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NATURAL HISTORY.

THE LANTERN FLY.

This is a very curious kind of fly. Its head looks like a large hollow lantern.— This shines so brightly that travellers are said to pursue their journeys by the light of this fly. For this purpose, they catch one of them, and tie it to a stick, and carry it before them as if it were a torch. This fly is said to be found in many parts of South America. A lady, who was travelling in the country where these flies abound, gives an account of her surprise at seeing these insects, before she was acquainted with the shining nature of them.

“The Indians,” she says, “once brought me a number of these lantern flies, which I shut up in a large wooden box. In the night they made such a noise, that I awoke in a fright, not being able to guess from whence the noise came. As soon as I found that it came from the box, I opened it, but was still more alarmed when I saw a flame of fire come from it; and as many animals as came out, so many different flames appeared.— When I found that it was the insects that caused the light, I recovered from my fright, and again collected them, much admiring their splendid appearance. The light of one of these insects is so bright, that a person may see to read a newspaper by it.” The light given by this fly proceeds entirely from the hollow part or lantern; no other part being luminous. The lantern fly is sometimes three or four inches in length.

It is a different insect from what is called the fire-fly; this latter insect is to be seen in most of the warmer parts of America, and about the woods in the West Indies. These flies shine in the dark: their light proceeds chiefly from four parts; namely, from two spots behind the eyes, and one under each wing. But they can stop this light whenever they please. A person may, with great ease, read the smallest print by the light of one of these insects, holding it between the fingers, and moving it along the lines, with the bright spots just above the letters; but if eight or ten of them be put into a phial, they will give light enough for a person to write by. It is said that the Indians travel in the night with these flies fixed to their feet and hands, and that they spin, weave, paint, and dance by them. The following is a part of a letter from a gentleman who himself saw what he describes.

“The birds which build the hanging nests are here numerous. At night each of their little habitations is lighted up as if to see company. The sagacious little bird fastens a bit of clay to the top of the nest, and then

picks up a fire-fly and sticks it on the clay to illuminate the dwelling, which consists of two rooms. Sometimes there are three or four fire-flies, and their blaze of light in the little cell, dazzles the eyes of the bats, which often kill the young of these birds.”— *Youths Magazine*.

THE CEDAR.—‘The forest of cedars’ on the famed mountain of Lebanon, which once furnished the sacred writers with so many beautiful images, has now almost wholly disappeared. Some few trees remain, to remind us of their former glory, (Isa. lx. 13.) and to teach us the mutability of all sublunary things.

The cedar is a large majestic tree, rising to the height of thirty or forty yards; and some of them are from thirty-five to forty feet in girth. It is a beautiful evergreen, possessing leaves something like those of the rosemary, and distils a kind of gum, to which various qualities are attributed. Le Bruyn says, the leaves of the tree point upward, and the fruit hangs downwards: it grows like cones of the pine tree, but is longer, harder, and fuller, and not easily separated from the stalk. It contains a seed, like that of the cypress tree.

The wood of the cedar is very valuable; it possesses a strong aromatic smell, and is reputed to be incorruptible.—The ark of the covenant, and many parts of Solomon’s temple, were constructed of it.

The cedar of Lebanon, says Paxton, is one of the natural images which frequently occur in the poetical style of the prophets; and is appropriated to denoté kings, princes, and potentates of the highest rank. The spiritual prosperity of the righteous man is compared, by the Psalmist, to the same noble plant: “The righteous shall flourish as the palm-tree; he shall grow as the cedar in Lebanon.” To break the cedars, and to shake the enormous mass on which they grow, are the figures that David selects to express the awful majesty and infinite power of Jehovah: “The voice of the Lord is powerful: the voice of the Lord is full of majesty: the voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. He makes them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn,” Ps. xxix. 4. This description of the Divine majesty and power, possesses a character of awful sublimity, which is almost unequalled, even in the page of inspiration. Jehovah has only to speak, and the cedar, which braves the fierce winds of heaven, is broken.—even the cedar of Lebanon, every arm of which rivals the size of a tree: he has only to speak, and the enormous mass of matter on which it grows

shakes to its foundation, till, extensive, and lofty, and ponderous as it is, it leaps like the young of the herd in their joyous frolics, and skips like the young unicorn, the swiftest of the four-footed race. The countless number of these trees in the days of Solomon, and their prodigious bulk, must be recollected, in order to feel the force of that sublime declaration of the prophet: ‘Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering.’

A NEW CONTINENT.—An extraordinary phenomenon presented in the southern ocean may render our settlements in New South Wales of still more eminent importance. A sixth continent is in the very act of growth before our eyes! The Pacific is spotted with islands through the immense space of nearly fifty degrees of longitude, and as many of latitude. Every one of these islands seems to be merely a central spot for the formation of coral-banks, which, by a perpetual progress, are rising from the unfathomable depths of the sea. The union of a few of these masses of rock shapes itself into an island; the seeds of plants are carried to it by birds or by the waves, and from the moment that it overtops the waters, it is covered with vegetation. The new Island constitutes in its turn a centre of growth to another circle. The great powers of nature appear to be still in peculiar activity in this region; and to her tardier process she sometimes takes the assistance of the volcano and the earthquake. From the south of New Zealand to the north of the Sandwich Islands, the waters absolutely teem with those future seats of civilization. Still the coral insect, the diminutive builder of all these mighty piles, is at work; the ocean is interested with myriads of those lines of foundation; and when the rocky substructure shall have excluded the sea, then will come the dominion of man.

FORTIFICATIONS AND CAVE OF ST. MICHAEL, GIBRALTAR.—The fortifications are excavations in the solid rock.— They were commenced during the reign of Napoleon, and are designed to prevent all approach on the land side. The entrance is at an old Moorish castle, about four hundred feet above the level of the sea. The principal avenues are large enough for a carriage to pass through, and are several thousand feet in length. These ascend gradually to the northeast, but so gentle is the ascent, that a mule loaded with cannon balls easily makes his way to the farthest extremity. From these principal avenues, are cut lateral passages, terminating in small chambers with port-holes, in which lie guns of the largest size ready for action.