

NATURAL HISTORY.

ADJUTANT BIRD.

Nothing tends more to diversify the scenery of India from that of England, than the number of adjutants (large birds of the stork species, the *ardea arguta*), which are beheld in all parts of the presidency and military stations. They do not frequent the native part of Calcutta, nor the dwellings of the natives generally, so much as they do the residences of Europeans, as near the latter (being carnivorous) they find a greater supply of food than they possibly can do around the habitations of the former, whose diet is principally composed of vegetable productions and milk. They seem to entertain no fear of injury from the natives, as they will not flee at their approach, nor exhibit the least symptoms of alarm if surrounded by them; but if a European comes near, they immediately retreat to a great distance, and will not suffer him to approach anything like so near as the natives do. This may in a great measure be owing to the many tricks which Europeans are accustomed to play on their voracity. Every morning, several of these birds station themselves near to the kitchen doors, ready to receive the offal which may be thrown out by the cooks: and many furious battles take place in the course of the morning for the possession of bones, and other spoils, which may occasionally present themselves to their watchful eyes. Their beaks are very long and thick, and they possess great strength in them. When they are fighting, the chopping of their bills and fluttering of their wings are the signals to waiting kites and crows, numbers of which immediately surround them; and one of these active and vigilant spectators will commonly avail himself of the dispute of the quarrelling adjutants to carry off the prize for which they are contending. The crows are about the size of the English jackdaw, and very numerous in every part of Bengal. They are to be found by hundreds around all the houses of Europeans, and are ten times more active, vigilant, annoying, and crafty, than any birds we have in England. Nothing to which they can have access is safe from their marauding attacks. A lost many small articles from their pilfering disposition. I have seen them often times fly into the room, and take off a slice or two of bread and butter, or any thing else that might be left in the hall after the dinner or tea party had just risen from the table. Sometimes a number of crows will beset an adjutant, and torment him exceedingly. At length, the poor bird, quite wearied out by their impertinent attacks, suddenly makes a start, and catching hold of one of their number, devours it instantly, when the other crows set up such a cawing as to disturb the whole

neighbourhood. This I have witnessed more than once.—*Stuttam.*

GREAT WALL OF CHINA.

The chief remains of ancient art in China is that stupendous wall, extending across the northern boundary. This work, which is deservedly esteemed among the grandest labours of art, is conducted over the summits of high mountains, some of which rise to the height of 5225 feet, across the deepest vales, over wide rivers by means of arches; and in many parts is doubled or trebled, to command important passes: at the distance of almost every hundred yards, is a tower or massy bastion. The extent is computed at 1500 miles; but in some parts of smaller danger, it is not equally strong or complete, and towards the N. W. only a rampart of earth. For the precise height and dimensions of this amazing fortification, the reader is referred to Sir George Staunton's account of his embassy, whence it appears, that near Kopekoo the wall is twenty five feet in height, and at the top about fifteen feet thick: some of the towers, which are square, are forty-eight feet high, and about forty feet wide. The stone employed in the foundations, angles, &c. is a strong grey granite; but the greatest part consists of bluish bricks, and the mortar is remarkably pure and white.

Sir George Staunton considers the era of this great barrier as absolutely ascertained, and he asserts that it has existed for two thousand years. In this asseveration he seems to have followed Du Halde, who informs us that 'this prodigious work was constructed two hundred and fifteen years before Christ, by the orders of the first emperor of the family of Tsin, to protect three large provinces from the irruptions of the Tartars.' But in the History of China, contained in his first volume, he ascribes this erection to the second emperor of the dynasty of Tsin, namely, Chi Hoang Ti; and the date immediately preceding the narrative of this construction, is the year 127 before the birth of Christ. Hence suspicions may well arise, not only concerning the epoch of this work, but even with regard to the purity and precision of the Chinese annals in general. Mr. Bell, who resided for some time in China, and whose travels are deservedly esteemed for the accuracy of their intelligence, assures us, that this wall was built about six hundred years ago, (i. e. about the year 1169.) by one of the emperors, to prevent the frequent incursions of the Monguls, whose numerous cavalry used to ravage the provinces, and escape before an army could be assembled to oppose them. Rensudot observes that no oriental geographer, above three hundred years in antiquity, mentions this wall: and it is surprising it should have escaped Marco Polo; who supposing that he had entered

China by a different route, can hardly be conceived, during his long residence in the north of China, and in the country of the Monguls, to have remained ignorant of so stupendous a work. Amidst these difficulties, perhaps it may be conjectured that similar modes of defence had been adopted in different ages; and that the ancient rude barrier having fell into decay, was replaced, perhaps after the invasion Zingis, by the present erection, which even from the state of its preservation can scarcely aspire to much antiquity.

VOYAGE FROM HALIFAX TO BERMUDA.

On the 6th day of December, we sailed from Halifax, with a fresh north-westerly wind, on a bitter cold day, so that the harbor was covered with a vapor called "the barber," a sort of low fog, which clings to the surface of the water, and sweeps along with these biting winter blasts, in such a manner as to cut one to the very bone.

As we shot past one of the lower wharfs of the town of Halifax, just before coming to the narrow passage between George's Island and the main land, on the south side of the magnificent harbour, a boat put off with a gentleman, who, by some accident, had missed his passage. They succeeded in getting alongside the ship; but, in seizing hold of a rope which was thrown to them from the mainchairs, the boatmen, in their hurry, caught a turn with it round the afterthwart, instead of making it fast somewhere in the bow of the boat. The inevitable consequence of this proceeding was, to raise the stern of the boat out of the water, and, of course, to plunge her nose under the surface. Even a landsman will comprehend how this happened, when it is mentioned that the ship was running past at the rate of ten knots. In the twinkling of an eye, the whole party, officer, boatmen, and all, were seen floating about, grasping at the oars or striking out for the land, distant, fortunately, only a few yards from them; for the water thereabouts is so deep, that a ship, in sailing out or in, may safely graze the shore.

As the intensity of the cold was great, we were quite astonished to see the people swimming away so easily; but we afterwards learned from one of the party, that, owing to the water being between forty and fifty degrees warmer than the air, he felt, when plunged into it, as if he had been soused into a hot bath. The instant however, he reached the pier, and was lugged out, like a half-drowned rat, he was literally enclosed in a firm case of ice from head to foot! This very awkward coat of mail was not removed without considerable difficulty; nor was it till he had been laid for some hours in a well-warmed bed, between two other persons, that he could move at all.