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## NATURAL HISTORY.

### BEAVERS.

Such is the sagacity of the beavers, that a tribe of the American Indians consider them as a fallen race of human beings, who in consequence of their wickedness, vexed the Good Spirit, and were condemned by him to their present shape, but that in due time they will be restored to their humanity. They allege that the beavers have the power of speech, and that they have heard them talk with each other, and seen them sitting in council on an offending member. The lovers of natural history are already well acquainted with the surprising sagacity of this wonderful animal, with their dexterity in cutting down trees, their skill in constructing their houses, and their foresight in collecting and storing provisions sufficient to last them during the winter months; but few are aware, I should imagine, of a remarkable custom among them, which more than any other, confirms the Indians in believing them to be a fallen race. Towards the latter end of Autumn, a certain number, varying from twenty to thirty assemble for the purpose of building their habitations. They immediately commence cutting down trees; and nothing can be more wonderful than the skill and patience which they manifest in this laborious undertaking. To see them anxiously looking up, watching the leaning of the tree when the trunk is nearly severed, and when its creaking announces its approaching fall, to observe them scampering off in all directions, to avoid being crushed.—When the tree is prostrate, they quickly strip off its branches; after which with their dental chisels, they divide the trunk into several pieces of equal lengths, which they roll into the rivulet across which they intend to erect their houses. Two or three old ones generally superintend the others, and it is no unusual sight to see them beating those who exhibit any symptoms of laziness; should, however, any fellow be incorrigible, and persist in refusing to work, he is driven unanimously by the whole tribe to seek shelter and provisions elsewhere.—These outlaws, are, therefore, obliged to pass a miserable winter, half starved in a burrow on the banks of some stream, where they are easily trapped. The Indians call them lazy beaver, and their fur is not half so valuable as that of the other animals, whose perseverance industry and *perseverance* secure them provisions and a comfortable shelter during the winter.—

*Impression of Music on Animals.*—M. Marville has given us the following curious details on this subject. Deubting, he tells us, the truth of those who say it is natural for us

to love music, especially the sound of instruments, and that beasts themselves are touched with it, being one day in the country he made his observations, while a man was playing on a conch shell, (*trompe marine*), upon a cat, a dog, a horse, an ass, a hind, cows, small birds, and some barn-door fowls in a yard under the window on which he was leaning. He did not perceive that the cat was in the least degree affected, and he even judged by her air that she would have given all the musical instruments in the world for a mouse, for she slept all the while unmoved in the sun; the horse stopped short from time to time at the window, raising his head up now and then as he was feeding on the grass; the dog continued for above an hour seated on his hind legs, looking steadfastly at the players; and the ass did not discover the least indication of his being touched, eating his thistles very peaceably; the hind lifted up her large wide ears, and seemed very attentive; the cows slept a little, and after grazing awhile went forward; some little birds which were in an aviary, and others on trees and bushes, almost tore their little throats with singing; but the cock, minding his hens, and the hens, solely employed in scraping on a neighbouring dunghill, did not show in any manner that they took the least pleasure in hearing the music.—*Faculties of Birds.*

### THE ORPHAN GIRL.

In one of those delightful retirements from the busy world, which decorate the banks of the Schuylkill, for miles above Philadelphia, resided some years since Mrs. Seldon and her little family, consisting of an old daughter, and two or three domestics. She was an English lady, and had emigrated to this country shortly after the close of the revolutionary war. It was a strange and romantic idea, which caused her removal from her native country: her husband, to whom she was tenderly attached, had died about a year before, on his return from India, leaving her a handsome support. But from the moment she heard of his decease, she said, she found there was no happiness left for her in England; every thing that she saw or heard—the little groves that surrounded her dwelling—the melody of the rippling waves that flowed at the foot of the garden—the shepherd's whistle, and the huntsman's horn, brought to mind only the delighted days of years now gone forever. She thought the novel scenery of a new country would wean her from these recollections, and was necessary to her health. Having arrived at Philadelphia, she took the little cottage I have spoken of, and made an effort to be a happy mother.—But the effort failed. In less than a year after a rapid decline succeeded a fixed and set-

tled melancholy, and she dwindled in a brief space of time into eternity.

The transition of Mrs. Seldon had been so sudden that little time was allowed Lauretta to prepare for the event—and when the final trial was closed, when after she had watched over that feverish bed, exhausted all her spirits, day by day, to light up a little cheerfulness in her mother's countenance, and wean her away from that slow and cankering despondency which had subdued her; when after suffering all the anxiety which hovers between hope and despair, the event she had not dared to think of, burst upon her, and she saw on her mother's lips the signet "it is finished," set on those eyes in whose smiles she had been nurtured closed forever,—it would not have been wondered at if her young heart had sunk within her, although it did not appear at first to do so. She attended the funeral ceremonies with a calmness that seemed like resignation itself; and when the attendants sung the sweet and touching hymn, beginning with

"Why do we mourn departed friends?" a glow came across her cheek, which brightened at the lines—

"The grave of all his saints he bless'd,  
And softened every bed—  
Where should the dying members rest,  
But with the dying head."

To one who had visited Lauretta months after these scenes had passed, a surprising change would have been visible. Those who have been called to sit by the bed of sickness, where all that was dearest to the heart lay pale and helpless, waiting, perhaps, the slow but steady approach of the last sad messenger—have known, can easily feel, at least, something of that wasting weariness which comes in such seasons over the heart. The variety of nature—the blooming meads and bowers—the song of the unconscious passengers—the lively tinkling of the bells, and the whole round of life and pleasure which enchant the heart at ease, throw a deeper melancholy over the anguish of a suffering bosom. But all this Lauretta had endured without a murmur. It was not till the scene was closed—and the grave had taken its victim,—that her grief seemed to burst forth. Then, indeed, despair—

"Like a worm in the bud,  
Fed on her damask cheek."

Misfortune seldom comes alone.—While a happy girl on the banks of the Humber, she had engaged her heart to one who was entirely worthy to receive it. She was now far from the scenes, which in former times, were endeared by the innocent indulgence of the first love she ever cherished. But that was not all,—her lover had met with a reverse of fortune,—to retrieve his affairs, it was necessary he should leave England on a foreign and a dangerous expedition,—and having given up all hope of ever seeing