

## CHAPTER XXV.

## SOMETHING ABOUT OIL.

**T**HE very word has wrought like magic. The smell of the article has turned men crazy. It has opened purse-strings which the cries of the orphaned, the tears of the widowed, and the pleas of religion could never loose. It has made men lavish in a hopeless enterprise who had no pence to spare under the counsels of wisdom. It has caused men to scorn the admonitions of the instructed and professional, to trust their own stark ignorance in the stake of a fortune. It has led the self-reliant and purseey capitalist to heap contempt on the wisdom and experience of science, to follow the lead of his own olfactory. All this because "oil" is a synonym for gold.

*Auri sacra fames! quid non mortalia pectora cogis?*

Since the historical excitement of the "South-Sea Bubble," the business world has hardly been invaded by such a fever of speculation as raged over the Northern United States from 1862 to 1866. When it was positively settled that oil could be drawn from the solid rocks—oil suited to the uses of illumination, gas-making, fuel, and lubrication—men who have the keenest eye to utility, and who counterpoise all values with bullion, were constrained to admit that Providence had done more for our race than they had ever dreamed. No doubt many men made suitable recognition of the services of the Almighty in facilitating the ends of money-getting. The picture which memory treasures, however, is that of a herd of porcine quadrupeds jos-