

# THE WEEKLY MIRROR.

"To please the fancy—and improve the mind."

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## NATURAL HISTORY.

### THE BEAR.

In the Hebrew, this animal is very expressively called the *grumbler* or *growler*.

There are three kinds of the bear known: the white, the black, and the brown. Of the two former the scripture does not speak; the latter kind being the only one known in the Eastern regions. The brown bear says Buffon, is not only savage but solitary; he takes refuge in the most unfrequented parts, and the most dangerous precipices and uninhabited mountains. It chooses its den in the most gloomy parts of the forest, in some cavern that has been hollowed by time, or in the hollow of some old enormous tree. The disposition of this animal is most surly and rapacious, and his mischievousness has passed into a proverb. His appearance corresponds with his temper: his coat is rugged, his limbs strong and thick, and his countenance, covered with a dark and sullen scowl, indicates the settled moroseness of his disposition. The sacred writers frequently associate this formidable enemy with the king of the forest, as being equally dangerous and destructive. Thus, Amos, setting before his incorrigible countrymen the succession of calamities which, under the just judgment of God, was about to befall them, declares that the removal of one would but leave another equally grievous: 'Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! To what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him,' Amos v. 18, 19. And Solomon, who had closely studied the character of the several individuals of the animal kingdom, compares an unprincipled and wicked ruler to these creatures: 'As a roaring lion and a ranging bear, so is a wicked ruler over the poor people,' Proverbs xxviii. 15.

To the fury of the female bear when she happens to be robbed of her young, there are several striking allusions in scripture. Those persons who have witnessed her under such circumstances, describe her rage to be most violent and frantic, and as only to be diverted from the object of her vengeance with the loss of her life. How terrible, then, was the threatening of the incensed JEROBAM, in consequence of the numerous and aggravated iniquities of the kingdom of Israel, as uttered by the prophet Hosea—'I will meet them as a bear bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart!' Chap. xiii. 8.

The execution of this terrible denunciation, and the invasion of the land by the Assyrian

armies, and the utter subversion of the kingdom, is well known to every reader of scripture.

### THE SYCAMORE TREE.

This curious tree seems to partake of the nature of two distinct species, the mulberry and the fig, the former in its leaf, and the latter in its fruit. The Sycamore is thus described by Norden: 'I shall remark, that they have in Egypt divers sorts of figs; but if there is any difference between them, a particular kind differs still more. I mean that which the sycamore bears. It was upon a tree of this sort that Zaccheus got up, to see our Saviour pass through Jericho.— This sycamore is of the height of a beech, and bears its fruit in a manner quite different from other trees. It has them on the trunk itself, which shoots out little sprigs, in form of a grapetalk, at the end of which grows the fruit, close to one another, most like bunches of grapes. The tree is always green, and bears fruit several times in the year, without observing any certain seasons, for I have seen some sycamores which had fruit two months after others. The fruit has the figure and smell of real figs; but is inferior to them in the taste, having a disgustful sweetness. Its color is a yellow, inclining to an okre, shadowed by a flesh color; in the inside it resembles the common fig, excepting that it has a blackish coloring, with yellow spots. This sort of tree is pretty common in Egypt. The people, for the greater part, live on its fruit.'

The sycamore strikes its large diverging roots deep into the soil; and on this account, says Paxton, our Lord alludes to it as the most difficult to be rooted up and transferred to another situation. 'If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamore tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea, and it should obey you,' Luke xvii. G. The extreme difficulty with which this tree is transferred from its native spot to another situation, give the words of our Lord a peculiar force and beauty.

### IMMENSITY OF CREATION.

Some astronomers have computed that there are no less than 75,000,000 of suns in this universe. The fixed stars are all suns, having, like our sun, numerous planets revolving round them. The Solar System, or that to which we belong, has about 30 planets primary and secondary, belonging to it.— The circular field of space with it occupies is in diameter three thousand six hundred millions of miles, and that which it controls

much greater. That sun which is nearest neighbour to ours is called Sirius, distant from our sun about twenty two millions of miles. Now if all the fixed stars are as distant from each other as Sirius is from our sun; or if our solar system be the average magnitude of all the systems of the 75 millions of suns, what imagination can grasp the immensity of creation! Every sun of the 75 millions, controls a field of space about 10,000,000,000 of miles in diameter. Who can survey a plantation containing 75 millions of circular fields, each 10 billions of miles in diameter! Such however, is one of the plantations of Him—'who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance;' he who 'setting up the habit of the earth, stretches out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.'

### INFLUENCE OF NEWSPAPERS.

Although much has been said of late, on the subject of Newspaper reading, yet much more remains to be told.

If we would observe the influence which they exert, let us look into families that have been permitted to read them, and those who have not. Here is my neighbor A, whose children enjoy the privilege of a school in common with other children. But he has no paper for them to read, or any books calculated to interest them. Yet he wonders why it is that his children do not improve any more. His neighbor B's children attend school no more than his, but they are much farther advanced. He scolds at his children because they study no more. Now poor A. does not see the cause of this difference.— Neighbour B. takes care to furnish his children with a good paper. They soon take an interest in reading and become good readers; and what is more, they soon gain a stock of general knowledge. But we advance a little farther. One of A's sons, a young man of twenty, happens to visit neighbour B's. The lad of twelve is conversing on subjects entirely foreign to the understanding of his older friend. Every subject which agitates the public mind is familiar to him, which he has gained by reading. Now all this is entirely unintelligible and uninteresting to his non-reading friend, although much older than himself, and he goes home, perhaps with feelings of envy towards his younger friend, thus increasing his disease for mental improvement, and sinks down contented in his ignorance.