

have determined to give three hundred thousand dollars to the Cambridge Museum, in order to complete its endowment—no less than sixty-five thousand dollars of this sum having been contributed during the first preliminary meeting called together to consider the question.

Some exceedingly interesting observations have been made by Mr. Thomas Belt upon the habits of various of the animals of Nicaragua in Central America. Amongst the most interesting of these are his discoveries as to the habits of some of the ants, of whose customs and instincts he must have been a most attentive observer. With regard to the well-known but little understood leaf-cutting ants, which spend most of their lives in storing up vast collections of leaves in their immense subterranean dwellings, Mr. Belt for the first time advances a theory which would reasonably explain the habit. The older observers imagined that the

ants either used the leaves as food, or employed them for the purpose of thatching their nests, but this view is rejected by Mr. Belt. He maintains, on the contrary, that the ants live to a large extent upon a minute fungus which grows upon decaying leaves, and that they diligently collect and store away the leaves for the sole purpose of growing this fungus, and thus of providing themselves with a supply of food. In this case, we must add the practice of agriculture to the numerous other accomplishments which ants are already known to possess. It need hardly be added that, with this peculiar taste, the leaf-eating ants are amongst the most frightful of all imaginary pests of the garden. Mr. Belt, during a somewhat prolonged stay in Nicaragua, seems to have made vigorous attempts to cultivate a small garden, and he gives an amusing account of his endeavours to extirpate the ants by pouring buckets-full of diluted carboic acid down the broad tunnels leading to their subterranean abodes.

CURRENT LITERATURE.

THE Elections in England have not been without their effect on the Magazines. The non-political monthlies are hardly up to the mark—the literary spirit, pure and simple, having been apparently confounded by the din. On the other hand, the excitement of the contest seems to have imparted unusual vigour even to the literary contributors of the party periodicals. *Macmillan*, for instance, which excludes political topics, although it contains one or two attractive papers, is, on the whole, uninviting. The interesting articles are unfortunately of the “to be continued” class. The first article, on “Endowed Competitions at the Universities,” by Sedley Taylor, M.A., is an attack on University Fellowships and upon the system of competitive examinations, as at present existing, particularly in Cambridge. The writer gives some practical suggestions on University Reform. Prof. Williamson, of Owen’s College, Manchester, contributes what appears to be the substance of a lecture on “Coal and Coal Plants,” the first part giving an account of the newest theory on the formation of coal, is of general interest; but the remainder, which discusses at length the points of difference between

the writer and Prof. Huxley regarding *Sporangia*, is scarcely suited to the pages of a popular magazine. Dr. Hiller’s collection of Mendelssohn’s letters, strung together on a sketch of his life, increase in value. This instalment covers the first year and a half of the great composer’s married life with his beloved Cécile. “The Prince-Printers of Italy” is continued. The three generations of the Manuzii, the efforts of the Popes and Cardinals on behalf of the typographical art, the establishment of the Vatican press by Sixtus V., and the munificent aid given by the houses of Medici at Florence, and Este at Ferrara, form the subjects of a very instructive paper. Lastly, we have “An Elephant Kraal,” describing two elephant hunts in Ceylon, in which the Duke of Edinburgh took part. Two little stories at the end are short and pointed enough for quotation. The demands upon a planter’s hospitality had, on one occasion, been so excessive, that when two officers drew up at his bungalow, he found that his larder was empty. Addressing his boy in pigeon-English, he said, “Boy, try get something to eat for officer-gentlemen.” The boy managed to serve up a most excellent curry, and after lunch the guests