

that, when on any occasion its taste comes to be displayed, it proves to be a not worse taste than that shown by its neighbors. What first struck my ear as peculiar among the noises of a large town, — and their amount here is singularly great, — was what seemed to be somewhat irregular platoon-firing, carried on, volley after volley, with the most persistent deliberation. The sounds came, I was told, from the “proofing-house,” — an iron-lined building, in which the gunsmith tests his musket-barrels, by giving them a quadruple charge of powder and ball, and then, after ranging them in a row, firing them from outside the apartment by means of a train. Birmingham produces on the average a musket per minute, night and day, throughout the year: it, besides, furnishes the army with its swords, the navy with its cutlasses and pistols, and the busy writers of the day with their steel pens by the hundredweight and the ton; and thus it labors to deserve its name of the “Great Toy-shop of Britain,” by fashioning toys in abundance for the two most serious games of the day, — the game of war and the game of opinion-making.

On the morrow I visited several points of interest connected with the place and its vicinity. I found at the New Cemetery, on the north-western side of the town, where a party of Irish laborers were engaged in cutting deep into the hill-side, a good section, for about forty feet, of the Lower New Red Sandstone; but its only organisms — carbonized leaves and stems, by much too obscure for recognition — told no distinct story; and so incoherent is the enclosing sandstone matrix, that the laborers dug into it with their mattocks as if it were a bank of clay. I glanced over the Geological Museum attached to the Birmingham Philosophical Institution, and found it, though small, beautifully kept and scientifically arranged. It has its few specimens of New Red Sandstone fossils, chiefly *Posidonomya*,