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

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NATURAL HISTORY.

THE SKIMMER OF THE SEA.

The structure of the organs of animated beings, and the express adaptation of those organs, each for its peculiar use, afford an inexhaustible source of rational inquiry. Studies of this kind must ever tend to elevate and expand our conceptions of the power and wisdom of the God of nature; they lead us through an elaborate chain of cause and effect, of means and end, till we arrive at the cause of causes, the Almighty, the self-existent Jehovah. Hence is the volume of nature of no mean use to him who reads it aright, and hence do we present these extracts from its pages to our readers.

We introduce this bird on account of the singular mechanism of its bill. The bill of birds affords a clue to their food and natural habits: who can mistake the purpose of the strong, hooked, dentated beak of the falcon? who of the spatulate mandible of the spoon-bill, or of the long slender bill of the snipe and curlew? In the present instance, also, we have an example of design, at the least as clear, and, if we regard the mechanism of the organ, fully as remarkable, as is possessed by any of the feathered race.

The skimmer is placed among the natural family of *laridae*, or gulls; it is a bird of moderate size, being in length about twenty inches; its stretch of wing, however, is very great, giving a measurement of three feet. The mandibles of the bill are very compressed on the sides; the lower is much the longest, and bears no unapt resemblance to a knife-blade, or rather, perhaps, to a sharp and slender paper-cutter. The upper is shorter, more pointed and rather stouter, having its inferior edge channelled with a groove, for the reception of the lower blade, which shuts somewhat like a razor into its handle.

The length of the lower mandible is five inches, that of the upper nearly four: both are orange red at their base, but gradually become black. Now what can be the use of such a bill as this? We have all seen the way in which eels are speared. Two of the flat prongs of the instrument used for that purpose well represent the bill of the skimmer, and such also is its use. The skimmer, as its name imports, is ever traversing on wing the surface of the ocean, with the lower mandible just dipping beneath the water, the gape of the mouth being open; on meeting with its prey (which consists of the smaller kinds of fishes), it does not at once ingulph it in a wide capacious mouth, or grasp it with a strong hooked bill, but taking it across, runs it up between these bladed mandibles by the impetuosity of its career, and thus securing it, swallows it at leisure. The immense power of flight with which this bird is endowed, renders it perfectly at home hundreds of miles from shore, and though it can swim with tolerable ease, it is seldom seen except on the wing. Its range is rather extensive, as it occurs along the American coast from New York to Guiana, and even Brazil; it is not, however, confined to the seas of the new world, being by no means uncommon in the East Indies, both on the Malabar coast and that of Coromandel. It is also found along the shores of Senegal, in Africa.

BIOGRAPHY.

WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE.

William Shakspeare, father of the English drama, was born of a good family at Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564. His father, who was a considerable dealer in wool, had so large a family that he could give him but a scanty education. He was indeed for some time at the grammar school at Stratford, where he learnt the rudiments of the Latin language, but was prevented from making any further progress by being taken home to follow his father's business. While he was yet very young he married the daughter of one Hathaway, a substantial farmer in the neighbourhood. In this kind of settlement he continued till, falling into the company of some deer-stealers, he was prevailed upon, more than once, to engage in robbing the park of sir Thomas Lucy, of Charlecote near Stratford. For this he was

prosecuted by that gentleman, and out of revenge he made a ballad upon sir Thomas, which is said to have been so bitter that the prosecution was redoubled, and he was obliged to shelter himself in London. Here he formed an acquaintance with the players and was enrolled among them, though what sort of characters he performed does not appear. Mr. Rowe observes, that he never could meet with any further account of him as an actor than that his highest part was the *Ghost* in his own *Hamlet*. The earl of Southampton was his particular friend, and hearing that he had an inclination to make a purchase, but wanted the means, he generously sent him one thousand pounds. Shakspeare was very intimate with Ben Johnson, who gives him a high character in his *Discoveries*. After conducting the theatre many years with great reputation, he retired to his native place, where his wit and good nature introduced him to the acquaintance of the gentleman in the neighbourhood. Shakspeare died in 1616, and was buried in the church of Stratford, where a monument is placed to his memory.

THE CHILDISH PURSUIT.

I tell you they are children still,
Just as they were before,
Though now their heads are six feet high,
Instead of two feet four

If you should happen to know the village of Ashgrove, then you will agree with me, that nothing more is wanting to render it one of the prettiest places in England, than to root up the old hollow oak tree, on the green, that shoots up its leafless and barkless branches into the air, and to pull down the dirty cowhouse, near the blacksmith's shop: but, then, the dirty cowhouse belongs to a poor worthy couple, who cannot afford to part with it; and the hollow oak tree is the delight of all the old inhabitants of the place who knew it in the days of their youth, when its goodly boughs were covered with acorns and with oakballs. No! not the old oak must not be rooted up, and the dirty cowhouse must not be pulled down, for the aged, and the poor, have a claim on our regard, and I pity him who would trespass on their peace.

It was one of the hottest days in August. The sun blazed in the heavens, while the few clouds, which were in the sky, appeared to be hung there to prevent his scorching rays from smiting the earth too intensively.