

# THE WEEKLY MIRROR.

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## NATURAL HISTORY.

### THE TAILOR BIRD.

The tailor warbler, a native of Ceylon, is a minute species, measuring but three inches and a half long; its general plumage is pale olive, throat yellow. The tailor bird makes a nest in a manner truly curious. Its outside is made of two leaves, the one is generally dead, which the bird fixes at the end of some branch to the side of a living one, by sewing both together, with little filaments or threads. Thus it makes a sort of pouch or purse to receive the nest. In doing this, the bill of the bird serves as a needle. Sometimes, instead of a dead leaf and a living one, two living ones are sewed together. Nobody would believe that this was the work of a bird. Indeed it is impossible for any one to look at what are called the works of nature, without seeing that they are in truth the works of a great and gracious Providence. We see this more particularly in what appears to us somewhat curious, but the same may be seen in creatures the most common, though we overlook them, because they are every day before us, and attract therefore but little attention.

**THE HUMMING-BIRD'S NEST.**—The humming-bird usually builds her nest on the upper side of a horizontal limb of a tree; not among the twigs, but on the body of the limb itself. In the woods it very often chooses a small white oak to build upon, but in the garden or orchard, it selects an apple or pear tree. The branch on which it builds is seldom more than ten feet from the ground. The nest is about an inch in diameter, and as much in depth. Though they usually build on trees, their nests have occasionally been found on the stalks of rank weeds, or even wheat. But this is uncommon.

Viewed from the ground, a humming-bird's nest appears like a small knot or protuberance of the limb. It is formed of a kind of grey moss, well cemented by the saliva of the bird and well lined with the down of the mullein. They lay two purely white eggs, equally large at each end, like a cranberry bean, but not quite so large. On approaching their nests they dart around one's head with a humming sound; and what is not very common with birds, if their young are newly hatched, they will seat themselves on the nest when you are within a few feet of it.

**ACCOUNT OF THE BANIAN TREE.**—This is a tree which grows in India, and in some of the West India islands. It is some-

times called the Indian Fig, and its fruit is indeed a sort of fig, which, when ripe, is of a bright scarlet colour. The great curiosity of this tree is that it throws out from every branch a number of small fibres, which hang down, and in time grow so long as to reach the ground; then they take root, and, by degrees, become the stems of fresh trees, which again throw out fresh branches, and these branches produce fresh fibres, which again take root and become new stems; thus there seems to be no end to the size or the duration of this tree. Every tree is indeed itself a grove. The stems are like pillars, and the walk amongst them delightfully shady and cool, and particularly agreeable in the hot countries where it grows. Its branches afford a retreat, and its fruit supplies nourishment for monkeys, squirrels, peacocks, and a great many different sorts of birds. An ancient writer mentions a tree of this kind which covered five acres of ground, and says that ten thousand men might easily find shelter under it.

There is now in India a Banian tree, which is nearly two thousand feet in circumference, measured round the stems; the overhanging branches cover a much larger space. It is said that there are three hundred and fifty large stems of this tree, and more than three thousand of the smaller ones; and these are constantly increasing. This tree is famed throughout Hindostan, and we are told that the Indian armies encamp around it, and it is held in great reverence as a sort of sacred tree. It is said that seven thousand men may find shelter under this extraordinary tree. The British residents in India, whilst on their hunting and shooting parties, form encampments, and spend weeks together under this noble shade. It affords a retreat for travellers, and is particularly frequented by the religious tribes of the Hindoos. It is curious to observe the monkeys shewing off their entertaining tricks, and teaching their young ones to select their food, and to jump from branch to branch, beginning with little attempts at first, till they teach them in time to be as nimble and active as themselves.—Those who live in hot climates can alone judge of the great delight of having such trees as these amongst them.

## BIOGRAPHY.

**CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS** was born in Italy about the year 1447. When he was quite a boy, he thought he should like to be a sailor, and sail all round the world.

When Columbus became a man, and

had sailed over many parts of the world, he began to think that there must be some other great country beside those that were already known.

Europe, Asia, and Africa were then only known; and, as Columbus knew that the world was round like an orange, he thought it very unlikely that half of it should have so much land on it, and the other half nothing but water; for the land side he thought would be too heavy for a proper balance. Besides this, he heard that a man who had sailed a very great way to the west had taken up a piece of timber curiously carved; and, as the wind was blowing from the west, he concluded that this must have come from some country to the westward.

Columbus went to live in Portugal, and he begged the king of that country to assist him in his attempts to discover the new continent; but, as the king of Portugal refused this, he then applied to the king and queen of Spain; and, after several years delay, he had three ships granted him and was allowed to try what he could do. These ships were not much larger than good sized boats, and he had only ninety men altogether.

On the 3d of August, 1492, Columbus set sail a little before sun-rise. Before they had gone far, they found that the ships were in very bad repair, and the men began to grumble at being sent on such an expedition in such crazy ships. They steered due westward. They encountered many difficulties, and had at different times dreadful doubts and fears, but they continued their course. At length they saw some sea-weeds, which gave them hopes that land was not very far distant. Then they saw several birds, and they were cheered still more.—After a time, however, these things disappeared, and the men began to despair; and they begged that Columbus would take them back again to their own country, for they were quite tired of seeing only sea and no land. The officers joined with the sailors, and there was nothing but tumult and complaints. At length Columbus told them, that if they would be patient for three days, if they did not see land in that time, he would go back with them to Spain.

Soon after this, they saw more flocks of birds, and they found a piece of cane newly cut, and likewise a piece of timber curiously carved, and the branch of a tree with red berries upon it. Columbus now felt sure that land was near. About midnight he saw a light; there was soon a joyful shout from one of the ships of "land, land!" In the morning an island was seen,