

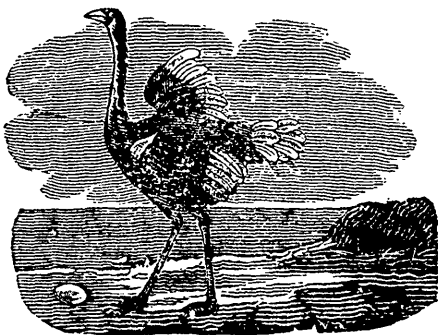
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NATURAL HISTORY.



THE OSTRICH.

The Ostrich is a bird very anciently known, since it is mentioned in the oldest of books. It has furnished the sacred writers with some of their most beautiful imagery, and its flesh was, even previous to the days of Moses, apparently a common species of food, since we find it interdicted, among other unclean animals, by the Jewish legislator.

The Ostrich is generally considered as the largest of birds, but its size deprives it of the power of flying. The medium weight of this bird may be estimated at 75 or 80 pounds, a weight which would require an immense power of wing to elevate into the atmosphere.

At a distance it bears a strong resemblance to that of a camel. It is usually seven feet high from the top of the head to the ground, but from the back it is only four.

The Ostrich is a native only of the torrid regions of Africa, and has never been bred out of that country which first produced it. This bird, so disqualified for society with man, its

habits, from preference, the most solitary and horrid deserts, where there are few vegetables to clothe the surface of the earth, and where the rain never comes to refresh it. The Arabians assert that the Ostrich never drinks: and the place of its habitation seems to confirm the assertion. In these formidable regions Ostriches are seen in large flocks, which, to the distant spectator, appeared like a regiment of cavalry, and have often alarmed a whole caravan. There is no desert, how barren soever, but is capable of supplying these animals with provision; they eat almost every thing; and these barren tracts are thus doubly grateful, as they afford both food and security. The Ostrich is of all animals the most voracious; it will devour leather, glass, hair, iron, stones, or any thing that is given. It lays very large eggs, some of them being above five inches in diameter, and weighing above fifteen pounds; these eggs have a very hard shell, somewhat resembling those of the croco-