

NATURAL HISTORY SERIES.

No 3.

PRINCES.—There are three varieties of the species, viz.—The Prince Royal, or *Filius regis*; the Merchant-prince, or *Terna filius*, and the *Public prints*. Of these the latter can scarcely be said, strictly speaking, to belong to the genus, man—but is more properly the offspring of man; yet on account of the important position which it holds among the “Wonders of Creation,” we venture to introduce it here.

The first we shall speak of, however, is the Prince Royal, or *Filius regis*. This variety resembles very much, in habits and appearance, the “king,” of which we spoke in our last number, to which species, indeed, it is by some supposed to belong; but that they are not the *same*, is the opinion of the highest authorities on these matters.

It has been known to naturalists for centuries, being mentioned, in fact, by the writers of the earliest period, of which we have any record. Thus, in the writings of an ancient eastern traveller, we find it stated, that, “*Of all ye animals that were wyth Noa and his familie in ye arc, and of all that went forth out of ye arc, there were onlie left ye fute Prynts, which seemed to poynt out and garde as sacred ye spot on which ye are had rested.*” From this we would infer, that, even as far back as the deluge, this animal, as at the present day, was held in very high esteem, if, indeed, it was not sacred—an idea which is almost forced upon us when, in connection with the fact of its having been chosen for this important duty, we consider the almost sacred regard in which it is still held by large classes of people.

This animal was first discovered in Asia, though it has since been found to exist, in large numbers, all over the eastern hemisphere, where it is much sought after.

Like the “king,” it is not indigenous to this continent, though, since the successful establishment of submarine cables, and the consequent annihilation of time and space, and the immense increase of good-will, and unity of feeling, between the various countries on either side of the Atlantic, a few have found there way hither.

Indeed, it was but recently, that a considerable sensation was created on this side of the water, by one of these creatures appearing openly in public, and submitting to be caressed with the greatest possible docility. It has been seen by large numbers of people, all of whom testify to the handsomeness of its appearance, and kindness of its disposition. But it is generally admitted, that, they have undergone a great improvement in this respect, during the last couple of centuries; for, previous to that time, they were understood to be of a treacherous and cruel disposition, often indulging in the most wanton deeds of violence, so much so that in England it was considered a very hazardous experiment to cross the path of one of them. Nor is the taint of cruelty entirely removed, as the fact of a person being attacked and killed, in the very heart of Paris, recently, abundantly proves. But this is a very rare occurrence, and this specimen (an unusually large one, measuring twelve feet up one side and down the other) has since been caught, and is not likely to do further mischief.

Here their value is, if possible, increased by their scarcity, and many are the traps laid and efforts put forth,

to gain even a sight of one. The most popular method of entrapping this interesting creature, is with the aid of a brass or string band—music being supposed to wield as great an influence over it as did the lyre of Orpheus on everything on which its harmonious accents fell.

As a rule, it is finely built, with a well proportioned frame and graceful carriage. Its motions are quick and easy, in fact, what is generally known as *fast*. It is, moreover, very powerful, in which respect it resembles the Merchant-prince or *Terna filius*, so called on account of the supposed obscurity of its origin, and in contradistinction to the variety mentioned above. The distinctive appellation *Merchant-prince* is derived from “*Mer*” the sea,—many of its movements and operations being of a decidedly fishy nature,—and “*chant*,” the species of melody with which it is wont to celebrate some happy stroke of fortune, as lighting upon the stores of some less powerful animal, or some unexpected booty. It does not possess the same noble qualities of the other variety, and is consequently not so highly valued. It is, as we have stated, a very powerful animal, occupying, so to speak, a sort of central position between the different species of “*nian*,” and is capable of exerting an immense influence on either the one side or the other, a power from which, according to the best authorities, the other species seldom derive much benefit. It is found in great numbers on this continent, and in this respect, as we have shown, differs from the Prince Royal or *Filius regis*, whose habits and appearance it is fond of assuming; but, like the crow in the fables, rarely ever manages to deceive anybody by the disguise. It is, however, naturally much more quiet and industrious, and is much given to accumulating large stores of one thing or another, which it guards with as much jealousy as does a hungry dog a bone. In temper it possesses much more of the qualities of the fox than the lion, being churlish and morose, especially to smaller animals, but often fawning upon larger and more powerful species in a way that is both instructive and amusing. But though not always to be depended upon, it very rarely indulges in deeds of open violence, and is consequently very easily domesticated.

The third variety of this animal is called the *Public prints*, but why, we are at a loss to determine, as it is in name only that it bears any particular resemblance to either of the others described above. It is essentially domestic in character, and is found in large numbers in all civilized countries. It has been known to naturalists for about three centuries only, but being naturally prolific, has increased very rapidly, and is now the most common of this species. It is much smaller than either of the others, but is strongly made, and is of a mottled black and white colour. It is one of the most useful of animals, being serviceable in an infinite variety of ways; but, like all other animals which have the misfortune to exist in great numbers, is not properly appreciated.

It is generally very intelligent, and can be trained to guard your interests with unwearied devotion, but when provoked to a quarrel, is apt to leave its opponent in a rather demoralized condition. Like the geese of ancient Rome, it has frequently sounded the warning-note of danger, and thereby saved a nation from impending evil.