

And pushing the table crossly away, some books fell from it to the ground, which the doctor suffered me to pick up, taking the opportunity thus made of tasting the contents of the uncorked bottle, which he held in his hand.

"Pshaw, nonsense," he exclaimed, seeing me about to reproach him for his imprudence, "the stuff is safe enough. I only wish I had a gallon of it."

"Is it valuable, then—good—wholesome? I am so glad."

"Yes, it's all three; but why did you suspect it was not?"

"I do not know if I ought to tell you; and yet I see no reason why I should make a mystery of it."

And so, after a moment's reflection, I told him all; my first and second meeting with the gipsy, her last strange visit in this very room, and her singular language, threats, denunciations, and prophecies.

"All of which are not worth one rap," he said, "although her herb stuff is. If she ever comes again, tell her, will you, to go to my place; I'll make it better worth her while than a month's prophesying. Why this is a detection of one of the rarest herbs known; worth a whole druggist's shop."

"Indeed! I was very ungrateful, then."

"Ay; it's a common failing, and you have your share of it."

(To be continued.)

### Scientific Notes.

**DOES SUNLIGHT EXTINGUISH FIRES?**—It is frequently asserted by observant persons—fancifully, as some declare—that a fire burns more brightly in cold weather, and that the sunbeams or other light have the property of enfeebling, or even extinguishing it. The remark is scientifically correct. The colder the air is, the more is it condensed, and the more oxygen does an equal volume or mass contain. Thus it flows faster toward the fire, from the tendency to equal diffusion of all gases, bringing thereto more of the element that feeds it. When the air is warmer it contains less oxygen, and the draught towards the fire is less easily established; while the direct sun-rays so expand the atmosphere of a room, that the current in the direction of the fire is impeded, and perhaps ceases altogether.

**INDICATIONS OF RAIN.**—In all things the present is the mirror of the future, if it is read aright. A pretty accurate conclusion as to coming weather may be formed from observation of the smoke ascending from chimneys, since it is an indication of the state of the atmosphere. Heated air has a tendency to expand in all directions, but its actual motion is in that direction offering least resistance, and it ascends until, the air favouring its lateral expansion, it cools, and moves only under a fresh impulse. The ascent of smoke, which is heated air, is sometimes impeded by the particles of charcoal, water, &c., which give it colour and render it visible; but a chimney often smokes most when it does not seem to smoke at all—that is, when there is a clear, bright fire, for smoke is a consequence of imperfect combustion; the chimney which showers soot around has but a feeble ascending current. When the smoke from the neighbouring chimneys has a single direction, and soon melts away in the air, it is apparent that the lower stratum of air is dry, and will certainly resist the descent of rain, however cloudy the sky may be. When the different smokes are inclined, some one way and some another, disturbance in the lower atmosphere is indicated, and rain may be immediately expected, although a cloud may not be visible in the sky. It must be observed that in certain places and at some seasons clear skies are treacherous; near the sea and mountains, day clouds and night clouds are regularly formed and dissolved in the atmosphere in the finest weather. When the smoke ascends in tall columns without blending with the still air, rain may also be expected, for it shows that the lower air will absorb no more moisture. Now, it is the lower atmosphere that supports the clouds, and when these are formed and again absorbed, the absorption is from the lower

sides, as snow melts first where it is in contact with the ground. When the smoke is abundant, the moisture being unevaporated, and the soot not

borders. Depend upon it, they were given to hospitality. There was always hearty welcome in the old hall of Speke for the strange guest or the frequent visitor. Round the hall was a moat—now filled up and transferred into a garden, and a stone bridge occupies the place of the old drawbridge. The house itself is chiefly built of wood and plaster, and is one of the best specimens of its class in England. There was formerly a terrace-walk parallel with the house, but most of this has been destroyed; there was a chapel, where many a squire may have kept his vigil in hope of the morrow's knighthood; but the chapel is turned into a laundry—to such "base uses" do we come at last!

The inner court contains two venerable yew trees, which may have helped our bowmen in winning many a fight, and which still add a picturesque effect to the old hall.

The interior of this ancient mansion presents various objects of interest to the antiquary. Carved ceilings and wainscots, richly ornamented chimney-pieces, windows of stained glass, and household furniture of great age, send the mind of the observer a thinking of the past. The chivalrous heroes, the hospitable squires, the good old-fashioned gentlemen

have departed; the house has passed through several hands; sold, and let, and hired, and "on view," like any common dwelling of the present time. Do the ghosts of its old owners, I wonder, ever come and look at the old place? Does the shadow of Mabel Norreys ever come gliding through the rooms "barefooted," as once a week she, in her lifetime, walked from Haigh to Wigan, to expiate the sin of marrying a second husband before the first was dead? Does the old Squire ever come back to look at the old hall where he celebrated his victory over the Welsh, and the winning of the Bromfield lands for himself and his heirs for ever? Does old Sir John ever look in?—Sir John who, in Queen Bess's time, performed so many valourous acts, and of whose famous retreat it might have been said, as it was of Socrates, "He did not fly as others did, but measured the ground by inches." Does the hero of Flodden Field come back to look at his ancient carvings—the wainscoting given him by his royal master? No; there are no ghosts walking at Speke, but the memory of the old worthies who were born, and lived, and flourished, and died within its ancient walls, is inseparably associated with the place.

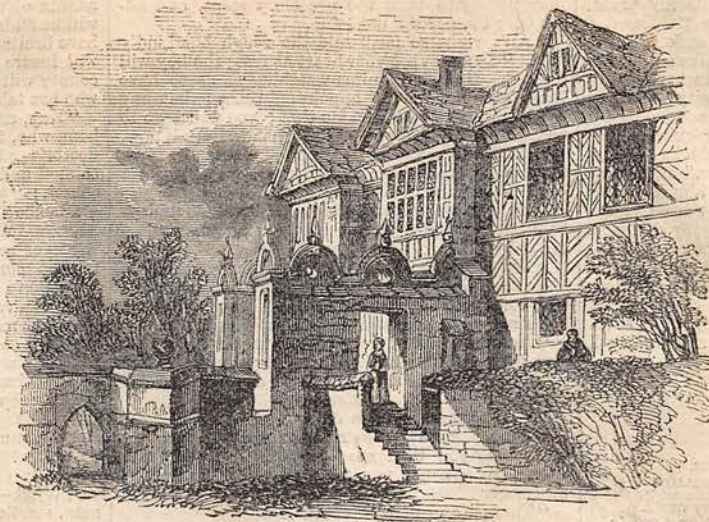
In various parts of the building there are some curious inscriptions in old English text. On the door frieze of the great parlour, for instance, is the following, with which excellent advice we conclude our notice:—

The Strongest:                      God: to: lobe: scrbe:  
Clage: to: heaben:                      25                      abode: all: thng.

### L I M A.

WHEN Francisco Pizarro, in 1526, first touched at the shores of Peru, he found himself among an intelligent people, who, under their ancient lords, the Incas, had attained, like the modern Japanese, a considerable degree of civilisation and prosperity, with little or no assistance from the rest of mankind. In 1531 he returned with a force which enabled him speedily to effect the conquest of the country; and from that time to the present, Peru has been the scene of almost continual disorders.

In order to check the spirit of rebellion, the Spanish Government made Peru the centre of its dominions, and Lima became the capital. The city thus founded by Pizarro rapidly rose in opulence and fame, and it became known as the City of the Kings. In 1821 General San Martin, after having expelled the Spaniards from Chili, entered Peru, and obtained possession of Lima. The independence of the nation was proclaimed on the 28th of July, and San Martin declared protector. Various changes followed, and for many years the country continued to be distracted by civil war. At length a republican government, headed by a president, and assisted by a national congress, was established. The constitution is, however, in many respects unsuited to the character and temperament of the people, and hence discord and disorder continue to prevail.



THE BRIDGE OVER THE MOAT AT SPEKE HALL, LANCASHIRE.

thrown down, a long flat stratum is frequently formed resembling a thunder-cloud. This, like a thunder-cloud, foretells the descent of heavy showers from a great height, because the lower air resists the descent of the cloud, while its moisture is rapidly escaping from the higher region. The evaporative power of the lower air is then engaged in resisting the descent of the cloud, so that the surface of the earth and vegetation become moist without any fall of rain or formation of dew. Little tricklings of water appear on the banks, at other times evaporated before reaching the surface to accumulate; while the watery constituents of plants are no longer exhaled from their foliage.

### SPEKE HALL.

SPEKE HALL, Lancashire, is one of those rare old houses which suggest a thousand fancies, and which are associated with the most stirring periods of the history of England. Speke Hall is of a good old age, and is duly registered in the Domesday Book. It was then "held by Uctred," and, with the adjacent land, was valued at sixty-four pence.

Domesday Book, as many of our readers are aware, is a general survey of all the lands in England, made by order of William the Conqueror, not quite eight hundred years ago. It furnishes an inventory of the estates then held, by whom they were possessed, and the value at which they were estimated. Many of the Saxon holders were dispossessed of their property; and the owner of Speke, the beginning and ending of our acquaintance with whom is contained in the one entry to which we have referred, soon lost his lands, and Benedict de Gernette gave it as a marriage portion with his daughter Annota to Adam de Molineux, a knight of chivalry; from thence it passed into the Norris family, and was held by them in direct descent until the middle of the last century. The Norrises were a noble and martial family. They held their estate by military tenure. Whether it was against the Scots, who came over the border to spoil the Southerners, and make a Douglas larder of some English stronghold; whether it was against the turbulent Welsh, who maintained an irritating warfare; whether it was against the "wild Irish," who, by their party squabbles, envy, division, and destructive strife, were easily subdued; whether it was against the Pagans in the Holy Land, or the French across the Channel—the Norrises were always ready to splinter a lance on a foeman's breastplate, or turn the edge of a stout battle-axe on an enemy's crest. They were always so busy fighting that they never distinguished themselves in any remarkable way at Cabinet or Council. They took no delight in "soft raiment" or "king's courts." Glory to them was as the breath of their nostrils—glory was to gild their sepulchre and embalm their names. And these sturdy Lancashire men were, no doubt, as fine specimens of chivalry as could be found within our