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NATURAL HISTORY.

INSECTS.

"How sweet to muse upon his skill displayed
(Infinite skill!) in all that he has made;
To trace in Nature's most minute design
The signature or stamp of power Divine."

"Where greatness is to Nature's works deny'd,
In art and beauty it is well supplied:
In a small space the more perfection's shown
And what is exquisite in little's done."

Insects have been reckoned by some among the more imperfectly formed of Nature's works; but in this most numerous class of animated beings, where shall we find a single instance in which this is made to appear? In all that prodigious variety that exist between the scorpion and the mite, certainly behold in the structure of insects abundant evidence, of the most exquisite skill; and if by means of the microscope we extend our researches downwards through that minute order of beings, till we arrive at those invisible animalcules which are computed to be twenty-seven millions of times smaller than a mite, the same evidences of wisdom and design present themselves in every gradation, and all ideas of imperfection cease.

Search the least path Creative Power has trod,
How plain the footsteps of th' apparent God!

It is not at all surprising, then, that such an accurate researcher into nature's works as the excellent Mr. Boyle, should observe, "that his wonders, dwelt not so much on nature's clocks as her watches."—In several kinds of these creatures, invisible before to mortal eye, it is not only easy to discover, by means of a good magnifier, the external appearance of their mouths, their horns, their trunks, and other members, but the very motion of their heart and lungs! Now, as it has been remarked, as these little animals are discovered to be organised bodies, how fine and subtle must be the several parts that compose them? How difficult to conceive the extreme minuteness of the muscles necessary to the motion of the heart, the glands for the secretion of the fluids, the stomach and bowels for the digestion of the food, the fineness of the tubes, nerves, arteries, veins, and above all, of the blood, the lymph, and animal spirits, which must be infinitely more so than any of these! Here the utmost stretch of imagination is brought to the test, without being able to form any adequate conception; but these inconceivable wonders, instead of conveying any idea of imperfection as to the skill of the artist, must, from what they make to appear, inspire the attentive observer with very different emotions, and force him to exclaim

"Thyself, how wondrous then!"

"The beauty and symmetry of some of those minute objects, so viewed, are surprising indeed. What a metamorphosis do they seem to undergo under the magic-working glass? Creatures that before seemed small and despicable, now "appear the pride of nature, wherein she has bestowed more nice and delicate art, and displayed more profusely the rich embroidery and elegant beauties and garniture of colours than in any of the larger species of animals." Even the dust that adheres to the butterfly's wing, and to which it owes the beautiful tints and variegated hues which adorn it, is said to be an innumerable collection of extremely small feathers, as perfect in their structure and symmetry of the arrangement as they are beautiful in the colouring.

The degree of strength and agility which many of the insect tribe possess is amazing. A flea will draw a chain a hundred times heavier than itself; and the velocity of a mite, in proportion to its size, is said to outstrip that of a race-horse.

Wisdom of Nature.—A cockchafer, respect being had to its size, would be six times stronger than a horse; and if the elephant, as Linnæ has observed, were strong in proportion to the stag-beetle, it would be able to pull up rocks by the root, and to level mountains. Were the lion and the tiger as strong and as swift for their magnitude, as the coindela and the carabus, no thing could have escaped them by precaution or withstood them by strength. Could the viper and rattlesnake move with a rapidity and force equivalent to that of the jirrus and scolopendra, who could have avoided their venomous bite?—*Spencer's Entomology.*

CHRISTMAS EVE.

A TALE.

"There now, I am sure it does look pretty," cried little Robert Grant, as he finished putting the green leaves of ivy and holly into the window of the neat cottage in which he dwelt.—"What a happy day to-morrow will be! I wish it was come. Of all the days in the year I like Christmas day best, Don't you grandfather?" The person whom he addressed sat in the chimney corner, his large Bible spread open on his knees. At his feet was a fine boy about five years old, who was intently watching the fire, and with his grandfather's stick occasionally thrusting fresh bits of fuel under the saucepan in which was his father's supper. "I do indeed, like Christmas-day," replied the old man, "I, and every one, have good reason to do so." "Why so," asked Tom. Come and sit down by me, Bob, and tell me why you like Christmas

day." Robert did as his brother desired him. "Because," said he, "every body looks so happy, and the bells ring so sweetly, and the church looks so pretty, with all the evergreens about it, and we have such a comfortable dinner."—"And why do you like it grandadda?" enquired Tom. "Because," returned his grandfather, "it is the day on which our blessed Saviour was born; the day on which the Son of God came into the world to save wretched sinners from the misery and punishment that were their due, and to reconcile them to his heavenly Father. Oh, it is indeed a day to make our hearts rejoice!" "Did not the angels sing with joy when Christ was born?" said Robert. "Yes," answered the old man, one of the blessed spirits brought the glad tidings to the shepherds, and a whole company of them joined in a hymn of praise to God and good-will towards men. What therefore made the angels glad should surely inspire us, for whose salvation Christ came, with the utmost gratitude and delight." "Oh do, grandadda, read all about it," cried Tom, "I will promise to sit very, very still." The old man put on his spectacles, which Robert had just wiped, and taking the gospel of St. Luke, read aloud the interesting account contained in the first and second chapters.

Thus engaged, time gilded insensibly away with the children, but not so with the mother. She had again and again mended the fire swept up the earth, and arranged the supper table; and now having undressed her baby, she held him in her arms endeavouring to lull him to sleep. She at first listened attentively to what was passing between the children and her father, but her fears began to rise at her husband's delay, and anxiety for him absorbed every other feeling. She went repeatedly to the door, looked and listened, but no sound, except the heavy dashing of the waves against the cliff, and the hollow moans of the wind, met her ear. She viewed, with increased apprehension, the appearance of the sky. Clouds on clouds seemed rising, the moon in vain struggled to break forth, and an unusual weight filled the air. At length occasional flashes of lightning darted athwart the gloom and the sea heaved its bosom, as if to meet the dark mass that was suspended over it. "Surely, father," said she, as she turned, still more alarmed, from the door, "surely it threatens to be a very bad night. Oh that Thomas was come home! What can have kept him out so long? He must have seen the storm coming on." The old man rose as she spoke, and followed by the boys, walked out to make his own observation. "It will be a dreadful night indeed," said he, "I fear