

rate of book-postage is one cent for four ounces: the American rate is one cent for two ounces. Surely there can be no good reason for such a restriction on the diffusion of literature in this country. Distant subscribers to circulating libraries and book-clubs in England are regularly supplied through the mails. Why cannot we have similar facilities here?

A. MELVILLE BELL.

Washington, D.C.

Systematic earthquake observation.

It will give me pleasure to join in any such systematic effort to secure the observation of earthquakes as is proposed in *Science*, iv. 334, and to provide, so far as practicable, for establishing seismometers, and making observations at this observatory.

EDWARD C. PICKERING.

Harvard college observatory,
Cambridge, Oct. 4.

Abnormal form of *Trillium grandiflorum*.

Early in June, 1883, I found at North Ferrisburg, Vt., a curious specimen of *Trillium grandiflorum*, — a species given to monstrosities, as every botanist knows. In this instance the petals were twenty-one in number, and pale green, edged with purple-pink, in color. I removed the plant to my garden; and in 1884 it displayed a blossom with eighteen petals and six sepals. The petals were deeper in color than before, and their general hue was pink rather than green. At neither time were there any traces of organs of fructification.

HENRY BALDWIN.

Charlotte, Vt., Oct. 3.

GEORGE BENTHAM.

GEORGE BENTHAM died at his house in London on the 10th of September, — a few days before the completion of his eighty-fourth year. The event is in the course of nature. His scientific life came to a close in the spring of the preceding year, when he laid down his pen upon the completion of the 'Genera plantarum.' His work finished, the wearied veteran succumbed to the bodily infirmities of age, yet still with mind essentially unimpaired, and has now gone to rest. His earliest publication bears the date of 1826, fifty-eight years ago. The first part of his classical monograph of the Labiatae was issued in 1832; and hardly a year of the subsequent half-century has passed without some botanical contribution from his hand. At the age of sixty, when most men seek retirement from service, he courageously entered upon his most formidable labors, — the 'Flora Australiensis,' in which he was assisted by Von Müller in Australia; and the 'Genera plantarum,' with Sir Joseph Hooker for his

colleague, — and he lived to complete them both. Fortunately, he was able to devote all his time and powers to his favorite studies; and he steadily did so without distracting haste and without delaying intermission, for his short annual holidays were themselves usually made subservient to botanical investigation. Although he shunned official engagements and all time-consuming avocations, he did not refuse to bear his part of the burden in the administration of scientific affairs. When young, he was for ten years honorary secretary of the London horticultural society, with Lindley for under-secretary, in the most active and flourishing days of that institution. Later, he held for thirteen years the presidency of the Linnean society. In both situations he gave himself with characteristic thoroughness to his duties; he also brought to them a business tact, and a shrewdness of judgment and power of administration, which his very retiring habits would not lead one to expect. His annual addresses from the chair of the Linnean society, always pertinent to the time and the occasion, are models both in thought and in statement, and are of permanent value.

Mr. Bentham came of a notable stock. He was the nephew (and heir) of Jeremy Bentham; his father, Gen. Sir Samuel Bentham, was a naval engineer of remarkable talents; and his mother, if we mistake not, was a daughter of Dr. Fothergill. Some years of his boyhood were passed in Russia; the remainder of his youth in France, where his earliest botanical production was written and published. On his return to England he entered at Lincoln's Inn, and was admitted to the bar. About this time, to please his uncle, who had discerned his ability, he wrote a small and now very rare book upon logic, in which was first introduced the quantification of the predicate. But he soon returned to his early love, and devoted himself to phaenogamous systematic botany, in which, since his compeers, Brown, the elder Hooker, and Lindley have passed away, he has been *facile princeps*. His remarkable gift for languages, nearly every European tongue being at his command