

THE OSTRICH.

BY MARY HOWITT.

Not in the land of a thousand flowers,
 Not in the glorious spice-wood bowers,
 Not in fair islands, by bright seas embraced,
 Lives the wild ostrich, the bird of the waste!
 Go to the desert—his dwelling is there,
 Where the breath of the simoon is hot on the air;
 To the desert—where never a green blade grew;
 Where never its shadow a broad tree threw,
 Where the sands rise up, and in columns are wheel'd
 By the winds of the desert, like hosts on a field;
 Where the wild ass sends forth a lone dissonant bray,
 And the herds of the wild horse speed on through the day,
 The creatures unbroken, with manes flying free,
 Like the steeds of the whirlwind, if such there may be.
 Aye, there in the desert, like armies for war,
 The flocks of the ostrich are seen from afar,
 Speeding on, speeding on, o'er the desolate plain,
 Where the fleet-mounted Arab pursueth in vain.
 But 'tis joy to the traveller who toils through that land,
 The egg of the ostrich to find in the sand;
 It is sustenance for him when his store is low,
 And weary with travel he journeyeth slow
 To the well of the desert, and finds it at last,
 Seven day's journey from that he hath pass'd.
 Or go to the Caffir-land—what if you meet
 A print in the sand of the strong lion's feet,
 He is down in the thicket asleep in his lair!
 Come on to the desert—the ostrich is there!
 There—there!—where the zebras are flying in haste,
 The herd of the ostrich comes down on the waste—
 Half running, half flying—what progress they make!
 Twang the bow—not the arrow their flight can o'ertake!
 Strong bird of the wild! thou art gone like the wind,
 And leavest the cloud of thy speeding behind;
 Fare thee well, in thy desolate regions, farewell,
 With the giraffe and lion we leave thee to dwell.

SKETCHES OF CUBA.

BY LEANDER KERR.

In the autumn of '33, suffering severely from a protracted attack of Florida fever, a combination of all fevers, I was urged by my physicians to go to the West Indies, and try the effects of a winter's residence there on my debilitated system. In compliance with this advice, I sailed for Havana, in Cuba, the modern Bethesda, for all diseases in our world—empty pockets excepted.

We sailed from Apalachicola, in Florida; but owing to the ignorance of our navigators we lost our latitude, or rather never found it nor ourselves, until we got down to cape "San Antonio," the patron saint of Spanish sailors. This cape is celebrated for its abundance of sea turtle, the finest in the world, and was a few years past as celebrated for pirates. It is a most dreary and desolate region.

We were now near an hundred miles west of our place of destination, and after the manner of our ancient navigators, we crept along the shore, hugging the land closely, as sailors say. To me this was very delightful, and though the first of December, the weather was like the finest and blandest of May. The sky was cloudless and serene, with that tranquil softness peculiar to it in this climate, at this season; the breezes came soft and healing from the land, fraught with spices and perfumes; the sea was tranquil as a fish pond, even the long heavy ground swells that remain long after the autumnal storms are over, had sunk to the depths of the ocean. Nothing can be so delightful as sailing over the West Indian seas at this season of the year—among the evergreens and sunny islands, that like living emeralds, lie scattered over a sea of saffron and gold. But oh, how different is the scene during the prevalence of the equinoctial tornadoes—then, fearful is the grandeur, and wild the magnificence.

A few years ago it was my lot to encounter one of these hurricanes, while crossing the gulf of storms. It was when the Hornet sloop of war with all her gallant crew and with a party of Mexicans, male and female, went down to the sepulchre of the ocean—without any being left to tell the melancholy tale. A more frightful storm never swept these seas. My old captain, on that occasion, told me that during forty years of sailing in all parts of the world, he had never seen such a gale. For several days previous a dead calm prevailed—the heat was scorching—the atmosphere so rare, as to render respiration painful and laborious; while every thing gave warning of a coming tempest; the sea was literally dashed into foam by the gambols of the porpoises—and every thing that had a wing was seen hurrying landward. On that morning, the sun rose like a ball of fire, unnaturally extended—it was fearful to look at it—it seemed to be clothed with the fire of divine wrath; while in the west a ridge of clouds arose, black as night, from the slumbering ocean, crested with bickering flame. It was a sublime and fearful scene, the stillness was unnatural and dreadful, often, often, have I tried since that fatal morn to analyse the feelings I then had, but could not—fear or terror did not predominate—it was a strange mingling of all the emotions of the heart and soul—a species of sublime and terrible ecstasy—which nothing but the sublime and terrible of nature alone can excite.

But how different the scene now, gliding along under an easy sail with a motion scarcely perceptible, with a smiling sky above and a smiling ocean below, and fanned by fragrant and renovating breezes, that brought health to my body and happiness to my mind. I soon became a new creature; different from that torpid, sickly, listless thing that had a week before crawled out of the pestilential marshes of Florida; more like an Egyptian mummy than a thing of life and action. What joy like the joy of returning health? What gladness like the gladness of the convalescent? For three years past I had scarcely past as many months of perfect health, but now I felt new life and vigour infused into every nerve, vein and limb.

This part of the coast of Cuba is picturesque and romantic in a high degree; in many places rising into lofty mountains visible in clear weather forty miles at sea, and clothed to their summits with perpetual verdure; while a line of rocks, black and precipitous, runs along the shore; against which the waves, when driven by storms, break in thunder, and are scattered back in sheets of foam and spray.

Some of these hills are in a high state of culture, covered with plantations of coffee and cane, with smiling villages, churches and cottages embowered in groves of orange and cocoa, with all the other varieties of tropical plants. But farther back from the coast, the hills and mountains are in their primitive wilderness, inhabited by banditti, of whom might many a tale of blood and crime be told, which it would be difficult to find parallel cases for in the wildest legion of fiction and romance. But were these hills and valleys peopled by an intelligent and virtuous population another and a brighter aspect would come over the scene, and all that poets have imagined and sung of Tempe's vale, or Elysian bowers, would be realized here.

A very small portion of this island is cultivated—the interior is almost all in a wilderness state: yet such is the fertility of the soil, and so magnificent and prodigal is nature here, and so abundant her resources—that it is the opinion of intelligent persons here whose general knowledge of the island warrants the assertion—that it is capable of supporting a population of twenty millions, though at present it does not contain one million. The estimate I am sure is not too high. The commerce of this island now is equal to one fourth of the whole commerce of the United States, and yet not a twentieth part of the island is cultivated—and were it not for the many and great restrictions and disabilities, under which her commerce labour, owing to a policy as stupid as it is suicidal, her commerce would now be much greater than it is. She now supports an army of 20,000 men constantly—defrays all the expenses of her government, which are enormous, and transmits several millions of dollars annually to old Spain, to keep her from starvation and beggary. From the city of Havana, alone, the metropolis of the island, eleven millions of dollars worth of segars are now annually exported, and the amount rapidly increasing, besides the amount annually smoked there, which is ten thousand per day, or 3,650,000 a year, which being divided among 130,000 persons, the present population of the city, is twenty-eight dollars and a fraction for each one, man, woman, and child, white, yellow, and black. This is smoking to some purpose I think.

But every thing that can draw a segar smoke here, the ladies not excepted, who have their segar cases hung by their sides like the "Cornucopias," well filled with very neat and small segars, one of which the fair wearer will light when in company, and after setting it in motion with her own ruby lips, present it to the gentleman nearest her, or to him whom she prefers, with a grace and manner unequalled. And the man who refuses to accept this pipe of peace or love rather, should have all his accounts settled beforehand, both with this world and the next.

St. Paul was as much superior to Lord Chesterfield in politeness and refinement, as he was to his lordship in morals and religion, in the exhibition of a rule of manners, which the noble lord was as incapable of conceiving, as of observing, viz. of "becoming all things to all men," that was, to comply with the prejudices, manners, customs, habits, &c. of those among whom he went, as far as was consistent with the great and only standard of manners, morals, and religion. This is the true line and rule of conduct, but the man, whose bigotry, sordidness and selfishness will not allow him to do this, had better stay at home, and rust.

COURT ANECDOTE—ROYAL COURTSHIPS.—As we hear, our young and gracious queen has, from her lofty situation in the world, been of late rather curiously embarrassed for a lady under her peculiar circumstances; it became necessary for her to indicate her preference for Prince Albert sufficiently to make him acquainted with the royal partiality, and so put affairs in train for the arrangements which we now officially know are in progress. This was a delicate task, but the queen acquitted herself of it with equal delicacy and tact. At one of the palace balls she took occasion to present Prince Albert with her bouquet, and the hint was not lost on the gallant German. His close uniform, buttoned up to the throat, did not admit of his placing the Persian-like gift where it would be most honoured; and he immediately drew his knife and ripped a slit in his dress near his heart, where he gracefully deposited the happy omen! Again, to announce the projected union to the privy council was an easy duty to that of intimating it to the principal party concerned; and we understand that here also our sovereign lady displayed unusual presence of mind and female ingenuity.

The Prince was expressing the grateful sense he entertained of his reception in England, and the delight he had experienced from the kind attentions to him during his stay, when the queen naturally put the question upon which their future fates so much depended—"If your highness is pleased with the country, would you wish to remain in it?" Who can doubt the reply? And thus it is, according to the accounts which descend from the perfumed atmosphere of royalty, even to the lowly haunts of literature, that reigning queens are wooed and wedded!—*Literary Gazette.*

THE SPIDER.—Dr. Foster observes, in his perennal calendar, that about this season of the year (March) the spider leaves his house and takes to the garden. These are a very interesting tribe of insects, notwithstanding their obnoxious appearance. Naturalists have discovered that they are remarkably fond of music, and have been known to descend from the ceiling during concerts, and retire when the last strain was finished, of which the following old verses, from the "Anthologia Borealis et Australis," remind us:—

To a Spider which inhabited a Cell.

In this wild, groping dark, and drearie cove,
 Of wife, and children, and health bereft,
 I hailed thee, friendlie spider, who hadst wove,
 Thy mazy net in yonder mouldering raft,
 Would that the cleanlie housemaid's foot had left
 Thee tarrying here, nor took thy life away,
 For thou from out this scare old ceiling cleft,
 Came down each morn to hear sweet music play,
 Wherewith I'd fain beguile the ling'ring day.

LADY CAROLINE LAMBE.—Most of our readers may remember that a few years ago it was very currently reported that Lady Caroline Lambe had, in a moment of passion, struck down one of her pages with a stool. When Tom Moore was told of this by Lord Strangford, he said, "Oh! nothing is more natural for a literary lady than to double down a page."

"I would rather," replied his lordship, "advise Lady Caroline to turn over a new leaf."

JUSTICE.—A certain justice of the peace would only hear one of the parties in a case before him, because, as he said, it always puzzled him when he heard both.

Hogarth's natural propensity was strongly inclined to merriment even on the most trivial occasions. On one of his cards, requesting the company of a friend to dine with him, there was a circle to which a knife and fork were the supporters—within the circle, the invitation was written, and in the centre of it was drawn a pie. The invitation of the artist concludes with a play on three of the Greek letters, eta, beta, pi—eat a bit of pie.

A CRANILOGIST,—dining in company with a gentleman who was given to exceed in his potation, unwilling to lose any opportunity of advancing his favourite science, on the gentleman leaving the room, took occasion to observe to his wife, "Ah, madam, what a fine musician your husband is! I never saw the organ of music so fully developed."

"Indeed, sir," said the lady, "I don't know what organ he may have, but if any, I am sure it's a barrel-organ."

Napoleon's house at Longwood is now a barn—the room he died in a stable, and where the imperial corpse lay in state may be seen a machine for grinding corn. The walls are covered with multitudinous names. The oak he planted now shadows the library. His bath is still in the new house which he never lived to enter. His chess board is in the possession of the officers of the 91st, which regiment is stationed on the island.

A chemist in Albany, a few days ago, expatiating on the late discoveries in chemical science, observed that snow had been found to possess a considerable degree of heat. An Irishman present at this remark observed, "that truly chemistry was a valuable science" and (anxious that the discovery might be made profitable) inquired of the orator what number of snow-balls would be sufficient to boil a tea-kettle.

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