives some curious facts upon this subject.

Charleston Courier.

THE CASKET.

Devoted to Select Tales, Sketches from Biography, Natural and Civil History, Poetry, Anecdotes, the Arts, Essays, and Interesting Miscellany.

JOHN GRADWIN, EDITOR.

HAMILTON, MARCH 24, 1832.

Board of Health.—It is believed that Hamilton is more healthy, the present season, than many other places at so great distance. Only a few instances of Scarlet Fever and Measles have occurred; and a few more, who have had the misfortune to get shoemakers' promises instead of India-rubber over shoes, are looking sour at their friends and railing against the climate. Of the last description is the publisher of the Casket, to whose indisposition the lateness of this number must be attributed.

Burlington Beach.—We shall never forget the delightful sensations experienced on first approaching the head of Lake Ontario. It was

When bright "Aurora, harbinger of day,
Rose from her saffron bed where Tithon lay;"—
And the rich silver carpet spread out before the imposing heights beyond, which
"Loaming through the magnifying mists,
Seemed waking giants groping for the clouds,"
was displayed at that hour to the greatest advantage. One object, in particular, excited a degree of admiration that has not been lost in familiarity: this was The Beach—a beautiful ridge of bright sand, lying like a floating bridge across the wide lake. It might have been taken for any thing else—a line of foam, or monster of the deep—sooner than the reality, since it is perhaps one of the most rare formations in the world. "What silver-clad, serpent form lies ahead?" enquired a stranger. "The Beach, sir," replied Captain W—. "What formed it there?" enquired another. No answer was returned. We repeat the inquiry, and hope some one, familiar