

THE WEEKLY MIRROR.



Vol. 2]

HALIFAX, NOVEMBER 18, 1836.

No. 44-

The Weekly Mirror,

Is Printed and Published every Friday,

BY H. W. BLACKADAR,

At his Office, nearly opposite Bauer's wharf, and adjoining north of Mr. Allan McDonald's.

WHERE

All kinds of JOB PRINTING will be executed at a cheap rate.

Terms of the Mirror Five Shillings per annum payable in advance.

NATURAL HISTORY.

THE CROSSBILL.

We suppose it is well known to most of our readers, that there is a bird called the Crossbill, on account of the fact that the extremities of the bill cross each other. It is an instance of imperfect adoption, as has been alleged by those who charge God foolishly. The ingenuity and research of Dr. Paley even did not enable him to give a good and satisfactory answer to this allegation.—It remained, for aught we know to the contrary, to Mr. Oaks, of Ipswich, to make a full discovery of the use of such a formation of the beak of the bird. We heard him in a lecture give an account something like the following. Being out one day in quest of some new variety, he shot at once upon a pine tree, having broken its wing, it fell into his possession, and proved to be a Crossbill. He immediately resolved to find out, if possible, what was the substance on which it feeds, and the use of such peculiar conformation of the mouth. On presenting to it several substances, he found it unable to pick them up, and after many efforts to find a substance which it could or would eat, he almost despaired of succeeding, and feared that the bird must die of starvation.

He suddenly bethought him, however, that the bird was found on a pine tree.—He brought, therefore, some of the seed of the pine, (i. e.) buds some four inches long, composed of scales, and laid them before the almost famished bird, when immediately he put his peculiar apparatus into successful operation, an indication that he felt himself at home. He thrust his closed beak between the scales, then opening his mouth so that the scales were so far distended as to loosen the red seed, which has a thin membrane to it, to serve as a wing to favor its wide circulation with his slimy tongue, which stuck to this membrane, he drew the seed into his mouth, and then withdrew his

beak. But how should he swallow the seed with this husky membrane attached to it? This difficulty he removed in the following manner. With much dexterity he turned the seed so as to place the membrane between the crossed part of his beak, which he used as a pair of scissors, and trimmed his seed to his liking and swallowed it. All this was done with so much facility that he very soon satisfied his hunger. This one fact is worth a fortune to naturalists, and demonstrates to the humble believer in the Supreme Being, that it is the height of presumption for any man to allege that anything is made in vain. 'Not a sparrow falls to the ground without his notice,' not a bird is fed without his all-wise provision for it.

BIOGRAPHY.

JAMES COOK.

James Cook, a celebrated navigator, was born at Marton in Yorkshire, in 1728. His parents were in humble circumstances, and at an early age he was apprenticed to a shopkeeper at Snaith, but having an inclination to the sea, his master gave up his indentures, and he bound himself to Mr. Walker, a shipowner in the coal trade at Whitby. On the breaking out of the war in 1755 he entered on board the Eagle man of war, and obtained, in 1759, a warrant as master. He served in that capacity at the reduction of Quebec, and while on that station was employed in taking the soundings of the river St. Lawrence; afterwards he was engaged in making a chart of the same river, which he executed with great accuracy. He was next with Lord Colvil, in the Northumberland, at the retaking of Newfoundland, of which coast he made a survey. On his return to England in 1762 he married a respectable young woman at Barking, in Essex, for whom he had always the tenderest regard. The year following he accompanied captain Graves, governor of Newfoundland, where he made many curious researches, and observed a solar eclipse, an account of which he transmitted to the royal society. It being resolved to send out persons to Otaheite, in the South sea, for the purpose of observing the transit of Venus, in 1769, Mr. Cook was selected for the command, and raised to the rank of lieutenant. In August 1768, he sailed in the Endeavour, accompanied by Mr. Green, as astronomer, Mr. now sir.

Joseph Banks, and doctor Solander. The transit was accurately observed, and July 13th our navigator left Otaheite on a voyage of discovery, in which he discovered a number of Islands, to which he gave the name of Society islands. October 8th he anchored at New Zealand, which he circumnavigated. From thence he sailed to New Holland, his account of which occasioned a settlement there, named by him Botany Bay. He arrived, after many dangers, June 12, 1771, and in August following was appointed a commander in the navy. The existence of a southern continent being still an undecided question, captain Cook was employed in another voyage to ascertain the point, and he accordingly sailed with two ships, the Resolution, commanded by himself, and the Adventure, by captain Furneaux, July 13, 1772. In this voyage they explored the southern hemisphere as high as latitude 71 10, amidst immense fields and mountains of ice, where a ship had never been; but in the course of it the two vessels parted, and never joined each other again. Captain Cook, after refreshing at Otaheite, sailed to the westward, and discovered a groupe, which he called the Friendly isles. He next fell in with the islands discovered by Quiros, and having surveyed them all, denominated them the New Hebrides. He next discovered a large island, which he called New Caledonia; and another, named by him Norfolk island, which has since been colonized. After many other additions to our geographical knowledge, but without attaining the main object, he arrived safe at Spithead, July 30, 1775, during which perilous voyage, only one man had died out of 118 on board the Resolution. He was now raised to the rank of post captain, and appointed to a post in Greenwich hospital. The admiralty having resolved to determine the disputed question, whether there be a northern communication between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, Captain Cook willingly volunteered his services on the occasion, and July 12, 1776, sailed from Plymouth in the Resolution, accompanied by another vessel called the Discovery. He carried out with him a native of the Society islands, named Omai, whom he had brought to England at his own request. After touching at Otaheite, the captain's favourite spot, he sailed to Huahine, where Omai was landed with his presents, which he had received in England.