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NATURAL HISTORY.

GENERAL REMARKS.

NATURAL HISTORY is the history of the material world, and in its most extended sense, embraces the whole creation, from the largest celestial orb to the smallest particle of dust, from the mightiest archangel to the minutest animalcule. This field is so vast, that a life time can cultivate but a small portion of it. Even a general survey of it requires that it should be divided into parts, the same as we divide the globe we inhabit into continents, islands, &c., in order to recollect and contemplate the relations and characteristics of its various parts. For example, when the object of Natural History is the magnitude, positions and revolutions of the heavenly bodies, it is called *Astronomy*; or *Optics*, when it investigates the nature and laws of light; or *Geology* and *Minerology* when it enquires into the nature, arrangement and changes of the materials constituting the earth on which we live; or *Geography*, when it describes the surface of the earth; or *Botany*, when it treats of the plants and trees which grow out of the earth; or *Zoology*, when it relates to the animals which move upon the earth, whether on land, in the air, or in the sea; *Natural Philosophy*, when it explains the laws which regulate the motions of all bodies; and *Chemistry*, when it investigates their elements and properties. These divisions of Natural History are also subdivided into various departments, to enable the student of nature to take one portion at a time, without being distracted by the multitude of objects around him. Natural History, therefore, embraces every object in nature, organic and inorganic,—it is a contemplation of the wondrous works of God, the study of which is the basis of religion. It has been well observed, that "the study of Natural History is pregnant with pure delights and solid advantages: the order, the design, and balance observable in the laws, the combinations of structure and mechanism with which they are associated, the ends to be obtained, the simplicity of the means for obtaining them, are all so many proofs of divine wisdom and superintendence. We look with delight, and with the more delight as we understand the more, on the beautiful and complicated machinery of our manufactories, which seems to perform so many labours as it were by enchantment, but in Natural History we behold a scheme more vast, a structure more curious, operations more complicated, and more important means more adapted and laws more profound."

The objects of Natural History are usually arranged in three great divisions, which are called Kingdoms; namely, the *Animal*, the *Vegetable*, and the *Mineral* kingdoms. Under each of these heads, will books be found, well adapted for popular libraries, and some of them suitable text-books for schools.

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