

Were we living in an age of infantile simplicity, to what myths might we not expect those mystic chords to give rise which in these days are so rapidly encircling the earth as with a zone ! Listen to the excellent music which they discourse over your heads as you walk abroad ! We overlook the phenomenon as a mere trifle—the principle of which, however, might lead us at least to the Æolian harp—were we not long forestalled in that ; and are absorbed—and justly so—in the sublimer contemplation of a system of artificial nerves, gradually throwing themselves out over the globe, along which may rush impulses from the will and soul of man.

Of chance discoveries hinted at in very ancient history, I find one or two cases more. The gracefully-curling leaves of an Acanthus plant, surrounding a basket left by accident upon it, catch the eye of a sculptor who has a quick sense of the beautiful. A new style of ornament for the column is instantly conceived. The Corinthian capital thenceforward in all after ages gives pleasure to the frequenters of Temple and Forum. Again the hand of affection, on one occasion, is prompted to delineate on a wall the shadow of a head, to be a memento, during an anticipated absence, of the beloved reality. The art of portrait-painting takes its rise from the circumstance.

The popular tradition is that the falling of an apple first suggested to Newton the idea of universal gravitation. Sir David Brewster, very reasonably, gives no credence to the story. Still, we can well imagine the philosopher in his orchard at Woolstrobe, using such a casual occurrence by way of illustration to a friend :—"If this earth be a globe, and what is 'up' to us is 'down' to our antipodes, why does yonder apple, for example, descend to the surface in preference to rising outwards into space ?" And may we not ask, in connection with Newton, is it not exceedingly likely that the resolution of white light into its component parts by the prism, may have been suggested to him by the beautiful colours which he must often have seen projected on the walls and ceiling of a room from the crystal drops of a chandelier ? But questions like this it is easy to put, in the case of almost every invention, after it has taken place. We are so fortunate as to be put at once in possession of the result, without being obliged so much as to think of the steps which led to it. Still, it is interesting sometimes to conjecture what those steps were.

The bold stroke of Columbus, by which he caused the egg to stand alone, has become a proverb. Any person visiting now the heights behind Genoa, and remembering that the great navigator was once familiar with that scene, can imagine it to be exceedingly natural that he should have discovered America. "If Africa lies yonder, though invisible to the eye, what reason is there, why I should not believe, when I look out on the Atlantic from behind Lisbon, for example, that there is as certainly land to be arrived at, by persevering to the West ?"

By a pleasant train of association, the mention of Genoa and Columbus suggests to me the memory of Pisa and Galileo—with another example of happy accidental discovery. It was in the magnificent cathedral at Pisa that the gentle oscillations of a chandelier gave Galileo (1642) the idea of the applica-