

# THE WEEKLY MIRROR.



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## NATURAL HISTORY.

### JESSE'S "GLEANINGS IN NATURAL HISTORY."

The late Gilbert White in his Natural History of Selborne, one of the most delightful books in the English language, says, that "if stationary men would pay some attention to the districts on which they reside, and would publish their thoughts respecting the objects that surround them, from such materials might be drawn the most complete bounty histories."

To this remark the public are indebted for the little volume now before us; for it was his passage which first induced Mr. Jesse, during his various rides in his Majesty's parks, to the fulfilment of his official duties,\* to note down the observations which occurred to him, on subjects relating to natural history. The time thus employed afforded him, he says, both instruction and delight; and in the process of becoming the instrument of leading others to enjoy equal pleasure with himself in studying the works of nature, he has been induced, to present the world with the result of his observations under the modest title of 'Gleanings in Natural History.' The volume consists of such a body of authentic anecdotes, descriptive of the peculiar habits and economy of different birds, animals, and insects, as were perhaps never before got together, all tending to awaken that degree of curiosity which promotes inquiry, and to create in the mind of the reader a passion for the study of nature—a study not only delightful in itself, but inevitably tending to promote virtuous and kindly feelings, and to increase our admiration of that Being by whose infinite power and wisdom all things were made.

The following are extracts.

\* Both horses, dogs, and indeed many other animals give extraordinary proofs of their intelligence and

\* Mr. Jesse is Surveyor of his Majesty's Parks, Palaces, &c.

reflection. I have known horses open a door or a gate which was fastened with a small latch—a proof that they must have been aware that it was the cause of the door keeping shut. Others will rub off their head stalls however tightly fastened, knowing that it occasions their confinement to one place. I saw a raven lately at the inn at Lyndhurst in the New Forest, which had a chain of about three feet long fastened to a ring round its neck. Whenever the bird fled or hopped about, it always gathered up the chain in its mouth, to prevent the weight of it hurting its neck. A gentleman of my acquaintance has a pig, which stands upon her hind legs and reaches the branch of an apple tree, which she shakes either with her mouth or forefeet, to make the apples fall, that she may feed upon them—a proof almost of the existence of a reasoning faculty. However, apparently pigs may be asleep in calm weather, the moment the wind rises, they hasten to the nearest apple or oak trees, aware that the wind will shake down food for them.

Cats are generally persecuted animals, and are supposed to show but little attachment to those who are kind to them. I have known a cat, however, evince great uneasiness during the absence of her owner, and it is stated that when the Duke of Norfolk was committed to the Tower in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, a favourite cat made her way into his prison room by getting down the chimney.

A dog which has been left in a room by himself has been known, either from hunger, or a wish to get out, to ring the bell. This he has done, not in one or two instances, but in several. This appears a strong proof of reflection.

Some of the woodpecker tribe, in excavating a hole in a tree for the purpose of incubation, will carry away the chips to a distance, in order that they may not lead to a discovery of their nest. Quails have such a perfect knowledge of the approach of the autumnal equinox, that the day of their arrival in Malta, is marked on the almanacks of the island at 22<sup>nd</sup> the 22nd of September, and varies every year with the equinox."

The following is an instance of the ingenuity of birds adopting expedients in building their nests to obviate inconvenience. A farvette (*Sylvia hortensis*) had twice built her nest in some ivy against a garden wall and twice her labour had been fruitless, the nest having been blown down by some high winds. The third time she prevented the recurrence of a similar accident by attaching a piece of worsted to a branch of the ivy, weaving it around on the outer side of the nest, and carefully fastening the other end of the worsted thread to another conveniently situated branch.

I have now in my possession the pendant nest of a golden crested wren, which has been suspended to the slender branches of a fir tree by means of threads. The threads have been curiously twisted round and round the branches, and then fastened to the edge or rim of the nest. By this means the nest is suspended, and vibrates backwards and forwards with the least touch.

## BIOGRAPHY.

### JAMES II.

It was said by the witty Duke of Buckingham, That Charles the Second might have done well if he would, and that James

would do well if he could; an observation which says little for the understanding of James, but a great deal for his heart; and with all the blemishes with which his public character is stained, he was not deficient in several qualities necessary to form a good sovereign.

His industry and attention to business were exemplary, he was frugal of the public money; he cherished and extended the maritime power of the empire; and his encouragement of trade was attended with such success, that, according to the observation of the impartial historian Ralph, as the frugality of his administration helped to increase the number of malcontents, so his extreme attention to trade was not less alarming to the Dutch, than his resolution not to rush into a war with France was mortifying to their stadtholder.

In domestic life, the character of James, though not irreproachable, was comparatively good. It is true he was in a great measure tainted with that licentiousness of manners which at this time pervaded the whole society, and which reigned triumphant within the circle of the court: but he was never carried into any excesses that trench deeply upon the duties of social life; and if the qualities of his heart were to be judged only by his conduct in the different characters of husband, father, master, and friend, he might be pronounced a man of very amiable disposition.

The dominion of error over the minds of the generality of mankind is irresistible. James, to the last hour of his life, continued as great a bigot to his political as his religious prejudices. He could not help considering the strength and power of the crown as necessary to the preservation and happiness of the people; and in a letter of advice which he wrote to his son, while he conjures him to pay a religious observance to all the duties of a good sovereign, he cautions him against suffering any intrenchment on the royal prerogative.

Among several articles containing excellent instructions on the art of reigning happily and justly, he warns the young prince never to disquiet his subjects in their property or their religion; and what is remarkable, to his last breath he persisted in asserting that he never attempted to subvert the laws, or procure more than a toleration and equality of privilege to his Catholic subjects. As there is great reason to believe this assertion to be true, it shows that the delu-