

subsidence and vegetable growths indicated in the great coal-measures of the South Joggins, Pictou and Sydney.

In Nova Scotia the Lower Coal-measures are characterized by a great preponderance of *Lepidodendra* (especially *L. elegans*) and *Poacites*, with few Ferns or Sigillaria. The middle Coal-measures are rich in Sigillaria and Ferns, as well as *Lepidodendra*. The upper Coal-measures especially abound in Conifers Calamites and Ferns. *Prælyniacus*, *Gyrolepis* or *Acrolepis*, *Centrodus*, *Rhizodus*, and *Ctenacanthus* are the chief fossil fishes of this Lower Carboniferous series. Unio like shells are nearly the only remains of Molluscs.

THE COMET.

Many of our contemporaries have devoted some space to a description of the magnificent spectacle of a comet which most of our readers must have witnessed during part of the months of September and October; but several of them have given currency to an opinion that this splendid object was the well known and long expected comet which last appeared in 1580, the year in which the Emperor Charles V. closed his earthly career. That comet it has been calculated ought again to visit this portion of our system between the years 1856 and 1860; for there are two of its former visits recorded with considerable exactness, and from these data it appears that it takes 280 years to complete its revolution. The comet which we have lately seen is a total stranger to our astronomical history, and from certain calculations based on recent observations its orbit is so much more extensive than that of Charles V.'s Comet that above 2,000 years must elapse ere it again is seen from the earth. This comet is known as Donati's from an accomplished Italian, now assistant Astronomer at Florence, who discovered the new comet as a telescopic object in June. Since which it rapidly approached the earth, and passed between the Earth and the Sun at a distance of nearly fifty millions of miles from these two bodies. It is now as rapidly leaving our neighbourhood and pursuing its appointed course through the realms of space. The very near proximity of this comet to the Earth, as well as to the Planet Venus, during its recent visit, without perceptibly disturbing these bodies, has confirmed the opinion of the best Astronomers that the nucleus of a comet is very much less ponderable than the Celestial bodies with which we are better acquainted, and the tail which always issues from the comet in a direction opposite to the bearing of the Sun, would seem possibly to be a reflection of light depending upon the comet's position with reference to the sun rather than a gaseous emanation from the comet itself. The comet of 1844 in passing the Sun swept its tail round through an arc of more than 120° in five hours, keeping it pointed away from that body, a rapidity of movement which can hardly be attributed to any thing with which we are acquainted but light, and this would appear to confirm the hypothesis that the tail is a reflection depending upon the transmission of light from the Sun. If Donati's Comet had reached the path of the Planet Venus three days sooner than it did, that Planet would have been immersed in the tail. But it is probable that no harm would have occurred had this been so—for the comet has much less density than our atmosphere and could not penetrate it.—Were it not so the gravity of so large a mass must have materially disturbed the Solar System. The nature and object of these great heavenly bodies is still wrapped in mystery, but experience and science both concur in believing that their paths are as truly marked out for them as aught else in the spangled heavens, and that the peculiar fitness

which the Creator has shown in all his adaptations has not been omitted in the laws which regulate the apparently eccentric motions of the Comets.—[COMMUNICATED.]

ORIGINAL HISTORICAL CONTRIBUTIONS.

The dangers incident to Royalty and high station are singularly illustrated by the history of the demises of King James VI.'s ancestors on either side of the house. First, on his father's side. His father, Lord Darnley, was strangled, and afterwards blown up in bed with gunpowder. His grandfather, the fourth Earl of Lennox, (Darnley's father,) was shot at Stirling whilst Regent of Scotland. The father of this Earl was murdered in cold blood by a bastard of the Earl of Arran. The father of this last was killed at Flodden Field, 1513, and the great grandfather of this last (viz., Sir John Stewart of Darnley) was killed at the siege of Orleans in 1428. The grandfather of this last again (viz., Sir Allan Stewart of Dreghorn) was killed at the battle of Halidon Hill, and Sir Allan's father perished at the battle of Falkirk.

Thus we find that of King James' paternal ancestors in the direct male line seven out of ten met with a violent death.

The nearest parallel record that can be produced is most probably that which tells of the manner of the deaths of his maternal ancestors. His mother, Mary Queen of Scots, was beheaded. Her father, King James V., died of a broken heart. His father, James IV., perished at Flodden Field. His father, James III., was assassinated near Stirling. His father, James II., was killed by the bursting of a cannon.—His father, James I., was assassinated at Perth, and his father, Robert III., died of a broken heart.

These facts, taken into consideration along with the circumstance that James VI.'s son, Charles I., was beheaded, might well deter the ambitious from their sometimes treasonable aspirings, and dispose the poorest to hearken with a willing ear to the counsel of Him who charges His people to be content with such things as they have.

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