

## THE ATOM.

From the bottom of his nets a fisherman one day gave me three almost dying creatures, a sea hedgehog, a sea star, and another star, a pretty creature, which still moved and soon lost its delicate arms. I gave them some sea-water, but forgot them for two days, and when I again saw them, all were dead. On the surface of the water a thick gelatinous film. I took an atom of this on the point of a needle, that atom, when placed under the microscope, showed me the following scene. A whirling crowd of short, thick, strongly built animals—*kolpodes*—rushed to and fro as though intoxicated with their sense of life, delighted, I may say, that they were born, and keeping their birthday with a perfectly bacchanalian joy; while microscopic cells—*vibrions*—swam less than vibrated to spring forward. Wearied with the contemplation of such movement, the eye, however, soon remarked, that all was not in motion: there were some vibrions yet stiff and still, and there were some intertwined in heaps which had not yet detached themselves, and which looked as though expecting the moment of their deliverance. In that living fermentation of still motionless creatures, the disorderly *kolpodes* rushed and raged, hither and thither, regaling and fattening themselves at will.—And this grand spectacle was displayed within the compass of an atom of film taken on the point of a needle! How many such scenes would be enacted in the whole of the gelatinous film which had so promptly formed on the surface of the water containing three dead creatures! The time had been wonderfully put to profit. In two days the dead had made a world; for three animals that I had lost I had gained millions, abounding in youth, absorbed in a real fury of new life!

## THE BARBARISM OF STEEL PENS.

I am aware, says a recent writer, that it may be very fairly said that if a man is green enough to be induced by any representations of seller or advertiser, to make his coffee with a windlass, and shave himself with a stone, the only verdict he can expect from an intelligent jury is "screwed him right;" but look at another invention, under the tyranny of which we all groan more or less, but which very few have the strength of mind to resist. Has not the curse of steel pens swept over the land until decent handwriting is almost unknown? Do not ninety-nine persons in

a hundred use steel pens, and has more than one out of the ninety-nine the effrontery to say he can write with them? Lord Palmerston was quite right—the handwriting of this generation is abominable; and as new improvements in steel pens go on, that of the next will be worse. The fine Roman hand of the last century has died out; the steel can't do it. There is neither grace nor legibility in the angular scrawl that prevails now. Open any parish register of fifty years back, and see in what a fine legible hand, and scholar-like too in most cases, the parson of that day made his entries. Our present young parson, though he took a first-class at Oxford, and wears a most correct waistcoat, doesn't do it, and couldn't do it if his benefit of clergy depended on it.

**ENERGY.**—It is astonishing how much may be accomplished in self-culture by the energetic and the persevering, who are careful to avail themselves of opportunities, and use up the fragments of spare time, which the idle permit to run to waste.—Thus Ferguson learned astronomy from the heavens, when wrapped in a sheepskin on the highland hills,—thus Stone learned mathematics, while working as a journeyman-gardener,—thus Drew studied the highest philosophy in the intervals of cobbling shoes,—thus Miller taught himself geology, while working as a day laborer in a quarry. By bringing their minds to bear upon knowledge in its various aspects, and carefully using up the very odds and ends of their time, men such as these, in the very humblest circumstances, reached the highest culture, and acquired honorable distinction among their fellow men. It was one of the characteristic expressions of Chatterton, that God had sent his creatures into the world with arms long enough to reach anything, if they choose to be at the trouble.

☞ We carry our burdens in this life a great deal more heavily than we need to. They are made to be heavy that we may not be willing to carry them alone. It is said that an unhelped cross is the heaviest thing a man ever carried; but a Christ-touched cross is about the lightest thing a man ever carried.

☞ An exchange—says another exchange—comes to us with the notice that 'Truth' is crowded out this issue. This is most as bad as the up country editor who said, 'For the evil effects of intoxicating liquors see our inside.'

## TRYING TO THE BASTE.

An Hibernian, fresh from the green isle, having sufficient means to provide himself with a horse and cart, (the latter a kind he probably never saw before) went to work on a public road. Being directed by the 'boss' to move a lot of stones near by and deposit them in a gully at the side of the road, he forthwith loaded his cart, drove up to the place, and had nearly finished throwing off his load by hand, when the 'boss' told him that was not the way—he must tilt or dump his load all at once.—Paddy replied that he would know better the next time. After loading again he went to the chasm, put his shoulder to the wheel and upset the cart, horse and all, into the gully. Scratching his head, and looking rather doubtful at his horse below him, he observed:—"Bedad, it's a mighty expeditious way, but it must be tryin' to the baste."

**ANECDOTE OF A GATE.**—A correspondent of the *Home Journal*, writing of gates, tells this anecdote:—I once passed through a dooryard gate which did, unintentionally, give indication of the designer's character. The gate was a common one, shut by a chain and ball; but the post to which the inner end of the chain was attached was carved and painted in the likeness of a negro, with one hand raised to his cocked hat, and the other extended to welcome you in. As you opened the gate toward you going in, the negro post-pointer bent toward you, by a joint in his back, fairly bowing you in. Upon letting the gate go, a spring in his legs "brought him up standing" again, ready for the next comer. This faithful fellow performed the amiable for his master for many years, without reward, except now and then a coat—of paint; but finally died of a rheumatic back, contracted in his master's service.

☞ The armor plates for the new British frigate *Royal Oak* are to be put on vertically. Each plate will be 4½ inches thick, 15 feet in length and 3 feet 2 inches in width and will weigh four tons. The cost of each will be \$600. This vessel is to be covered from stem to stern with such plates.

☞ "My brudders," said a waggish darkey to a crowd, "in all affliction, in all ob your troubles, dar is one place you can always find sympathy." "Whar? Whar?" shouted several of his auditors. "In de dictionary!" he replied rolling his eyes skyward.