

NATURAL HISTORY.

THE REINDEER.

This useful animal, the general height of which is about four feet and a half, is to be found in most of the northern regions of the old and new world. It has long, slender, branched horns; those of the male are much the largest. In colour it is brown above, and white beneath, but it often becomes a greyish white as it advances in age. It constitutes the sole wealth of the Laplanders, and supplies to them the place of the horse, the cow, the sheep, and the goat. Alive and dead the Rein-Deer is equally subservient to their wants. When he ceases to exist, spoons are made of his bones, glue of his horns, bowstrings and thread of his tendons, clothing of his skin, and his flesh becomes a savoury food. During his life, his milk is converted into cheese, and he is employed to convey his owner over the snowy wastes of his native country. Such is the swiftness of this race, that two of them, yoked in sledge, will travel a hundred and twelve English miles in a day. The sledge is of a curious construction, formed somewhat in the shape of a boat, in which the traveller is tied like a child, and if attempted to be guided by any person unaccustomed to it, would instantly be upset. A Laplander who is rich has often more than a thousand Rein-Deer.

The pace of the Rein-Deer, which it can keep up for a whole day, is rather a trot than bounding: its hoofs are cloven and moveable, so that it spreads them abroad as it goes, to prevent its sinking in the snow; and as the animal moves along they are heard to crack, with a pretty loud noise. Attempts have been made, but without success, to naturalize the Rein-Deer in England. It is probable, however, that this object will ultimately be effected.

Parallel between the Languages of Men and Beasts.—It is imagined by some philosophers that birds and beasts (though without the power of articulation) understand one another by the sound they utter; and dogs and cats have each a particular language to themselves like different nations. Thus it may be supposed that the nightingales of Italy, have as fine an air for their native wood notes, as any Signior or Signora, for an Italian air; that the boars of Westphalia grunt as expressively through the nose, as the inhabitants of High Germany, and that the frogs in the Dykes of Holland, croak as intelligibly as the natives jabber their low Dutch. However this may be, we may consider those whose tongues hardly seem to be under the influence of reason, and do not keep the proper conversation of human creatures, as imitating

the language of different animals. Thus, for instance, the affinity between chattering and monkeys, and praters and parrots, is too obvious not to occur at once. Grunters and growlers may be justly compared to hogs; snarlers and curs; and the spitfire and passionate, are a sort of wild cats, that will not bear fondling, but will pur when they are pleased. Complainers are screech owls; and story tellers, always repeating the same dull note, are cuckoos. Poets, who prick up their ears at their own hideous braying, are no better than asses. Critics, in general, are venomous serpents, who delight in hissing; and some of them, who have got by heart a few technical terms, without knowing their meaning, are no other than magpies.

A SCENE OFF BERMUDA.

The evening was closing in dark and rainy, with every appearance of a gale from the westward, and the weather had become so thick and boisterous, that the lieutenant of the watch had ordered the lookout at the mast-head down on the deck. The man on his way down had gone into the main-top to bring away some things he had left in going aloft, and was in the act of leaving it, when he sung out, "A sail on the weather bow!" "What does she look like?" "Can't rightly say, sir; she is in the middle of the thick weather to windward." "Stay where you are a little. Jenkins, jump forward, and see what you can make of her from the foreyard." Whilst the topman was obeying his instructions, the look-out again hailed. "She is a ship, sir, close-hauled on the same tack; the weather clears and I can see her now."

The wind ever since noon had been blowing in heavy squalls, with appalling lulls between them. One of these gusts had been so violent as to bury in the sea the lee-guns in the waist, although the brig had nothing set but her close-reefed main-topsail, and reefed foresail. It was now spending its fury, and she was beginning to roll heavily, when, with a suddenness almost incredible to one unacquainted with these latitudes, the veil of mist that had hung to the windward the whole day was rent and drawn aside, and the red and level rays of the setting sun flashed at once, through a long arch of glowing clouds, on the black hull and tall spars of his Britannic Majesty's sloop Torch. And, true enough, we were not the only spectators of this gloomy splendor; for, right in the wake of the moonlike sun, now half sunk in the sea, at the distance of a mile or more, lay a long warlike-looking craft, apparently a frigate or heavy corvette, rolling heavily and silently in the trough of the sea, with her masts, yards, and the scanty sail she had set, in strong relief against the gloomy horizon.

Jenkins now hailed from the foreyard, "The strange sail is bearing up, sir." As he spoke, a flash was seen, followed, after what seemed a long interval, by the deadened report of the gun, as if it had been an echo, and the sharp half-ringing, half-hissing sound of the shot. It fell short, but close to us, and was evidently thrown from a heavy cannon, from the length of the range. Mr. Splinter, the first lieutenant, jumped from the gun he stood on, "Quartermaster, keep her away a bit," and dived into the cabin to make his report.

Captain Deadeye was a staid, stiff-rumped, wall-eyed, old first lieutenantish-looking veteran, with his coat of a regular Rodney-cut, broad skirts, lung waist, and standing-up collar, over which dangled either a queue, or a marlinspike with a tuft of oakum at the end of it, it would have puzzled Old Nick to say which. His lower spars were cased in tight unmentionables, of what had once been white kerseymere, and long boots, the coal scuttle tops of which served as scuppers to carry off the drainings from his coat-flaps in bad weather; he was, in fact, the "last of the sea-monsters," but like all his tribe, as brave as steel; when put to it, as alert as a cat. He had no sooner heard Splinter's report than he sprang up the ladder. "My glass, Wilson," to his steward.

"She is close to, sir; you can see her plainly without it," said Mr. Treenail, the second lieutenant, from the weather nettings, where he was reconnoitering. After a long look through his star-board blinker, (his other skylight had been shut up ever since Aboukir,) Deadeye gave orders to "clear away the weather-bow gun;" and as it was now getting too dark for flags to be seen distinctly, he desired that three lanterns might be got ready for hoisting vertically in the main rigging.

"All ready forward there?" "All ready, sir." "Then hoist away the lights, and throw a shot across her forefoot—fire!" Bang went our carronade, but our friend to windward paid no regard to the private signal; he had shaken a reef out of his topsails and was coming down fast upon us.

The enemy, for such he evidently was, now all at once yawed, and indulged us with a sight of his teeth; and there he was, fifteen ports of a side on his main deck, with his due quantum of carronades on his quarter deck and fore-castle; whilst his short lower masts, white canvas and the tremendous hoist in his topsail, showed him to be a heavy American frigate; and it was equally certain that he had cleverly hooked us under his lee, within comfortable range of his long twenty-fours. To convince the most unbelieving, three jets of flame, amidst wreaths of white smoke, glanced from his main deck; but, in this instance, the sound of the cannon was