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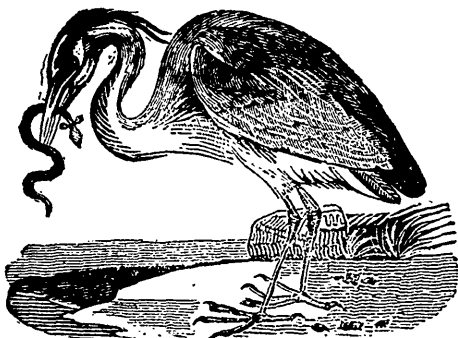
# THE INSTRUCTOR.

No. XVI.]

MONTREAL, AUGUST 12, 1835.

[PRICE 2d.

## NATURAL HISTORY.



THE COMMON HERON.

To enter into any description of the plumage of this bird is superfluous, as it is almost universally well known. By the lower orders it is most frequently denominated crane, although the latter is a totally different species, now extinct in Britain.

There is no bird better entitled "to claim the protection of the admirers of nature and picturesque scenery, from the striking efforts its presence can produce in the solitary haunts in which it delights, and where it is most commonly found" When seen, it is usually standing immovable in the shallows of rivers, on a stone on the edge of a pond, or on the bank recently deserted by the ebbing of the tide, its neck bent and drawn in between its shoulders, watching attentively the motions of its sinny prey, upon which, when once within its reach, it darts with unerring aim, transfixing it by a single stroke of its sharp bill. So motionless does the heron remain when watching for its prey, (its eye intently fixed

on the water below, eagerly seeking the slightest ripple on the surface, or other indication of the vicinity of its victim,) that it is not unfrequently taken for the stump or root of an old tree. So wary is it when fishing, that it is seldom or never seen with its back to the sun, by which a shadow would be thrown on the water, and affright the fish—but on the contrary, always places itself, when possible, in such an attitude that it resembles rather something inanimate.

Its food consists principally of fish, but it will eagerly devour frogs and other reptiles, and occasionally young water-rats and mice, &c.

A few years ago, when fishing on one of the small rivers in the county of Antrim, I was rather alarmed by one of these birds. The day was remarkably fine, and at the time I speak of, scarcely a cloud was to be seen; I was standing on the bank of the stream, shaded from the sun by a small planting, and was

intent on the capture of my flies by the wary trout. While my eyes were directed to the water, a dark, swift-moving shadow passed over that part of the river near which I stood. Startled, I looked up, and the moment I lifted my head, a loud, wild scream was uttered by a heron then passing over me; .. was within about four yards of me, and its flight had been so easy, and it so silent, that I was perfectly unconscious of its vicinity till I heard the scream it gave. — On being so unexpectedly disturbed in its flight, it raised itself as quickly as possible to a considerable height in the air, and pursued its journey towards the shores of Larne lough, whither it had been bound.

## LITERARY DEPARTMENT.

### THE RATTLESNAKE HUNTER.

BY J. G. WHITTIER.

During a delightful excursion in the vicinity of the Green Mountains, a few years since, I had the good fortune to meet with a singular character, known in many parts of Vermont as the Rattlesnake Hunter. It was a warm, clear day of sunshine, in the middle of June, that I saw him for the first time, while engaged in a mineralogical ramble amongst the hills. His head was bald, and his forehead was deeply marked with the strong lines of care and age. His form was wasted and meagre, and, but for the fiery vigor of his eye he might have been incapacitated by age and infirmity for even a slight exertion. Yet he hurried over the rude ledges of rocks with a quick and almost youthful tread; and seemed earnestly searching among the crevices and loose crags and stunted bushes around him. At once he started suddenly, drew himself back with a sort of shuddering recoil, and then smote fiercely with his staff upon the rock before him. Another and another blow, and he lifted the lithe and crushed form of a large rattlesnake upon the end of his rod.

The old man's eye glistened, but his lip trembled, as he looked upon his yet writhing victim. "Another of the accursed race!"

he muttered between his clenched teeth, apparently unconscious of my presence.

I was now satisfied that the person before me was none other than the famous rattlesnake hunter. He was known throughout the neighborhood as an outcast and a wanderer, obtaining a miserable subsistence from the casual charities of the people around him. His time was mostly spent among the rocks and rude hills where his only object seemed to be the hunting out and destroying of the dreadful *Crotalus horridus*, or rattlesnake. I immediately determined to satisfy my curiosity, which had been strangely excited by the remarkable appearance and the behaviour of the stranger. For this purpose I approached him.

"Are there many of these reptiles in this vicinity?" I enquired, pointing to the serpent.

"They are getting to be scarce," said the old man, lifting his slouched hat, and wiping his bald brow; "I have known the time when you could hardly stir ten rods from your door in this part of the state without hearing their low, quick rattle at your side, or seeing their many colored bodies coiling up in your path. But as I said before, they are getting to be scarce. The infernal race will get to be extinct in a few years; and thank God, I have myself been a considerable cause of their extermination."

"You must, of course, know the nature of these creatures perfectly well," said I. "Do you believe in their fascination?"

The old man's countenance fell. There was a visible struggle of feeling within him; for his lip quivered, and he dashed his brown hand suddenly across his eyes, as if to conceal a tear. But quickly recovering himself, he answered, in the low, deep voice of one about to reveal some horrible secret:

"I believe in the rattlesnake's power of fascination as firmly as in my own existence."

"Surely," said I, "you do not believe that they have power over human beings,"

"I do—I know it be so!" and the old man trembled when he spoke. "You are a stranger

to me,' he said slowly, after scrutinizing my features for a moment: 'but if you will go down with me to the foot of this rock, in the shade there,' and he pointed to a group of leaning oaks, that hung over the declivity, 'I will tell you a strange and sad story of my own experience.'

It may be supposed that I readily assented to this proposal. Bestowing one more blow on the rattlesnake, as if to be certain of its death, the old man descended the rocks with a rapidity that would have endangered the neck of a less practised hunter. After reaching the place that he had pointed out, the rattlesnake hunter commenced his story in a manner which confirmed what I had previously heard of his education and intellectual strength.

'I was among the earliest settlers in this part of the country. I had just finished my education at the university of Harvard, when I was induced, by the flattering representations of some of the earlier pioneers into the wild lands beyond the Connecticut, to seek my fortune in the new settlements. My wife—the old man's eye glistened an instant, and then a tear crossed his brown cheek—'my wife accompanied me, young and delicate and beautiful as she was, to this wild and rude country. I never shall forgive myself for bringing her hither—never. Young man,' he continued, 'you look like one who could pity me. You shall see the image of the girl who followed me to the new country.' And he unbound, as he spoke, a ribband from his neck, with a small miniature attached to it.

It was that of a beautiful female. She might have been twenty years of age; but there was an almost childish expression in her countenance—a softness, a delicacy, a sweetness of smile—which I have seldom seen in the features of those who have tasted, even slightly of the bitter waters of existence. The old man watched my countenance intently, as I surveyed the image of his early love. 'She must have been very beautiful,' I said, as I returned the picture.

'Beautiful!' he repeated; you may well say

so. But this avails nothing. I have a fearful story to tell: would to God I had not attempted it! But I will go on. My heart has been stretched too often on the rack of memory to suffer any new pang.

'We had resided in the new country nearly a year. Our settlements had increased rapidly, and the comforts and delicacies of life were beginning to be felt, after the weary privations and severe trials to which we had been subjected. The red men were few, and did not molest us. The beasts of the forests and mountains were ferocious, but we suffered little from them. The only immediate danger to which we were exposed resulted from the rattlesnakes, which infested our neighbourhood. Three or four of the settlers were bitten by them, and died in terrible agonies. The Indians often told us frightful stories of this snake and its powers of fascination, and although they were generally believed, yet, for myself, I confess I was rather amused than convinced by their legends.

'In one of my hunting excursions abroad on a fine morning—it was just at this time of the year—I was accompanied by my wife. 'Twas a beautiful morning. The sunshine was warm, but the atmosphere was perfectly clear and a fine breeze from the northwest shook the bright green leaves which clothed to profusion the wreathing branches above us. I had left my companion for a short time in pursuit of game; and in climbing a rugged ledge of rocks interspersed with shrubs and dwarfish trees, I was startled by a quick, grating rattle. I looked forward. On the edge of a loosened rock lay a large rattlesnake, coiling himself, as if for the deadly spring. He was within a few feet of me, and I passed for an instant to survey him. I know not why, but I stood still, and looked at the deadly serpent with a strange feeling of curiosity. Suddenly he unwounded his coil, as relenting from his purpose of hostility, and raising his head, he fixed his bright, fiery eye directly on mine. A chilling and indescribable sensation, totally different from any thing I had ever before ex-

perienced, followed this movement of the serpent; but I stood still, and gazed steadily and earnestly, for at that moment there was a visible change in the reptile. His form seemed to grow larger, and his colours brighter. His body moved with a slow, almost imperceptible motion, towards me, and a low hum of music came from him—or, at least, so it sounded in my ear—a strange, sweet melody, faint as that which melts from the throat of the humming bird. Then the tints of his body deepened, and changed and glowed like the changes of a beautiful kaleidoscope, green, purple, and gold, until I lost sight of the serpent entirely, and saw only wild and curiously woven circles of strange colors, quivering around me like an atmosphere of rainbows. I seemed in the centre of a great prism—a world of mysterious colors; and the tints varied and darkened, and lighted up again around me, and the low music went on without ceasing, until my brain reeled, and fear for the first time came like a shadow over me. The new sensation gained upon me rapidly, and I could feel the cold sweat gushing from my brow.\* I had no certainty of danger in my mind—no definite idea of peril—all was vague and clouded, like the unaccountable terrors of a dream; and yet my limbs shook, and I fancied I could feel the blood stiffening with cold, as it passed through my veins. I would have given worlds to have been able to tear myself from the spot: I even attempted to do so, but the body obeyed not the impulse of the mind. Not a muscle stirred, and I stood still, as if my feet had grown to the solid rock, with the infernal music of the tempter in my ear, and the baneful colourings of his enchantment still before me.

\* Suddenly a new sound came on my ear—it was a human voice—but it seemed strange and awful. Again—again—but I stirred not; and then a white form plunged before me, and grasped my arm. The horrible spell was at once broken—the strange colours passed from before my vision. The rattlesnake was coiling at my very feet, with glowing eyes and

uplifted fang, and my wife was clinging with terror upon me. The next instant the serpent threw himself upon us: My wife was the victim! The fatal fangs pierced deeply into her hand; and her scream of agony, as she staggered backwards from me, told the dreadful truth.

‘Then it was that a feeling of madness came upon me; and when I saw the foul serpent stealing away from his work of death, reckless of danger I sprang forward and crushed him under my feet, grinding him in pieces upon the rugged rocks. The groans of my wife now recalled me to her side, and to the horrible reality of her situation.—There was a dark livid spot on her hand, and it deepened into blackness as I led her away. We were at a considerable distance from any dwelling, and after wandering a short time, the pain of her wound became insupportable to my wife, and she swooned away in my arms. Weak and exhausted as I was, I had yet strength enough remaining to carry her to the nearest rivulet, and bathe her brow in cool water. She partially recovered, and sat down upon the bank, while I supported her head upon my bosom. Hour after hour passed away, and none came near us; and there alone, in the great wilderness, I watched over her, and prayed with her and she died!’

The old man groaned audibly, as he uttered these words; and as he clasped his long bony hands over his eyes, I could see the tears fast falling thickly through his gaunt fingers. After a momentary struggle with his feelings he lifted his head once more, and there was a fierce light in his eyes as he spoke.

‘But I have had my revenge. From that fatal moment I have felt myself fitted and set apart, by the terrible ordeal of affliction, to rid the place of my abode of its foulest curse. And I have well nigh succeeded. The fascinating demons are already few and powerless. Do not imagine,’ said he, earnestly regarding the somewhat equivocal expression of my countenance, ‘that I consider these creatures as serpents only—creeping serpents; they are the servants

of the fallen angel—the immediate minister of the infernal god!

Years have passed since my interview with the rattlesnake hunter. The place of his abode has changed; a beautiful village rises near the spot where we had the conference, and the grass of the churchyard has grown over the grave of the old hunter; but his story is yet fixed upon my mind, and time, like enamel, only burns deeper the first strong impression. It comes up before me like a remembered dream, whose features are too horrible for reality.

## RELIGIOUS.

### FOR THE INSTRUCTOR.

#### THE NOBLENES OF RELIGION.

It has been found that men of strong, cultivated, and even candid minds, often associate the idea of meanness and imbecility with vital religion. This may sometimes arise from ignorance of the great elements of the Christian system, in combined, proportionate and healthy operation, as also from finding persons void of taste, uncouth in appearance, and possessed with a very limited portion of intellect, eminently imbued with the Christian spirit. It is, however, readily admitted that the great things of the universe, at least in relation to us, occupy an unseen field. The soul, the future residence of the soul, the future friends of the soul, the great Saviour of the soul, Jehovah himself, the portion of the soul, are all invisible. Now, the Christian religion touches the soul not so much for the purpose of making it true to external relations, as to make it tremble with the steadiness of the needle to these invisible objects. The objects of sense are material, and as such necessarily limited. Spiritual objects, on the contrary, move over an illimitable field, and, therefore, sorts with the immaterial part of our nature, especially with that principle of mind which is vested with greatness bordering on the infinite—I mean the principle of expansion. At what

period of eternity shall this elastic principle reach its bounds? One feels when he thinks on the subject as if some embers of greatness, nearly extinguished, glowed at the prospect, and longed to kindle into the brightness of that glory to which eternity will light them. Now, does that religion which sustains the soul in happy converse with objects so sublime, deserve to be associated with the idea of meanness or imbecility! Let men remember that her walks are generally over an invisible field, not bounded within the narrow sphere of mortality, nor confined within the narrow prison of sensual or corporeal delights; and though no enemy to the courtesies of life, or the most exquisite polish of taste, she is most in her element when breathing the calm of holy love and aspiring after immortal glory. Fleshly minds may creep like shadows over the surface of the earth, but religion is life and spirit, flowing from God, the fountain of life, and returning to him again as into its own original. The spirit of religion always ascends; it insinuates itself through the whole soul: it loosens the soul from self-confinement and narrowness, and so renders it more capacious of Divine enjoyment. Its brief definition is “to walk with God”—and can a created nature rise to any thing more noble than to converse with the Divinity?

Should a series of essays on this subject accord with the plan of the INSTRUCTOR, more shall be forthcoming.

G.

Montreal, August 4, 1835.

Happiness is the sole pursuit of all men: how few, alas! there be who seek it right! Pleasure & wealth may well be called its phantoms, in the chase of which we too frequently pass by as of little consequence its only tangible reality—a good conscience.

Truth should ever be held sacred; equivocation is the worst species of lying; and falsehood disgraces the utterer, whether it be in a trifle or in things of more importance.

## TRAVELS.

### RUINS OF ANCIENT BABYLON.

(Continued from page 118.)

Eighty yards to the west of the fallen statue a vast quantity of perfect building is observable in detached fragments of architectural labour; and some pieces of square pillars, or columns, cover the surface of this elevated terrace. The whole is of the finest furnace brick. On a high spot, upwards of fifty feet above the level of the plain, I distinctly traced a large square pilaster, rising out of a conical mound. The brick which composed it measured thirteen inches square, by three thick, and were joined together by an almost imperceptible layer of cement.

I employed thirteen men to clear away the rubbish; and we dug down along its western face to a depth of twenty feet, when we arrived at the bricks, where bitumen alone was found to be the binding material. Here I had no trouble in extracting them with an iron instrument, something like a pickaxe. The arrow headed or cuneiform writing was stamped on all, but differed as to the number of lines. They varied from three to ten lines. The first number was the commonest, or most abundant, and the latter the most rare.

The writing was more deeply engraven on these bricks than on any others I had met with. I found one with the Babylonian writing both on its face and edge, but unfortunately it was broken. I regard it as a unique specimen; never having seen or heard of another like it. I discovered also an ornamental flat fragment of calcareous sand stone, glazed with brown enamel on the superior surface, and bearing the raised figure in good relief. This proves the Babylonians had perfectly acquired the art of enamelling. Diodorus Siculus informs us that among the great variety of painting represented upon the walls of the palace, Semiramis was seen on horseback piercing, with her dart, a panther; and her husband Ninus, in the act of fixing to the earth, with his spear, a savage lion. (Lib. ii.) M. Beauchamp found

several varnished bricks, on one of which was the figure of a lion, and on another the sun and moon. The prophet Ezekiel, in describing the vengeance of the Almighty upon Judah, says, 'She saw men portrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermilion, girded with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads, all of them princes to look to, after the manner of the Babylonians of Chaldea,' Ezekiel xiii, 14, 15.

Upon clearing away a space of twelve feet square at the base of the pilaster, I laid open a bricked platform beautifully fastened together with bitumen, each brick measuring nineteen inches and three quarters square, by three and a half thick, with the written characters along the edge, instead of being in an upright column on the face. I will venture to assert that these bricks are the largest hitherto found, as all former visitors to, and writers on, this venerable place agree in saying, that the largest bricks measure only fourteen inches square.

(To be continued.)

## MISCELLANEOUS.

### HARMONY IN FAMILIES.

Impartiality tends greatly to promote harmony in families. Hence the necessity of parents not manifesting any partiality to one or more of their children. In the favoured child it lays the foundation for pride and self importance, and in the neglected one it raises indignation, if not hatred. Whatever may be the motives assigned for the partiality, parents must answer to the Judge of all the earth for the sorrows and evils it produces.

Harmony in a family will be greatly interrupted, should the father and mother pursue different systems in the management of their children. It is, therefore, highly necessary that they adopt a similar plan, otherwise one or the other of them, and perhaps both, will lose the esteem of their children. Obedience to either is not to be expected, or the probability is, that bad habits and incorrect principles will be established.

In order to promote love and harmony among children one should not be allowed to domineer over or tease another. No envious comparisons must be drawn. Children should not be allowed to scoff at one who happens to be an offender. This practise destroys affection, and gives rise to resentment and retaliation. They should be taught to feel for one another when in disgrace, and not be prohibited from interceding.

#### THE JUDGMENT DAY.

Jerome used to say that it seemed to him as if the trumpet of the last day was always sounding in his ears, saying, 'Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment.' The generality, however, think but little of this awful and important period. A Christian king of Hungary being very sad and pensive, his brother, who was a gay courtier, was desirous of knowing the cause of his sadness. 'O, brother,' said the king, 'I have been a great sinner against God, and know not how to die or how to appear before God in judgment!' His brother making a jest of it, said, 'These are but melancholy thoughts.' The king made no reply; but it was the custom of the country that if the executioner came and sounded a trumpet before any man's door, he was presently led to execution. The king, in the dead of night, sent the executioner to sound the trumpet before his brother's door, who, hearing it, and seeing the messenger of death, sprang into the king's presence, beseeching to know in what he had offended. 'Alas brother,' said the king, 'you have never offended me; and is the sight of my executioner so dreadful and shall not I who, have greatly offended, fear to be brought before the judgment seat of Christ?'

#### APOLOGIES.

A lady invited Dean Swift to a most sumptuous dinner. She said, "Dear Dean, this fish is not as good as I could wish; though I sent for it half across the kingdom, and it cost me so much," naming an incredible price.

"And this thing is not such as I ought to have for such a guest; though it came from such a place, and cost such a sum." Thus she went on decrying and underrating every article of her expensive and ostentatious dinner and teasing her distinguished guest with apologies to find a chance to display her vanity in bringing her trouble and expense into view, until she exhausted his patience. He is reported to have risen in a passion and to have said, 'True, madam, it is a miserable dinner; and I will not eat it, but go home and dine on sixpence worth of herring.'

Such is the general character of apologies.

#### AMIALE TRAIT IN THE CHARACTER OF LINDLEY MURRAY.

"In the performance of relative duties Mr. Murray did not forget humanity to animals, of which the following is a striking instance, among many others that might be given. In early life he was fond of shooting, but after some years he became dissatisfied with it from a conviction not only that it consumes too much precious time, but also that it is improper to take away life for the sake of amusement. He believed that of the birds which are shot at many more are wounded than are actually killed and obtained; and consequently, they gradually pine away and die through pain and want of food. He had seen birds so much hurt as to be incapable of performing their natural functions; and he had reason to believe that instances of this kind are very numerous.— These reflections made such an impression on his mind, that he determined never again to indulge himself in a sport which produced so much distress to the objects of his amusement."

#### PERSEVERANCE.

Perseverance will do more than we may at first be aware of; if it will not remove every difficulty, it will certainly remove many; the most persevering may sometimes be disappointed; but those who are careless and indifferent are doubtless disappointed much oftener.



Idleness is the murderer of time and the destroyer of comfort ; it is the rich man's bane, the tradesman's ruin and the poor man's curse

Genius, like an exotic plant, is rare, and requires not only the same care and attention to bring it to perfection, but also a shelter from the squalls of fortune & the frosts of adversity, without which it will wither and die.

## POETRY.

### FOR THE INSTRUCTOR.

#### THE SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER TO HER CLASS.

For whom ought I in faith to pray,  
And humbly supplicate each day  
That God would guard and guide their way ?  
My Class.

Whom, on the sacred Sabbath, should  
I point and guide along the road  
That leads to glory and to God ?  
My Class.

Whom do I long to see live well,  
And those sweet truths to others tell,  
On which we've often loved to dwell ?  
My Class.

Whom do I hope in Heaven to meet,  
And with ecstatic love to greet,  
Where joys are pure and bliss complete ?  
My Class.

Saviour ! do thou thy grace impart,  
Give each a true believing heart,  
And teach me rightly to exhort  
My Class.

And should a flattering world allure,  
O rescue in temptation's hour,  
And save by thine Almighty power,  
My Class.

Whom do I pray the Lord will aid  
With that rich love in Christ display'd,  
If ever on a sick bed laid ?  
My Class.

Soon will our wanderings here be past,  
Eternity approaches fast ;  
Lord, may we reign with thee at last,  
I and my little Class.  
Montreal, August 4. E.

#### A VISION OF HEAVEN.

Once, with a fearful, trembling land,  
I drew aside the veil, to see  
The glories of the heavenly land,  
The brightness of eternity.  
But soon the vision overcame,  
And terror seized my quaking frame.

I look'd—I saw—but O ! the light,  
The bliss, the splendour of the place,  
The shining host, who all unite  
In songs before Jehovah's face !  
A sudden dimness seized my eye,  
For who could look on Deity ?

One sight I caught of heaven's high train,  
One glimpse of that eternal home ;  
I heard one sweet melodious strain,  
And all my powers were overcome,  
I fell aghast ! my senses fled !  
Nor dared I raise again my head.

The sight, O ! ne'er shall I forget,  
The song still vibrates in my ear ;  
When shall I reach that blest estate,  
When in yon holy throng appear ?  
Haste, Jesus, fetch my soul away,  
To dwell with thee in endless day,

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