

STEAM-BOAT EXPLOSIONS.

The number of explosions of the boilers of steam-boats which have taken place lately, is exceedingly discreditable. A steam-boiler should not blow up any more than a common tea-kettle, if properly managed. Bad materials or workmanship in the first place, and carelessness or ignorance in the second, are the sole cause of these accidents. Some time ago (in No. 261) we explained the manner in which such explosions usually take place, which is by the over-great elaboration of steam from the water which is hastily propelled into the almost empty and red hot boiler, just as the boat is going to start. The valves cannot, or do not, let off the spare steam fast enough, and the weakest part of the boiler consequently gives way. We accuse the Mahomedans of trusting to fate in every thing, of giving themselves no concern about the proximate causes of things, of ascribing all the ills of life to the decrees of Providence, and there letting the matter rest. We are afraid that the mass of the people in our own country are not much better than Mahomedans, in these respects. They, and the persons they select to legislate for them, go on from day to day, and year to year, seeing all the time hundreds of their fellow-creatures sent to the bottom of the sea in rotten and worn-out ships, or blown to the air and scalded to death in steam-vessels, without making the smallest effort—a little newspaper fuss at every accident excepted—to prevent these evils from occurring in future. We should like to see a little more alacrity in setting these things to rights. Coffin ships, as a certain class of trading vessels are appropriately termed, should not be permitted to take on board either goods or passengers, with the hollow pretension of taking them to foreign countries; and no steam vessel should be allowed on any account to leave its station, without being duly licensed as of warrantable materials and machinery, and under the management of a captain and engineer thoroughly versed in the duties of their profession. With regard to the more urgent of these measures, a preventive, as far as is practicable, for steam-boat explosions, the evil will by and by cure itself to a considerable extent—not by a public demonstration of dissatisfaction, which would cost too much trouble, but simply—by a great number of persons refraining from going on board any of this description of vessels. Panic is one of the most catching of all things, and a few more explosions will help wonderfully to deter people from trusting their lives to such precarious vehicles. If the managers of respectable steam-boat companies have a due regard for their own honour or profit, they will be the most eager to demand such a legislative enactment as we have pointed out.—*A late number of Chamber's Journal.*

POISONOUS FLY.—Near this place (Babakaly, on the Danube) we found a range of caverns, famous for producing the poisonous fly, too well known in Serbia and Hungary under the name of the Golubacser fly. These singular and venomous insects, somewhat resembling mosquitoes, generally make their appearance during the first great heat of summer, in such numbers as to seem like vast volumes of smoke; their attacks are always directed against every description of quadruped, and so potent is the poison they communicate, that even an ox is unable to withstand its influence, for he always expires in less than two hours. This results, not so much from the virulence of the poisons, as that every vulnerable part is simultaneously covered with these most destructive insects; when the wretched animals, frenzied with pain, rush wild through the fields till death puts a period to their sufferings, or they accelerate dissolution by plunging headlong into the rivers. The shepherds of these countries, taught by experience the time of their approach, avoid every part of their flocks and herds, unprotected by nature, with a strong decoction of wormwood; to which, it appears, these flies have a great antipathy. In addition to this, the shepherds keep immense fires constantly blazing; around which the poor animals, aware of their danger, tremblingly and patiently congregate. Kind nature has, however, mercifully ordained that their existence shall be most ephemeral; for the slightest variation in the weather is sufficient to destroy the whole swarm; hence they seldom live beyond a few days. The probable supposition however is, that when the Danube rises, which it always does in the early part of summer, the caverns are flooded, and the water remaining in them becomes putrid, and produces, during the heat of summer, this most noxious fly.—*Spencer's Circus.*

THE STUDY OF INSECTS.—Is any thing that proceeds from the hands of the Great Creator too insignificant for man to investigate? A moment's reflection will apprise us that the most minute insect must necessarily be as fully perfected in its structure, in its wonderful apparatus of nerves, muscles, respiratory organs, and organs of the senses, and all their functions, as the largest, and, according to its rank in nature, the most gigantic animal, over which it possesses an infinite superiority of muscular strength; and when we find that there are insects scarcely discoverable without a lens, must we not exclaim, with

wonder and admiration, at the stupendous power evinced in their construction, and should not this stimulate us to learn as much as we can concerning these miracles, that we may be better able to appreciate the marvellous power displayed in their creation, although we can scarcely hope to arrive at the perfect comprehension of their least attributes, the complexity of their organization when even most simple, the multiplicity of their instincts, the quality of those instincts, and their very powerful agency in supporting the universal equilibrium of nature? Who then is bold enough to say, even to what his arrogance and assumption have dared to style a contemptible insect, "Thou art beneath my notice," when he feels that the pigmy might reply, "Thou, with all thy boasted superiority, dost not comprehend me!" (Humility is the crown of humanity, and let us follow the words of Solomon, and learn wisdom from the Ant.—*Foreign Quarterly Review.*

THE MALE AND FEMALE GLOW-WORM.—Viewed when at rest, no portion of his eyes is visible, but the head is margined with a horny band, or plate, being a character of one of the genera of the order *coleoptera*, under which the eyes are situated. This prevents all upward vision; and blinds, or winkers, are so fixed at the sides of his eyes, as greatly to impede the view of all lateral objects. The chief end of this creature, in his nightly peregrinations, is to seek his mate, always beneath him on the earth; and hence this apparatus appears designed to facilitate his search, confining his view entirely to what is before or below him. The first serves to direct his flight, the other presents the object of his pursuit; and as we commonly, and with advantage, place our hand over the brow, to obstruct the rays of light falling from above, which enables us to see clearer an object on the ground, so must the projecting hood of this creature converge the visual rays to a point beneath. This is a very curious provision for the purposes of the insect, if my conception of its design be reasonable. Possibly the same ideas may have been brought forward by others; but, as I have not seen them, I am not guilty of any undue appropriation, and no injury can be done to the cause I wish to promote, by detailing again such beautiful and admirable contrivances.—*Journal of a Naturalist.*

DIAMOND.—The diamond is pure carbon, or charcoal, crystallised. It is among the rarest of all known substances, and carbon is among the most abundant. We can have a roomful of pure carbon for sixpence, but a bit of crystallised carbon the size of half your thumb is worth many thousand pounds. You drink diamonds when you drink soda-water; but you drink them in the form of gas. Mr. Faraday has succeeded, by immense pressure, in reducing carbon from the gaseous to the liquid state; but it must be kept in a glass tube, hermetically sealed. The moment it comes in contact with the atmosphere, it again assumes the gaseous form. Diamond requires great heat to burn it; but, when it does burn, it consumes utterly. Its whole substance changes into a kind of gas which is pumped into soda-water, and is produced naturally in champagne.

A WORD OF ADVICE TO MOTHERS.—Some time ago, we heard of the death of a very fine child of two or three years of age, in consequence of the ignorance of the mother, in a matter with which every one ought to be well acquainted. An eruption of some kind appeared on the head of the child, and the foolish parent not being aware that out-breakings of this description are modes of relief wisely established by nature for clearing the constitution of its impurities, resorted to a remedy which drove the eruption inwards, and thus led to the death of the infant. We wish that the mentioning of this fact may have the effect of impressing upon mothers the extreme danger of their endeavouring in any way to check the progress of external eruptions on their children. Measles, small-pox, and all similar appearances on the surface of the body, are nothing more than the demonstrations of nature in throwing disease outwards from the vital parts of the system; and the more they make themselves seen, the better.

THE PEARL.

HALIFAX, NOVEMBER 11, 1837.

And here we are again, gentle Reader, about to impart the finishing hue to our weekly summary of literary pearls: again to overspread a thousand fair minds with a renewed ray from Gutenberg's dazzling Luminary; and to add another sheet to our increasing file. What topic shall we choose to occupy your time and ours? Shall we walk with you in this bracing autumnal weather, and reconcile your nerves to the warning touch of stern ungenial winter, or fly to the ice-bound regions of the north, and sketch

* The Press.

the adventurous wanderings of men who braved the arctic frost to pacify an all absorbing spirit of discovery? Shall we tell you of the earthquakes of Peru and Chili, or open to your view the excavations of Pompeii and Herculaneum? or shall we relate the progress of christianity in rescuing the Hindoo from the Ganges, reclaiming the intemperate from their evil habits, and striking the manacles from the slave? "All, all, or either," reply the ready volumes on the shelves before us, and most heartily does our inclination reiterate the call: but the warnings of flying time and diminishing space overhelm the sound. Yet we cannot quit our readers thus—we cannot throw these cogitations subject to the wind; and therefore seek both relief and brevity, in the multitudinous assemblage of the world's literature, by which, in chaotic confusion we are surrounded.—Ah! what have we here, enclosed in a pink cover? "The Literary and Historical Journal." 'Tis well, we shall look no further, but close our rhapsody with a few lines of sober review.

The first number of the above work, published by Mr. John Croskill, at St. John, and which we have just received, is prefaced by an advertisement stating, that in consequence of a sudden attack of illness he has been obliged to relinquish his undertaking; but that not wishing to abuse public confidence, "he had made arrangements for the publication of a few of the articles which he had hastily prepared" as a specimen of his intentions. Notwithstanding the disadvantages incident to the number before us, of which the advertisement complains, it fully equals the professions of the prospectus, being neatly printed, and embracing one or more articles under each of the proposed heads. Twenty articles are named in the table of contents, chiefly original or re-written: those worthy of notice are as follows, *v. z.*: The rise and progress of New Brunswick, the Prince's Lodge, Letters of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, Essay on Elocution, the Ferryman's Daughter, Affecting Epistle, the Dey of Algiers, Biography—Kosciusko, Men and Manners—the New Zealanders, and a variety of Poetry. Among the latter is an Elegy on the death of William the IVth., which we believe is from the pen of the Editor. It concludes thus:

"The scene is over—life has fled;
Majesty in death is laid—
A mournful emblem of the truth,
The 'choicest flowers fade.'
Affliction's tears o'erwhelm the throng
That to his name and house belong.

"Why weep ye! 'tis his body sleeps
In the cold, silent tomb;
His spirit's left the mortal clay—
Recall'd by God's beloved Son:
For, hark! they whisper—Angels say'
'Come and repose in perfect day—

"Quit thy frail tenement, and soar
Aloft in heaven's bright sphere:
We thy Redeemer's messengers
Are to conduct thee there:
Angelic host! celestial love!
They waft him to the realms above.

Resplendent light! the portals ope
With silvery sound, and forth,
Issue Heaven's legions—swift and bright,
'Welcome to new and holy birth:
Redeeming love the ransom's paid—
Thy peace with God the Lamb has made.' "

This number contains some few typographical errors, attributed in the advertisement to a necessary want of revision, but judging from the whole, the work if continued would be an acquisition to Provincial Literature; and we are only sorry, that owing to his late illness, the enterprising and spirited Editor has been obliged to abandon the further publication of "the Literary and Historical Journal of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia." We hope that Mr. Croskill will soon be able to resume his labours, in the event of which, we most heartily concur in wishing him every success.