BY RALPH WALDO BEERSON. Announced by all the trumpets of the sky, Arrives the snow; and driving o'er the fields, Eeems nowhere to alight; the whited air Hides hills and woods, the river, and the

And veils the farm-house at the garden's end. The sled and traveller stopped, the courier's

Delayed, all friends shut out, the housemates Around the radiant fire-place, enclosed In a tumultuous privacy of storm.

Come see the north wind's masonry. Out of an unseen quarry, evermore Furnished with tile, the flerce artificer Curves his white bastions with projected roof Round every windward stake, or tree, or door; Speeding, the myriad-handed, his wild work So fanciini, so savage; nought cares he For number or proportion. Mockingly On coop or kennel he hangs Parian wreaths: A swan-like form luvests the hidden thorn; Fills up the farmer's lane from wall to wall Maugre the farmer's sighs; and at the gate A tapering turret overtops the work. And when his hours are numbered, and the

world Is all his own, retiring as he were not, Leaves, when the sun appears, astonished

To mimic in slow structures, stone by stone, Built in an age, the mad wind's night-work, The frolic architecture of the snow.

THE ENGLISH HOUSE-SPARROW.

Passer Domesticus.

BY D. G. ELLIOT. in the olden time, the records of which are transmitted to us in the verse of inspired men, when, in the days of the minstrel king, the sparrow "sat alone upon the house-top, the sprightly creature which forms the subject of our present theme was, even as now, a

well-known, familiar friend. A cosmopolite he is also, and many are the lands which claim him as their own. To mighty Nineveh, with its miles of streets, or to Jerusalem, when in all its glory, he was no stranger, but smid their noisy thoroughfares and crowded marts securely dwelt, as busy with his own affairs as the most industrious of

the higher orders around him. No recluse is he, to shun man's presence and seek the solitude of the groves, or silent paths of shady woods, where, aided by his assiduous mate, he could build his commodious nest, disturbed only by the murmur of, the brook, and there bring up his little family in peace; no, indeed-the streets of the crowded city, the noise and bustle of countless passers-by, the rumbling of vehicles, and all the ories and sounds which continually ascend from within the limits which encompass the abodes of men, are far more agreeable to him; and beneath the eaves of the stateliest edifice, upon the perch, or within the ivy, which, perchance, may cover the walls, his nest is placed and he makes himself at home.

Constant in his attachments, the auguessparrow may be always form in the particular location whom ne may have chosen to unou. Others of the feathered race, which come to us when the trees are blossoming, and Nature is arraying herself in her bridal dress of spring, desert their acoustomed haunts.

and the spot endeared to them as the home of their chirping brood, for suunier climes, as seen as the chilling breath of winter is felt. Let the wind blow ever so fierce and keen, and the snow enwrap all the land, his cheery note will be heard in the blast, as, puffed into the semblance of a ball, he clings to his much-

loved perch, happy even amid the storm.

I have called him a cosmopolite, and bear me witness if he does not deserve the appellation, when I recount the lands which consider him their own:—In Europe he is found in Eugland, Sweden, Norway, Holland, Germany, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Dalmatia; out of Europe, in Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Persia, and the mountains of the Himalaya; while it is more than probable that the species inhabiting the Peninsula and other portions of India, to which another name has been given, is only the same well-known bird.

To this long list of habitats must now be added that of the United States, of which, within the last few years, our friend has become a naturalized citizen, as our streets testify every day.

First landed in Jersey City, the little foreigners prospered and increased, soon attaining to the dignity of a small colony, which dwelt in peace in the minute thatched houses provided for them. The benefit of their presence was soon manifested by the diminution in number of the measuring-worm (Eunomos subsignaria), that great destroyer of our city foliage, which succumbed to the attacks of our new-found friends. Energetic, inquisitive, fearless, ay, impudent, the sparrows would pry into every crevice in the bark, or other hiding place, and draw out the concealed larvae or reluctant worm, to be speedily devoured as a most dainty morsel; and so constant was their attention to these pests of all pedestrians, that they were soon exterminated in those portions of the city in which the birds abode.

They were soon transported to New York, and houses provided for them in Union and Madison Squares, where they rapidly increased, and where, since their arrival, we can perceive a diminution of the same pests which were accustomed to hang from the trees in repulsive clusters.

In England, this unfortunate bird is subject to all manner of persecutions; but in the New World let us hope he will be received as the benefactor he really is, and treated accord-

But the question is asked:-"Is not all the good which the sparrow does offset by the injury he effects in the destruction of grain, etc?" Doubtless, we must reply that he is not entirely guiltless, but let us not be overhasty to condemn him, for he only takes the wages due for timely services well performed. Think, if you will, my friend, how active and important an assistant to the farmer he has been, when the ground was being prepared for the sower, and afterwards, when the living germ in the seed was struggling to pierce through its hardened envelope to appear in the tender blade. How many grubs and hurtful insects has not your feathered friend destroyed, and, through the incessant exertions which his instinct teaches him to make, rendered himself the mest important helper of the tiller of the soil ! "The insect which the farmer raises only to cast again into the earth," our little friend carries entirely away. Constantly occupied from morning until night in active search for the insects which, during a great portion of the year, constitute almost his only tood, it is impossible to arrive at even an approximate estimate of the number he destroys or the service he renders to man. Besides investigating the bark and leaves of the trees, he will inspect the fences and walls of the houses, and woe to any spider which may be found lurking in the crevices, for it is

speedily withdrawn and devoured.

Very little is required to keep the sparrows through the winter; a few handfuls of grain occasionally thrown near their abodes is all that is necessary; their own energy and cease-less activity will provide them with other food to enable them to thrive.

If we take into consideration the benefit which the feathered race bestows upon man, by destroying the countless injurious insects and larva, surely the small tribute which they may take from the growing crops should not be grudged to them, for if a balance could be struck, man would find himself a heavy debtor .- Hearth and Home.

Ancient Armor.

The London Athenaum gives the following interesting description of a fine collection of ancient armor on exhibition at the South Ken-

sington Museum, London:-This collection comprises not only offensive and defensive European and oriental arms, but ivories, ministures. Flemish pictures, enamels, carvings in iron and other metals, bronzes, and several historic relies of great interest, as the targets of Charles the Fifth and Francis the First, the baton of Alva, a suit of armor which is reputed to have belonged to Ferdinand, King of the Romans and successor of the first; also, the so-called portrait of Anne of Cleves, which is ascribed to Holbein, and said to have been that which induced king Henry to marry the easy-going princess. These relies are now disposed in chronological order in the lower part of the gallery which held the National Portrait Exhibitions. Within certain limits the military items illustrate in a series of mounted figures and in detached pieces the development of arms This collection comprises not only offensive and in detached pieces the development of arms and armor in medieval Europe. The extreme rarity of early specimens, to say no hing of the total absence of certain kinds, precluded a more remote beginning for this series than the reign of Heury the Fourth, c. 1445. We shall confine our remarks in the first case

We shall confine our remarks in the first case to the armor and weapons, and primarily call the visitor's attention to some very interesting Greek, or rather Etruscan, armor which is placed in a table-case at the east end of the gallery, being belinets of bronze with and without the nasal pieces which appear on painted vases and the heads of statues of Pallas, On one of these the stadent may notice conven-On one of these the student may notice conven-tional indications in metal of the leather thongs which were used to attach portions of still older head-pieces to each other. These indications form a sort of ornament to the metal. In the same case are greates of bronze of similar

origin.

In a standing case near the last is, together with a British or Gaulish helmet, one of the most remarkable antiquities of the Romano-British period in these islands, the unique and much-studied (see "Archeologia," vol. xxiii.) ysywyd, or large shield covering of git bronze which was found in the Witham, Lincolnshire, the decorations are precisals says Six Newson. Its decorations are precisely, says Sir Samuel Meyrick, such as we should expect from a people imitating the modes of a superior race. It is supposed to periain to Britain after the departure of the Romans: it was held, Chineseshion, at arm's length, and by means of a andle behind the bos in the centre; its surface is decorated with three bosses, of which that in the middle is inlaid with cornelians, connected by finely-wrought lines and mould-

Close to this article are Italian painted shields of the differenth or sixteenth century. On the wall behind are examples of true chain-mail erks, sieeves and jambs, also two-hand and single-hand swords of large sizes, rough maces, a ponderous tilting helm a temp. Edward the Fourth, a large broad-bladed sword, such as hung sheathless at the saddles of combatants, Also a salade, c. 1475, another of Venetian Also a salade, c. 1475, another of Venetian origin and stateouth century date, which has the form and nasal pieze of the Etruscan helms --> referred to. Such articles are not unfreadown.

duently seen in policy of some lines, Here, likewise, is the "headlate" of some likewise, is the "headlate" of some lines of the lines Cathedral, one of the most unwieldly garments that were ever made: also (No. 133), a globose breastplate of noteworthy character, with bold flutings, such as added materially to its power of resistance to blows, and were soon brought into common use, as further examples here amply show. This breastplate is beautifully etched and chased with patterns that are arranged in lines intermediate to the flutings. In front of these articles, filling the centre of the first of the series of bays into which, by means of lines of halberts and other staff weapons, the gallery is divided, stands the figure of a knight, 5. 1446, temp. Henry the Sixth, the earliest com-plete suit in the collection, and among the oldest in existence. For earlier illustrations of armor than this we must refer to missal and other paintings, and, above all, to the efficies in hundreds of churches. These, taken with the Bayeux Tapestry and other authorities, evince the gradually increased use of pieces of platearmor to overlay the almost invariably present undershirt and other garments of mail. Precious among these uncient records are the sepulchral

incised slab at Ashington, Devon, and the brasses which, beginning with that of Sir John D'Aubernoun I, in Stoke D'Aubeinoun Church, Surrey, 1272, show the grades of advancement from fragmentary to complete suits of steel plates, of which there are many fine specimens before us here. The brasses, better than the actual armor, show the addition of steel knee caps or genouvieres, elbowpieces, or conteres, splints on the upper arms or demi-brassaris, splints on the legs or greates or jambs, and, first of all, skull-caps or basinets for the heads of the soldiers of old. These additions were progressively enlarged, until they met upon the body and limbs of the wearer and clothed him wholly. With these defenses the weapons of attack were also changed; the short lance which the D'Aubernoun knight, I, carries, grew ultimately to the long and terrible arm with which so many of our picturesque notions are more or less incorrectly associated, the Mareis de fer and sharp-pointed hammers which erst served to break up and penetrate the light and flexible mail developed to ponderous maces, and were used with effect upon encrusted menat-arms. Those arrows of early date which mail coats barely resisted became the potent shafts of Creey and Poictiers, and were driven by bows, such as the example in the tower represents, and of which so many tales are told.

As we invent guns to break up the
iron-clads of to-day and devise more
strongly armored ships to keep out the shot and shell of those tremendous pieces, so our ancestors added weight and keenness to their trenchant weapons, and added weight to and doubled the stiel clothing of their men, of the first Sir John of that place, displays the expansion of plate upon mail in this metallic clothing. The Trumpington knight of Cambridge, the Septyans knight of Chartham, Kent, The D'Aubernoun knight, II, son and unmesake the De Bures knight of Norfolk, and others in succession, point to the same changes. As we have lost the earliest plate armor, although not so the autecedent and contemporary mail, we must look for its form to the monuments and pictures, and for its service to the weapons which were employed against its wearers. Bear ing these facts in mind, the student has a key to much which is enigmatical here, and in the Museums of Vienne, Madrid, Brussels, Paris, Copenhagen, and the Tower. The intervals of plate armor were slmost invariably shielded by gussets and fringes of mail, as in the entire suit before us.

Between this and the next figure stands a fine

specimen of German armor, c. 1520-30, which reproduces the pulls and slashes of the cloth garments then in vogue. It is richly etched between the lines of puffs. Next is a suit of black armor, gilt and crossed with red upon the breast, as for a knight of St. John of Ravenna; on the wall behind it hangs a suit of Italian chased and ubbed armor, c. 1500, which is, however, unmilitary in its appearance according to our notions; worthy of attention from an artistic point of view. Then a strangelooking Burgundian morion, with a visor which is chaped like a grotesque mask, and has a beaklike nose and bold cutled monstaches moulded in iron. Next is a very elegant Italian morion of the sixteenth century, with rich scrolls repousse upon its contour, and arising from an arabesque mask of fine design. Here also is a morion shaped like the head of a sea-monster, and from that circumstance doubtless of Venetian make. No. 99, in this bay, is a mounted figure, part of the horse armor of which does not assort with that of the man. This is a very interesting specimen, c. 1560. Then comes a black suit with gilt bands, engraved. Near is a lancer's demi-suit of Genoese origin, repousse in tollage of great spirit and beauty on its breast; parts of the tace are "made up;" on the right shoulder and knee

pieces are grotesque monsters' heads, with pro-

jecting snouts. Next stands a fine Italian plate armor, which is traditionally ascribed to Ferdinand, King of the Romans, and is certainly one of the most admirable here.

On the wall here hang bucklers with projecting rings of steel, the use of which was to

ing rings of steel, the use of which was to catch the point of a sword and break the weapon, leaving the assailant open to the dagger or sword of his antagonist. Also daggers with the rings through which, in order to obtain a firmer grasp, the users thrust their thumbs, and exceptional weapons: among the last is an absurd "sword-breaker," a sort of comb of steel, designed with teeth to catch a weapon, and by means of several reach. and, by means of a strong wrench, snap it; c. Henry the Eighth. In a standing case are the Herry the Eighth. In a standing case are the targets of Charles the Fifth and Francis the First. Behind are some curious pistols and their appurtenances. Next is a tilting suit, made smooth and without ridges, upon which a pointed lance could take effect. Notice the large neck-shield or grand garde, added to the left shoulder of this figure, with its flying piece, which was designed to cover the very large. which was designed to cover the visor and its openings. By way of eluding the effect of these smooth and large surfaces, tilting-poles were furnished with coronels or heads, with four or more rounded knobs, such as may be seen in the hands of the effigy in question and others its neighbors. The famous "Triumph of Maximilian" illustrates very completely and generally these outre devices. Here is a suit of splinted or laminated armor, which was devised to afford liberty of motion to the wearer Also another suit, not in splints, richly gilded and engraved. Other figures, until we come to a rough effigy of a Common wealth trooper, in a complete buff coat of modern leather, are rather curious and admirable on account of the cost, taste, and labor which have been lavished

among the minan as armor proper.

Among the articles to which peculiar historical interest attaches are the decorated targets of Charles the Fifth, the signed work of H. Spacini, of Milan, engraved with concentric subjects of the Zodiac, classic themes, twelve acts of the Emperor, and, external to these, the same number of Scriptural illustrations, c. 1550. The target of Francis the First has been injured. Not inferior to these is the famous marshal's baton which Philip the Second gave to the Duke of Alva, a short, hollow staff of steel, designed to contain the muster roll of the Spanish army, and engraved outside with numerals, arranged so as to show at will the number of soldiers who could be placed on any assumed space. Altogether this collection comprises about 1500 pieces, of which two-thirds are Furopean arms and defenses, 219 are oriental; miscellaneous objects, 117; ivories,

For these latter classes we must spare space. Prime in interest here are two miniatures of exquisite quality: 1. Is the famous portrait, which is ascribed to Holbein, of Anne of Cleves, but ques ionably on both points. It is more like Catharine of Arragon, as the catalogue now styles it, and cannot well be the picture of either lady. It is that with which Walpole fell in love when he saw it at "Mr. Barrett's, of Lee, Kent." This gem was at Manchester in 1857, and is here accompanied by (2) a minuture of Henry the Eighth, apparently by the same hand. Both are in ivory boxes; that of the former is carved like a full-blown rose. Here, also, are some ivery carvings, optychs, triptychs, and tablels; among them are beautiful illustrations of the Legend of St. Agnes, in eight tablets in high relief, and of "Syr Trystam de Leonthis;" also, an exquisitely-wrought devotional tablet, French, of the rarest beauty, representing the Coronation of the Virgin by an Angel; a diptych with four subjects of the Virgin's life, which are worthy of the most careful study, and a triptych of incidents in the life of Christ. In a care in the same ome ivery carvings, optychs, triptychs, and dents in the life of Christ. In a case in the same chamber with these is a collection of ivory of Gothic, normalization and Rhenish-Byzantine origin, an arm-rest, a staff-head of ivery, apparently Romanesque in design, with very bold grotesques in foliage. Also, Indian carved boxes and staff-heads. In another case are Cothic and stall-heads. In another case are Gothic and Romanesque enamels, articles cur bou'll, bronzes, a knocker of iron, Italian or French, seventeenth century, representing Samson with the ass's jawbone; pyxes and candlesticks; some splendid oriental arms, including three tall lances with richly chased stayes of silver, swords, bucklers, daggers, one with a jade handie, and a considerable number of other article, of various origins and dates.

Proposed Tunnel Under Dover Straits. The project of tunnelling a passage from kng-and to France under Dover Straits is still talked of in England. The London Daily News

of December 25 says of it:—
"The plan of tunnelling beneath the Straits is not altogether a new one. Probably the success with which the Mont Cents tunnel has been worked through the solid backbone of the Alpine range has attracted new attention to a scheme which on the face of it seems far from being impracticable. It must be remem-bered, however, that the difficulties to be eucountered in tunnelling beneath the Straits of Dover are of a totally different character from those which the French engineers have had to meet with in tunnelling through the Alps. The soil to be traversed in the former instance would probably be the 'second chalk formation,' which may be assumed to extend in an unbroken course from the place of its uprising in Eegland to the place in which it makes its appearance to France. It need hardly be said that the difficulty of perforating this soil would be very much less than that of perforating the hard and complicated material which has been encountered by the French engineers. On the other hand, however, there are dangers and difficulties in tunnelling under the Straits which more than make up for the comparative ease with which the mere process of perforation could be pursued. It needs but a slight acquaintance with the history of the construction of the Thames Tunnel to enable one to recognize the fact that the workers in the suggested tunnel beneath the Straits would be exposed to enormous risks from the effect of the pressure of the sea upon the stratum through which they would have to work. Again and again the water into the Thames Tunnel, and drove the work-men out. Brunel himselt nearly lost his life during one of these irruptions. Now, if this happened beneath the Thames, what might be looked for from the effects of the enormous pressure of the sea-to say nothing of the increased danger during heavy storms ? and then the workmen in the Thames Tunnel had but a comparatively short distance to run, when they were threatened with an irruption of If such an event threatened workmen engaged nine or ten miles from either outlet of the suggested tunnel, escape would be hopeless. In a short time the whole I ngth of the tunnel would be filled with the waters of the sea, and the labors of years would be rendered useless.

"We urge these considerations, however, not as deprecating the suggested attempt. Doubtless the dangers which we have pointed out may be surmounted by a judicious choice of the straium to be worked through, and by cautious progress-defenses being continually prepared around every fresh portion tunnelled. The experience gained during the tunnelling of the Thames shows that much can be done in this way; and we also have every reason to believe that once a tunnel was constructed it would be as safe as the Thames Tunnel now is. There are difficulties in the way of ventuation, but such difficulties as these have to be dealt with (and have been most successfully dealt with in construction of the Mont Cenis Tunnel. Ti Three eminent engineers, Messrs, Hawkshaw, Brunfees, and Lowe, have pronounced the plan to be feasible; and the estimated cost-nine millions

sterling-though large, is still reasonable when the value of the tunnel is considered. "Certainly the idea is at once a bold and an attractive one. Nature's barriers are being, one after another, overcome. Now a mountain is tunnelled, then an isthmus is cut through, next the Falls of Niagara are spanned by a railway bridge. Hitherto, however, sea-straits have not been successfully attacked, except whereas in the case of the Mensi Straits-they are of very moderate extent. When voyagers can pass to France without encountering the terrors of sea-sickness, a veritable triumph will have

been achieved over nature. —A Cincinnati paper says the Clerk of the Massachusetts House makes most of its Governors and Congressmen. The Boston Post thinks he should be discharged for poor workINSURANCE COMPANIES.

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Advance in value..... ...\$31.048.13 LOSSES BY FIRE. Losses Paid during the Year 1868,... \$113,540.03

By order of the Board.

CHAS. N. BANCKER, President. Attest-

JAS. W. MCALLISTER, Secretary pro tem.

DIRECTORS.

CHAS. N. BANCKER, ALFRED FITLER, SAMUEL GRANT, THOMAS SPARKS GEO. W. RICHARDS.

WM S. GRANT. ALFRED G. BAKER, GEORGE FALES, THOMAS S. ELLIS. CHAS. N. BANCKER, President,

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JAS. W. MCALLISTER,

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