

Which begat Express, 1st Class, 2nd Class, 3rd Class, and Goods Trains,—

Which begat abundant space for the safe conveyance of letter bags and parcels,—

Which begat the Penny and Book Posts—(the former for social literature—the latter for general literature.)

As a Genoese Sailor "discovered" America, but did not create it, so did the London Post-office "find out," but did not invent the Penny and Book Posts, and yet the names of Christopher Columbus and of Rowland Hill will deservedly be immortal.

On behalf, therefore, of Literature, I congratulate the Institution of Civil Engineers on the invaluable postal services rendered by their twin legitimate children—who from the hour of their birth, have been nursed, educated, drilled and commanded, not by their own parents—"The child whom many fathers share, has seldom known a father's care"—but by the individual whose distinguished name it was my duty to mention.

—One of the last members of the literary circle which used to meet at Holland House, in the early part of the present century, has just passed away, in the person of the Rev. Charles Townsend, Rector of Kingston-by-the-Sea, near Brighton. He has died at the ripe age of 80 years, after suffering during the last three years from paralysis. He was a personal friend of Lord Byron, Samuel Rogers, and others of his contemporaries, and an especial favourite with the late Earl of Egremont, who conferred on him his little living, which, with its tiny church and parsonage, and still tinier population—for it was one of the smallest in Sussex—he never could be persuaded to exchange for wealthier preferment.

—*News.*—The word *news* is not as many imagine derived from the adjective *new*. In former times (between the years 1595 and 1730) it was a prevalent practice to put over the periodical publications of the day the initial letters of the compass, thus:—

N
E + W
S

importing that these papers contained intelligence from the four quarters of the globe; and from this practice is derived the term "newspaper."

—The late Lord Vernon's great work on the "Inferno" of Dante, in three volumes folio, has recently been completed. Copies of it are to be placed in the public libraries.

—*Oriental Literature.*—The Oriental Translation Committee nuss iybo the third and fourth volumes of Ibn Khallikan's Biographical Dictionary, by Baron de Slane; the third volume is actually at press; and the MS. of the fourth volume is very nearly completed. The Oriental Translation Fund, it may be of interest to learn, says *Allen's Indian Mail*, was established just forty years ago; it has enjoyed the patronage of George IV., of William IV., and of her present Majesty, and its successive presidents have been the Earl of Munster, Sir Gore Ouseley, the Earl of Clare, the Earl of Ellesmere, Professor Wilson, and Mr. Beriah Botfield. The published works of the society are more than seventy in all. The Sanscrit translations include those of the Sankhyr Karika, Rig Veda, and Vishnu Purana. Amongst those from the Arabic are found the travels of Ibn Batuta, and of the Patriarch Mecarius, Al-Makkari's "History of the Muhammadam Dynasties in Spain," and the extensive Lexicon of Hajji Khalifa. There are also on the list translations from the Persian, Syriac, Ethiopic, Armenian, Chinese, and Japanese languages.

—An old sergeant at Nieuport, Belgium, has contrived out of his modest pay, to collect a library of 8,000 volumes. He has announced his intention to leave it to his native town, above named.

—*Foolscap Paper.*—This term appears to have originated in England during the time of the Commonwealth. Charles I. having granted to certain parties the exclusive privilege of manufacturing paper, that commodity invariably bore, in water-marks, the royal arms. The rebel parliament made this circumstance a target for their jests, and ordered that the royal arms should be removed and their place supplied by the fool's cap and bells. This insulting change was reversed at the dissolution of the Long Parliament, but paper of the size then used for parliament journals still retains the name of foolscap.

—*Philosophy of Pythagoras.*—A prize of two hundred francs is offered by the French Academy for the best dissertation on the Philosophy of Pythagoras,—the dissertation to be sent in before the close of 1870. The plan of the Academy includes a critical examination of the traditions about the person and the doctrines of Pythagoras; a comparison of all the fragments left by his immediate disciples; a discussion of their authenticity, and remarks upon their resemblances and differences; research as to the influence of Pythagorism upon other systems of Greek philosophy, particularly on Platonism and Neoplatonism, to trace the Pythagorean traditions through the middle

ages and the period of the revival of Philosophy; and to separate truth from error in the Pythagorean philosophy, showing the influence which it has had both upon philosophy in general and upon science.

—*Curiosities of Literature.*—The first of a series of autographic facsimiles, by the photolithographic process, has just been issued. It contains Robert Burns's masterpiece, "Tam O'Shanter," and also his "Lament of Mary Queen o' Scots." They are reproduced with absolute and, in fact, inevitable fidelity, for the photographic part of the business is not more exact than the lithographic process which succeeds it, and the result is an exact and reliable facsimile, the size of the original MS., in ink of the same colour, and on paper as nearly like it as the improved manufacture of the present day will permit. Hosts of Scotchmen who pride themselves on being able to recite without a verbal error this wondrous "tale," will be pleased to see a reproduction only less interesting than the original itself. Burns wrote a fine, manly, clear hand.

—Mr. E. Little, the conductor of "Littell's Living Age" died on the 17th May, at his residence in Brooklyn, at the allotted age of 70. He was a resident of Boston for the last 25 years.

He was a man of broad views, generous sympathies and high cultivation, and his loss will be widely deplored. He leaves a widow and four children.

Science.

—*Experiments with Thermometers.*—Last year Dr. Carpenter, in the course of his dredging excursion in the North Sea, made observations of the temperature at the bottom of deep seas. But it occurred to him and others that the enormous pressure at the bottom of these deep seas must exert some influence on his thermometers, and prevent them from giving correct indications of the temperature. He has, therefore, made experiments with thermometers, the *Globe* reports, under pressure artificially produced, and has found, in fact, very large discrepancies in the results. Different thermometers, made very thick expressly for the experiments, showed variations of six, eight, and ten degrees at the same temperature under great pressure; and, on the whole, the doctor concludes that the temperature he has given for deep-sea bottoms must be received at about ten degrees too high! It is satisfactory to learn that Dr. Miller has devised a thermometer, the bulb of which is provided with an outer casing of glass, and the space between it and the bulb being partially filled with water, which will obviate the effects of pressure on the mercury bulb. These instruments will be employed during the next dredging excursion in the North Sea, for which a steamer has again been liberally provided by the Admiralty.

—*Magnetism.*—An American watchmaker has made a chance discovery that the balance wheel in nearly every watch is, if made of steel, converted into a magnet. By what process in the manufacture it has become one it might be difficult to say; but whether the wheel be indeed a magnet or not may be easily discovered by fixing it upon a small piece of cork, letting it float in still water, and seeing if it always turns in one direction. The fact of the magnetic character of the wheel will account for many perturbations in watches which have hitherto been inexplicable. A key, or the steel blade of a knife in the same pocket as the watch, will exert a disturbing influence. But even if there should be no piece of steel in the pocket, the magnet will necessarily tend towards the north, and so far interfere with the calculations of a watchmaker in a very delicate piece of mechanism.

—*The Age of Our Earth.*—Among the astounding discoveries of modern science, is that of immense periods that have passed in the gradual formation of the earth. So vast were the cycles of time preceding even the appearance of man on the surface of our globe, that our period seems as yesterday when compared with the epochs that have gone before it. Had we only the evidence of the deposit of rocks heaped upon each other in regular strata by the slow accumulation of materials, they alone would convince us of the long and slow maturing of God's works on earth; but when we add to these the successive populations of whose lives this world has been the theatre, and whose remains are hidden in the rocks into which the mud, or sand, or soil of whatever kind, on which they live; had hardened in the course of time—or the enormous chains of mountains whose upheaval divided these periods of accumulations by great convulsions—or changes of different nature in the configuration of our globe, as the sinking of lands beneath the ocean, or the gradual rising of continents and islands above—or the slow growth of coral reef on those wonderful sea-walks, raised by the ocean architects, whose own bodies furnish both the building stones and the cement that binds them together, and who have worked so busily during the long centuries that there are extensive countries, mountain chains, islands and long lines of coast, consisting solely of their remains—or the countless forests that have grown up, flourished and decayed, to fill the store-houses of coal