

NATURAL HISTORY.

THE PORCUPINE.

The Porcupine is a native of Africa, India, and the Indian Islands; and is sometimes found in Italy and Sicily. It is a harmless inoffensive animal, and seems to wish to be at peace; and, if it should be attacked by other animals, it has no strength of limbs to enable it to resist, neither has it much swiftness of foot to enable it to run away. But Providence has supplied it with a defence of a very wonderful kind,—a covering of hard sharp quills, all over its body. It is a common notion that the Porcupine has the power of shooting out these quills, to a distance, against its enemy; but this is a mistake. If he is attacked, indeed, he will lift up his sharp quills, and thus offer a good defence against any animal that might come near him. The quills are from nine to fifteen inches in length; and, when the Porcupine is angry, he shakes these quills, and stamps with his feet on the ground like a rabbit, making, at the same time, a sort of grunting noise. Most animals are afraid of attacking the Porcupine, from their dread of his sharp quills, which would give a serious wound to any creature that should make war upon him.

THE PALM-TREE.

The palm is one of the most beautiful trees in the vegetable kingdom, and frequently rises to the height of a hundred feet. The leaves, when the tree has grown to the size for bearing fruit, are six or eight feet long, are very broad, and are used for covering houses and other similar purposes.—The fruit of the tree is called *date*, and grows in clusters below the leaves, and is of a sweet agreeable taste.

From the leaves the natives make couches, baskets, bags, mats and brushes; and from the branches cages for the poultry, and fences for the gardens; from the fibres of the boughs, thread, ropes, and rigging; from the sap, a spirituous liquor is prepared; and the tree furnishes fuel. It is said, that from the body of one variety of the palm-tree, meal has been extracted, which is found among the fibres of the trunk, and has been used for food.

This tree arrives at its greatest vigour about thirty years after its transplantation, and so continues for seventy-years afterward, annually bearing fifteen or twenty clusters of dates, each of them weighing 15 or 20 pounds. After this period it begins gradually to decline, and usually falls about the latter end of its second century.

The root of the palm-tree produces a

great number of suckers, which, spreading upward, form a kind of forest. It is, probably, to this multiplication of the palm-tree, that the prophet alludes, when he says, 'The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree.'

COMMON THINGS.

No. 10.—MIND.

The universe is composed of mind or spirit, and matter. The various faculties of the mind, embracing both intellects and affections, with their actions and influences upon each other; and matter, with its combinations, and the laws which govern it, and its action upon mind, present one of the most common and one of the most sublime objects in a boundless creation. Not merely every rational being, but every animal, even in the lowest orders of insects and reptiles, possesses something distinct from matter. It possesses the power of moving itself—of contracting its muscles at pleasure. Many orders in the animal kingdom possess passions or propensities in common with men. They have fear, anger, love, hatred, love of power, ambition, revenge, gratitude, and an inferior species of reason, or the faculty of fitting means to ends, varying with circumstances.

Most animals have in common with man the five senses—they can see, hear, taste, smell, and feel; and in many instances these senses are much stronger and more delicate, among animals than among men.—Mind or spirit, or something distinct from matter, is visible in its operations or effects every where.

But what is more appropriately called mind, is not only common, existing as it does wherever there is a rational being to contemplate it, but it constitutes the highest, the most interesting, and the most sublime part of the universe of God. It is not only as common as human beings, and as sublime as the Great Creator, but is so plain and simple as to be within the comprehension of a child three or four years old. It is a great and lamentable mistake, that *intellectual and moral philosophy* can be comprehended only by sage philosophers. Young philosophers, for such are all children, and much more rational than the old ones, are exactly fitted and prepared to understand and to relish the operations and the results of mind. Ask a child of five years old, what a brute, such as a horse or dog, can do that a tree cannot, and although it is the first time the question was asked him, or his mind brought to it except by its own voluntary act, and he will at once prove that he has the power of

discrimination, and that he has been much in the habit of discriminating. Ask him again, what a child can do that a brute cannot, or to distinguish between the rational and the animal powers, and he will soon convince you that he is not merely able to understand, but that he has studied, and studied with effect, the powers of mind as distinct from matter. He will convince you that he has studied both the intellectual and moral faculties of his nature—that he has made great progress in the exercise and improvement of his intellectual powers—that he is quite competent to decide questions of right and wrong—and to understand his obligation to pursue the one and avoid the other. Question him respecting the nature and tendency of the great christian principle of *loving our neighbor—of doing good to each other*,—and he will convince you that his perceptions on moral subjects are accurate and clear—and that he is far more wise in his discriminations than adults.

How delightful and animating would be the reflection, if the operations and intercourse of minds and hearts produced nothing but good fruit. How consoling and how glorious would be the thought, that all the relations of ~~the~~ intercourse in a universe of minds were only calculated to elevate and ennoble them, and render them more worthy of themselves, and more like their Creator.

THE MONTHS.—No. 5.

MAY, the fifth month in the year, reckoning from our first, January; and the third; counting the year to begin with March, as the Romans anciently did, was called *Maius* by Romulus, in respect to the senators and nobles of his city, who were named *Majores*.

The first of May was dedicated by the Romans to one of the most pleasing and splendid of their festal rites. Their houses were decked with garlands of flowers and the day was devoted to pleasure. Some are of opinion, that the customs formerly so much observed in England on the first of May, have rather been borrowed from our gothic ancestors than from the Romans. Shakespeare says, that it was "impossible to make the people sleep on May-morning, and this eagerness

"To do observance to a morn of May," was not confined to any particular rank or society, but royal and noble personages, as well as the lower orders, went out a "*Maying*" early in the morning of the first of May."

May has ever been the favourite month of the year in poetical description; but the praises so lavishly bestowed upon it, took