

of the comet of February 6, 1847, which was visible at noonday, shortly before perihelion. The motto or inscription is, "Non frustra signorum obitus speculamur et ortus." Mr. Hind has also received from the Academy of Sciences at Paris a prize on the Lalande foundation, for the discovery of Iris and Flora in the year 1847.

Royal Commission to Inquire into the State and Revenues of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge.—The Heads of Houses, in both Universities, have objected in the strongest possible manner against the proposed Royal Commission as illegal and unconstitutional, and not designed to promote the objects contemplated.

Printing Statistics of the London "Times."—From a paper on Printing Machines, read by Mr. E. Cowper, at the Institution of Civil Engineers, it appears that on the 6th of May, 1850, the *Times* and *Supplement* contained 72 columns, or 17,500 lines, made up of upwards of a million pieces of type, of which matter about two-fifths were written, composed, and corrected after seven o'clock in the evening. The *Supplement* was sent to press at 7.50 p.m., the first form of the paper 4.15 a.m., and the second form at 4.45 a.m.; on this occasion, 7,000 were published before 6.15 a.m., 21,000 papers before 7.30 a.m., and 34,000 before 8.45 a.m., or in about four hours. The greatest number of copies ever printed in one day was 54,000, and the greatest quantity of printing in one day's publication was on the 1st of March, 1848, when the paper used weighed 7 tons, the weight usually required being 4½ tons; the surface to be printed every night, including the *Supplement*, was 30 acres; the weight of the fount of type in constant use was 7 tons, and 110 compositors and 25 pressmen were constantly employed.

Change of Names.—Formerly a custom prevailed with learned men to change their names. They christened themselves with Latin and Greek. *Desiderius Erasmus* was a name formed out of his family name *Gerard*, which in Dutch signifies amiable, or *G A R all*, and *A E R D nature*. He first changed it to a Latin word of much the same signification, *Desiderius*, which he refined into the Greek *Erasmus*, by which names he is now known. The celebrated *Reuchlin*, which in German signifies smoke, considered it more dignified to smoke in Greek, by the name of *Capnio*. One of the most amiable of the Reformers was originally named *Hertz Swartz* (black earth,) which he elegantly turned into the Greek name of *Melancthon*.

Beginning of the Year in Various Nations.—The Chaldeans' and Egyptians' year was dated from the autumnal equinox. The ecclesiastical year of the Jews began in the spring; but in civil affairs they retain the epoch of the Egyptian year. The ancient Chinese reckoned from the new moon nearest the middle of Aquarius. The year of Romulus commenced in March, and that of Numa in January. The Turks and Arabs date their year from the 16th of July. Dremschild, or Gernschild, king of Persia, observed, on the day of his public entry into Persepolis, that the sun entered its Aries; and in commemoration of this fortunate event, he ordained the beginning of the year to be removed from the autumnal to the vernal equinox. The Brachmun begin their year with the new moon in April. The Mexicans begin in February, when the leaves begin to grow green. Their year consists of eighteen months, having twenty days in each; the last five are spent in mirth, and no business is suffered to be done, nor even any service in the temples. The Abyssinians have five idle days at the end of their year, which commences on the 26th of August. The American Indians reckon from the first appearance of the moon at the vernal equinox. The Mohammedans begin their year the minute in which the sun enters Aries. The Venetians, Florentines, and the Pisans in Italy, began the year at the vernal equinox. The French year, during the reign of the Merovingian race, began on the day on which the troops were reviewed, which was the first of March. Under the Carolingians, it began on Christmas-day, and under the Capetians, on Easter-day. The ecclesiastical begins on the first Sunday in Advent. Charles the IX. appointed, in 1564, that for the future the civil year should commence on the 1st of January. The Julian Calendar, which was so called from Julius Cæsar, and is the old account of the year, was reformed by Pope Gregory in 1582, which plan was suggested by Lewis Lilio, a Calabrian Astronomer. The Dutch, and the Protestants in Germany, introduced the new style in 1700. The ancient clergy reckoned from the 25th of March; and the method was observed in Britain until the introduction of the new style, A. D. 1752; after which our year commenced on the 1st of January.

Singular and Curious Facts in Natural History.—The greyhound runs by eye-sight only, and this we observe as a fact. The carrier-pigeon flies his two hundred and fifty miles homeward, by eye-sight, viz.: from point to point of objects which he has marked; but this is only our conjecture. The fierce dragon-fly, with twelve thousand lenses in his eyes, darts from angle to angle with the rapidity of a flashing sword, and as rapid-

ly darts back—not turning in the air, but with a clash reversing the action of the wings—the only known creature that possesses this faculty. His sight, then both forwards and backwards, must be proportionately rapid with his wings, and instantaneously calculating the distance of objects, or he would dash himself to pieces. But in what confirmation of his eyes does this consist? No one can answer. A cloud of ten thousand gnats dance up and down in the sun, the minutest interval between them, yet no one knocks another on the grass, or breaks a head or a wing, long and delicate as these are. Suddenly, amidst your admiration of this matchless dance, a peculiarly high shouldered, vicious gnat, with long, pale, pendant nose, darts out of the rising and falling cloud, and settling on your cheek inserts a poisonous sting. What possesses the little wretch to do this? Did he smell your blood in the mazy dance? No one knows. A four-horse coach comes suddenly upon a flock of geese on a narrow road, and drives straight through the middle of them. A goose was never yet fairly run over; nor a duck. They are under the very wheels and hoofs, and yet, somehow, they contrive to flop and waddle safely off. Habitually stupid, heavy and indolent, they are nevertheless equal to any emergency. Why does the lonely woodpecker, when he descends his tree, and goes to drink, stop several times on his way—listen and look round—before he takes his draught? No one knows. How is it that the species of ant which is taken in battle by other ants to be made slaves, should be the black, or negro ant; No one knows. A large species of the starfish (*Ludia fragilissima*) possesses the power of breaking itself into fragments, under the influence of terror, rage or despair. "As it does not generally break up," says Professor Forbes, "before it is raised above the surface of the sea, cautiously and anxiously I sunk my bucket, and proceeded in the most gentle manner to introduce *Ludia* to the purer element. Whether the cold air was too much for him, or the sight of the bucket too terrific, I know not; but in a moment he proceeded to dissolve his corporation, and at every mesh of the drege his fragments were seen escaping. In despair I grasped at the largest, and brought up the extremity of an arm with its terminating eye, the spineous eyelid of which opened and closed, with something of a wink of derision." With this exquisite specimen of natural history wonders, for which naturalists can only vouch that "such is the fact," and admit that they know no more. You see that young crab blowing bubbles on the sea-shore!—such is the infancy of science. He waits patiently for the rising tide, when all these gobules of air shall be fused in a great discovery.

Curiosities of Science—Geological Changes of our own Time.—Lyell, Darwin, and others, have lately collected and powerfully applied a curious class of facts, to show the slow and continuous upheaving or depression of large tracts of land, in different parts of the world, in effect of subterranean changes going on underneath. The phenomenon belongs to our own time, as well as to the anterior ages in the history of the globe. In Sweden, for instance, a line traverses the southern part of that kingdom from the Baltic to the Cattegat, to the north of which, even as far as the North Cape of Europe, there is evidence, scarcely disputable in kind, that the land is gradually rising at the average of nearly four feet in a century; while to the south of this axial line, there are similar proofs of a slow subsidence of surface in relation to the adjacent seas. This, and various other examples of what maybe termed secular changes of elevation, particularly in South America, amidst the great coral foundations of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, have led the eminent geologists just named to regard such slow progressive changes as the probable cause of many or most of those great aspects of the earth's surface, which by others have been attributed to paroxysmal actions of subterranean forces, sudden and violent in kind.

Extraordinary Discovery of the Art of Forming Diamonds.—The Paris correspondent of the *Atlas* makes the following interesting remarks which announce a triumph of chemical genius as much without parallel as is the diamond itself peerless:—"The scientific world has been in a state of commotion during the whole week in consequence of the publication of the discovery of the long sought for secret of the fusion and crystallization of carbon. The Sorbonne has been crowded for the last few days to behold the result of this discovery in the shape of a tolerably-sized diamond of great lustre, which M. Desprezt, the happy discoverer, submits to the examination of every chemist or *savant* who chooses to visit him. He declares that so long ago as last autumn he had succeeded in producing the diamond, but in such minute particles as to be visible only through the microscope, and, fearful of raising irony and suspicion, he had kept the secret until, by dint of repeated experiments and great labor, he had completed the one he now offers to public view. Four solar lenses of immense power, aided by the tremendous galvanic pile of the Sorbonne, have been the means of producing the result now before us. M. Desprezt holds himself ready to display the experiment whenever it may be required. The diamond produced is one of the quality known in the east as the black diamond, one single specimen of which was sold by Prince Rostoff to the late Duke of York for the enormous sum of twelve thousand pounds."