DANIEL McCARTNEY—THE GREAT PRODIGY OF MEMORY.

BY J. H. CREIGHTON.

Daniel McCartney was born in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, September 10, 1817. His father was of Irish descent and his mother German.

I first met him in Delaware, Ohio, in 1871. Notice of his coming and what he would do was given in the papers several days before he arrived.

The meeting was in a public hall. The president and several professors and many students of the Ohio Wesleyan University and also a few citizens were present. Mr. O. C. Brown, of Cardington, O., stated what he could do, and introduced him and conducted the examination.

Mr. S. Moore, of the First National bank, was prepared with calendars and other documents to test his claims. Other gentlemen were also prepared in various ways to decide the truth of Mr. Brown's statements.

Mr. McCartney was then fifty-four years old, of medium height, rather heavy set, with rather large, well formed head; square, large, high forehead; complexion pale. Countenance sober, dignified, benevolent. Eyes defective, not being able to see clearly, and yet not entirely blind.

His speech was deliberate and confident, using but few words. His dress was cheap, but decent.

The audience was requested to ask any questions they chose. As the examination went on, we soon found that everything that had passed before his mind for forty years was remembered. I can only refer to a few things that occurred in the two hours of most varied questioning. He could tell the day of the week (by having the year and day of the month) back for forty years, and tell it instantly. He could tell the dates of most important events from his boyhood. Could give the state of the weather, forenoon and afternoon, for forty years without mistake.

One gentleman asked for the day of the week about fifteen or sixteen years before. McCartney replied *Friday*. No, said the gentleman, that is wrong. That was my wedding day, and it was *Thursday*. Now, said Mr. Brown, can any gentleman in the hall tell who is right. Yes, said Mr. Moore; and in a minute or two from his old calendar he found that McCartney was right. During the evening one or two other questions were raised as to the day of the week, but by the old calendar McCartney was right every time.

He was a complete concordance of the New Testament and most of the Old Testament. Prof. Hoyt (Hebrew professor) read a large number of passages from the Scriptures, till the audience were entirely satisfied that he knew where every passage was.

He could tell what he was doing every day from his boyhood. President Merick having prepared himself on several dates, asked him what he was doing on a certain day, naming the time, several years before. "Looking at the eclipse," said he.

His multiplication table went up into millions. He could give the cube root of numbers up to millions almost instantly. One of the numbers given was ten figures deep, another was eleven figures deep.

He could raise any number under forty to the sixth power instantly. He could raise any number under 100 to the sixth power in ten or fifteen minutes.

He was given the number 89, which is a prime number and more difficult; but he raised it in a few minutes (496,981,290,961). He could instantly give the minutes and seconds of periods of time from the Mosaic creation, and could give the feet or inches of sidereal distances. Prof. H. M. Perkins (professor of astronomy) asked him a question. McCartney said he had never been given such a question, but he would see. What was very remarkable was, he never asked the professor to state it again, although it was most complicated. In about three minutes he said it came out with a fraction, and the fraction was one-eighth. In a few minutes more he told off the long line of figures.

A gentleman wrote five or six columns of figures, seven or eight deep, on the blackboard and read them to him. He could immediately repeat them backward or forward; and being asked the next day if he still remembered them, he told them off again without a mistake.

At the close of the examination, several questions of another nature were asked. Some of them were of a nature not needing any test, for we were perfectly satisfied of the accuracy of all his statements. His powers of memory were noticed when five or six years old, and he could remember a great number of little events from that early age. His full power of memory was attained at the age of about sixteen. He knew two hundred hymns, and could sing one hundred and fifty tunes. He could remember what he ate for breakfast, dinner, and supper, for more than forty years. He learned nothing by reading, but by hearing. His sight was so defective, especially in early life, that he could not read, except very coarse print, and that very slowly, and with great difficulty. He was always poor, and his relatives, with whom he lived, were poor. The question has often been raised why a man with such

DANIEL McCARTNEY.

prodigious memory did not prosper in some business. Doubtless the principal cause of this was his deficient eyesight. Several attempts were made to bring him before the public, but with very little success. At one time, in 1871, he appeared in the Opera House, Columbus, Ohio, when members of the legislature, teachers, and professional men were present. At that meeting he answered questions similar to those above stated, and gave entire satisfaction.

He retained his memory to the time of his death. He was in possession of most all these vast powers for about sixty years. When answering questions about certain things, President Merick asked him how he did it, or if he had any particular mental process or rule. He said, "I just know it." The answers to some questions, however, showed that it was not all entire memory, for they required some reasoning powers. This was particularly so in the question given by Professor Perkins.

It has been considered that the invention of logarithms by Napier stands among the greatest works of intellectual power in the world, and will be a monument to his name and fame forever. But McCartney would not need these tables. He was himself a living table of logarithms. These deductions, that cost Napier long and tedious hours of figuring, McCartney could solve at once without pencil or paper, and without mistake.

Daniel McCartney was supported for the last few years of his life at the county farm, near Muscatine, Iowa, and died in that place, November 15, 1887, aged a little over 70 years.

THE SUPERB BIRD OF PARADISE (LOPHORINA PAROTIA).

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(Lophorina, Parotia.)

The paradise birds attract attention less by the brilliance than by the extraordinary development of their plumes.

From the Arfak range we had obtained several species, which at a little distance look a uniform black. Two of these—*Lophorina* and *Parotia*—are furnished with appendages which are, perhaps, as striking as any with which long ages of sexual selection have provided the birds of this group, but until the specimen is taken up in the hand they may pass unnoticed. In the former an immense plume of feathers springs from the occipital region, and reaches to the end of the tail. It is of the deepest velvety black, shot in some lights with oily-green reflections, and with the outermost feathers slightly recurved toward the tip. The top of the head is covered with scale-like feathers of metallic green, and a shield of the same color and nature, but of a still brighter shade, adorns the breast. The rest of the body is dull black. Any further ornament or color would be out of place, and one feels that the beautiful creature fully deserves its appellation of the superb bird of paradise.

Almost more beautiful still is *Parotia sexpennis*, the six-shafted bird of paradise, which Signor D'Albertis was the first European to observe in its native jungle. The curious plumes, which give the bird is specific name, lie so close to the neck in the dried skin as to be almost invisible. They consist of three slender filaments springing from each side of the head, and terminated by a spatulate expansion. A bar of vivid steely-green across the vertex, and a peculiar tuft of metallic silver at the base of the beak—a color which, so far as I know, is unique in the bird world—completes the head decoration. Like *Lophorina*, the rest of the plumage is almost entirely black, except at the upper part of the breast, which is furnished with a collar of green and bronze feathers.

The impossibility of giving all the features of this curious bird in a single illustration has led to its representation in a position which is quite possibly incorrect. As far as could be gathered from the natives, the enormous crest, as it appears displayed during the courtship of the female, is spread more widely, in the shape of a fan opened out to its fullest extent, and the pectoral shield being expanded in a similar manner, the head of the bird forms the center of an irregular circle of feathers of velvety black and emerald, which completely hides the rest of the body when viewed from in front.

The tuft of silvery feathers on the forehead can be either erected, as represented in the engraving, or depressed flat against the skull, where it forms a triangle of regular shape with the apex forward.—*Dr. F. H. H. Guillemard, Cruise of the Marchesa.*

A New Dynamite Gun.

The ordnance department of the army has received from Mr. Hiram Maxim, of England, the description of a new dynamite gun which he has projected, in which he proposes to introduce a new and interesting method of expelling the projectiles from the weapon, and by which he hopes to render the use of dynamite in projectiles practicable in heavy guns. He retains the pneumatic principle which has been utilized with so much success by Zalinski, but instead of using compressed air alone, as Zalinski has done, he mixes with this compressed air a quantity of volatile hydrocarbon, such as the vapor of gasoline. This compressed mixture is introduced behind the projectile and the pressure is applied to start it forward in the chamber of the gun. After it has moved a certain distance the projectile itself uncovers a detonating fuse and an explosion then occurs, the air furnishing the oxygen for the explosion and the pressure being increased about eight times. He claims that by this method his initial pressure does not need to be more than half as great as that used by Zalinski. He does not have to use so much compressed air, nor does he require that the barrel of his gun shall be of such great length. His highest pressure is about 4,000 pounds to the inch, the first pressure being not more than one-tenth of that. His detonator is a very ingenious affair, and is inserted through a small circular opening from the interior of the gun. The ordnance officers are much interested in this new form of the dynamite gun.—*Army and Navy Register.*