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NATURAL HISTORY.

SPORTS OF INSECTS.

It is not generally known that some of the smallest insects are discovered to enjoy themselves in sports and amusements, after their ordinary toils, or satiating themselves with food, just as regularly as is the case with human beings. They run races, wrestle with each other, and, out of fun, carry each other on their backs, much in the same manner as boys. These pleasing characteristics of insects, are particularly observable among ants, which are remarkable for their sagacity. Bonnet, a French author, says he observed a small species of ants, which, in the intervals of their industry, employed themselves in carrying each other on their backs, the rider holding with his mandibles the neck of his bearer, and embracing it closely with his legs. Gould, another writer on ants, mentions that he has often witnessed these exercises, and says, that in all cases, after being carried to a certain length, the ant was let go in a friendly manner, and received no personal injury. This amusement is often repeated, particularly among the hill ants, who are very fond of this sportive exercise.

It was among the same species that Huber observed similar proceedings. "I approached," he says, "one day, to the foraging of wood ants, exposed to the sun, and sheltered from the north. The ants were heaped upon one another in great numbers, and appeared to enjoy the temperature on the surface of the nest. None of them were at work; and the immense multitude of insects presented the appearance of a liquid in a state of ebullition, upon which the eye could scarcely be fixed without difficulty; but when I examined the conduct of each ant, I saw them approach one another, moving their antennae with astonishing rapidity, while they patted, with a slight movement, the cheeks of other ants. After these preliminary gestures, which resembled carressing, they were observed to raise themselves upright on their hind legs by pairs, struggle together, seize each other by the mandible, foot, or antenna, and then immediately relax their hold to recommence the attack. They fastened upon each other's shoulders, or bellies, embraced and overthrew each other, then raised themselves by turns, taking their revenge without producing any serious mischief. They did not spurt out their venom as in their combats, nor retain their opponents with that obstinacy which we observe in their real quarrels. They presently abandoned those which they had first seized, and endeavoured to catch others. I have seen some who were so eager in their exercises, that they pursued several of the workers in succession, and struggling with them for a few moments, the skirmish only termina-

ting when the least animated, having overthrown his antagonist, succeeded in escaping and hiding in one of the galleries. In one place, two ants appeared to be gambling about a stalk of grass, turning alternately, to avoid or seize each other, which brought to my recollection the sport and pastime of young dogs when they rise on their hind legs, attempting to bite, overthrow, and seize each other, without once closing their teeth. To witness these facts, it is necessary to approach the ant hills with much caution, that the ants should have no idea of your presence; if they had, they would cease in a moment their plays or their occupations, curve up their tails and emit their venom."

THE STUDY OF THE MATERIAL WORLD.

Many, with unwearied diligence, pursue the progress of nature in the growth of a plant, or the formation of an insect. They spare neither labour nor expense to fill their cabinets with every curious production; they travel from climate to climate; they submit with cheerfulness to fatigue and inclement seasons; and think their industry sufficiently compensated by the discovery of some unusual phenomenon. Not a pebble that lies on the shore, not a leaf that waves in the forest, but attracts their notice and stimulates their inquiry. Events, or incidents, that the vulgar regard with terror or indifference, afford them supreme delight; they rejoice at the return of a comet, and celebrate the blooming of an aloe, more than the birth of an emperor. Nothing is left unexplored. Air, ocean, the minutest object of sense, as well as the greatest and most remote, are accurately and attentively scrutinized. These researches are laudable, and suited to the dignity and capacity of the human mind.

A NATURAL HYGROMETER.

One of the most obvious indicators of a change in the moisture of the atmosphere, that we know of, is the pappus or down of the dandelion. The top of each seed is surmounted by a small stem, the remains of the style, which for convenience, we will call the axle-tree; at the end of this is the down disposed in rays like the spokes of a wheel. In fine weather, when the air is dry, these rays are flat or at right angles to the stem that supports them. If the air is moist, or the vapour is beginning to condense, we see these same rays rising so as to form a sort of cup. A few days before these observations were penned, the writer observed one morning that these rays were flat: on the following morning they were seen approaching, and on the third, when the rain was falling, they were ranged nearly side by side. If a promised excursion is at any time

placed in doubt by the lowering appearance of a cloudy morning, our readers may obtain a hint from the down of a dandelion, when its level rays, by indicating dryness in the air, would seem to teach them that the ruffled clouds were only labouring to disperse themselves.

VOYAGE FROM HALIFAX TO BERMUDA.

(Concluded.)

The next thing to be done was to get in the jib-boom, in order to ease the bowsprit. In effecting this rather troublesome operation, one of the primest seamen we had fell overboard. He was second captain of the fore-castle, the steadiness of whose admirable skill as a steersman had, one day, elicited the complimentary remark from the captain, that he must surely have nailed the compass card to the binnacle. On this, and other accounts, he was so much esteemed in the ship, that more than the usual degree of regret was felt for his melancholy fate. I saw the poor fellow pitch into the water and watched him as he floated past, buoyant as a cork, and breasting the waves most gallantly, with an imploring look towards us, which I shall never forget. In less than a minute he was out of sight. A boat could hardly have lived in such weather, and no further attempt was made, or could have been made, to save him, than to throw over ropes, which all fell short of their mark. Although we soon lost all traces of him, it is probable he may have kept sight of us, as we drifted quickly to leeward under our bare poles, long after we had ceased to distinguish his figure in the yest of waves.

This gale, the first I ever saw, was also, I can recollect, one of the fiercest. It lasted for three days, totally dispersed our little squadron, well nigh foundered one of them, the Cambrian, and sent her hobbling into Bermuda some days after us, with the loss of her main-mast and all three top-masts.

The rock of the islands of Bermuda is of a very soft coarse freestone, full of pores; so soft, indeed, that if it be required to make an additional window in a house, there is nothing to be done, we are told, but to hire a black fellow, who, with a saw, could speedily cut an opening in any part of the wall.

There is nothing more remarkable in this singular cluster of islands than the extensive coral reefs which fend off the sea on the northern side, and stretch out in a semi-circular belt, at the distance of two or three leagues from the land. On these treacherous reefs we saw many a poor vessel bilged, at moments when, from seeing the land at such a distance, they fancied themselves in perfect security.

They tell a story of a boatman who, it was said, lived by these disasters, once going off