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THE WEEKLY MIRROR.

VOL. I.]

HALIFAX, FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 1835.

[No. 15

NATURAL HISTORY.

THE SQUIRREL.

Natural History, (by which we mean an account of the different productions of nature, whether they belong to the animal, the vegetable, or the mineral kingdom,) is a very pleasant, as well as useful study: we intend, therefore, continuing to give in every number of our little paper, a short piece under this head.

The squirrel is about the size of a small rabbit, with shorter ears, and a beautiful bushy tail, which spreads like a fan, and, when thrown up, covers the whole body.—It is a very beautiful and gentle little animal.

Its food consists of fruits, nuts, and acorns; and it is cleanly, active, and industrious,—just as all boys, and girls, and men, and women, should be.

It lives chiefly on trees, and jumps with surprising activity from one branch to another.

It does not, however, waste all its time in jumping and skipping, and sitting in pretty attitudes; but it is a very prudent and thoughtful animal, and it takes care to collect a supply of provisions in the autumn, which it lays by against the time of winter, when it can find no food.

It builds its nest in trees, just where the large branches begin to fork off into small ones: this nest is built with moss, and twigs, and dry leaves: these the clever little animal binds together with great art, so as to make a safe shelter against the weather. It leaves only a small opening at the top; and even this it secures by a sort of covering, or umbrella, pointed something like a sugar loaf, which keeps off all the rain from the nest.—Here the animal finds a shelter for itself and its young from the storms of winter, and from the hot rays of the sun in summer. See how this little animal teaches us forethought and contrivance, and good management! and there is scarcely an animal in the world that would not,—if we were but wise enough to see to it.

In Lapland, and the large forests towards the north, the squirrels are observed to change their habitation, and to remove, in vast numbers, from one country to another. Sometimes, thousands of them are seen together travelling directly forward, whilst neither rocks, forests, nor other hindrances can stop them:—a good lesson for us all to be diligent and persevering and not to be easily frightened by difficulties.

When the squirrels meet with broad rivers, or extensive lakes, they take a very extraordinary method of crossing them. Upon approaching the banks, and perceiving the breadth of the water, they return, as if by common consent, into the neighbouring for-

est, each in search of a piece of bark, which answers all the purposes of boats for wafting them over. When the whole company is ready, they boldly commit their little fleet to the waves; every squirrel sitting on his own piece of bark, and fanning the air with its tail to drive the vessel to its desired port. In this manner they sometimes cross lakes several miles broad; but it sometimes happens that a sudden gust of wind oversets the whole navy, and there is a wreck of two or three thousand sail. On such occasions, the Laplanders gather up the dead bodies, as they are thrown on shore, eat the flesh, and sell the skins for above a shilling a dozen.

ASTRONOMY.

There are other bodies in the Solar System, besides those we have already described, called *Comets*. They generally appear like Stars, with long tails, or trains of light. They sometimes come very near the Sun, and sometimes remove from him to a greater distance than Saturn. No branch of Astronomy is so imperfect as that which relates to comets. These illustrious strangers, although they attract more curiosity and attention than the regular luminaries of Heaven, generally remain so short a time visible to us, are so unequal in their movements, and so eccentric in their courses, that it is difficult accurately to determine their orbits, their periods, or their nature.

ECLIPSES—Every Planet and Moon is enlightened by the Sun, and casts a shadow towards that point of the Heavens which is opposite the Sun. We will just mention a simple thing to give you an idea of this—You have observed when you have been walking on a fine sunny day, that you have seen your own shadow cast upon the ground *opposite to the Sun*; and that if the Sun shone to the South of you, your shadow would appear North of you. A shadow is nothing but an absence of light in the space hid from the Sun by the dark body which comes between his rays. An Eclipse of the Sun is produced by the Earth coming in contact with the shadow of the Moon; therefore when the Sun is eclipsed, we see the dark body of the Moon before the Sun. The Sun is much larger than the Moon; but the Moon being so very near the Earth, appears about the same size as the Sun; if this were not the case, we could never have any very large Eclipses of the Sun.

The 5th chapter of Matthew probably contains more sound philosophy than any other writing in any language of the same amount.

COMMON THINGS.

NO. 9.—AIR.

By referring back to the simple elements of nature, as mentioned in previous numbers, a person may readily understand the different kinds of air or gas which exist in nature or are formed by art. For although they are numerous, and represented by long and odd words, the elements which compose them are few, and easily understood and remembered.

The atmosphere, which is perhaps more commonly termed air than any other substance, is composed essentially, as has more than once been mentioned, of oxygen and nitrogen; though carbonic acid, hydrogen; carburetted hydrogen, and many other airs or gases, are either constantly or occasionally combined with those two.

Besides this view of the chemical ingredients of the atmosphere, its mechanical properties are of a most interesting character. Among the mechanical properties of the atmosphere or common air, its weight perhaps is the most striking and most important. The whole weight of atmosphere upon the earth, is about equal to a quantity of water sufficient to cover the whole of the earth's surface to the depth of thirty feet. And by considering the earth a globe of 8,000 miles in diameter, it is easy to calculate how many cubic feet or hogsheads of water would be equal in weight to the atmosphere upon its surface.

The weight of the atmosphere, like the weight of every other kind of matter, arises from the attraction of the earth upon it. By the weight of air, together with its penetrating nature, it finds its way into almost every other substance. Water contains it in large quantities, except for which fishes could not live in water. All vegetable substances, even the most solid oak, contain much of it. It is diffused through all animal matter. It is mixed with our blood, and circulates in our veins. It undoubtedly finds its way far into the depths of the earth, perhaps to its centre. It is hence evident that common air, besides covering the surface of the earth to the height of forty-five miles or more, is diffused through most other substances in the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms.

Common air not only spreads itself over the earth's surface, and penetrates to its centre, but it is constantly performing an infinite variety of operations, important to the happiness, and essential to the existence of every living acting being. It is constantly upon the march, from the equator to the poles, and from the poles to the equator.

It is also passing from the land to the sea, and from the sea to the land, from mountains to valleys, and from valleys to mountains, either in the gentle breeze, the violent tempest, or the destructive tornado.

Nor are its moderate or its rapid marches, without their uses. Wherever and however it travels, it carries upon its wings, health, animation, fragrance, or some other blessing for the animal and vegetable creation, especially for man.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE THUNDER-STORM.

I was never a man of feeble courage.—There are few scenes either of human or elemental strife, upon which I have not looked with a brow of daring. I have stood in front of battle, when swords were gleaming and circling around me like fiery serpents of the air—I have sat on the mountain pinnacle, when the whirlwind was rending its oaks from their rocky clefts and scattering them piecemeal, to the clouds—I have seen these things with a swelling soul, that knew not, that recked not of danger—but there is something in the thunder's voice that makes me tremble like a child. I have tried to overcome this unmanly weakness—I have called pride to my aid. I have sought for moral courage in the lessons of philosophy—but it avails me nothing—at the first low moaning of the distant cloud, my heart shrinks, quivers, gasps, and dies within me.

My involuntary dread of thunder had its origin in an incident that occurred when I was a child of ten years. I had a little cousin—a girl of the same age with myself, who had been the companion of my childhood. Strange, that after the lapse of almost a score of years, that countenance should seem so familiar to me. I can see the bright young creature—her large eye flashing like a beautiful gem; her free locks streaming as in joy upon the rising gale, and her cheek glowing like a ruby through a wreath of transparent snow. Her voice had the melody and joyousness of a bird's, and when she bounded over the wooded hill or the fresh green valley, shouting a glad answer to every voice of nature, and clapping her little hands in the very ecstasy of young existence, she looked as if breaking away like a freed nightingale from the earth, and going off where all things were beautiful and happy like herself.

It was a morning in the middle of August. The little girl had been passing some time at my father's house, and she was now to return home. Her path lay across the fields, and I gladly became the companion of her walk. I never knew a summer's morning more beautiful and still. Only one little cloud was visible, and that seemed as pure, and white, and peaceful, as if it had been the incense smoke of some burning censor of

the skies. The leaves hung silent in the woods and the waters of the bay had forgotten their undulations, the flowers were bending their heads as if dreaming of the rainbow and the dew, and the whole atmosphere was of such soft and luxurious sweetness, that it seemed a cloud of roses, scattered down by the hand of a Peri from the far off gardens of Paradise. The green earth and the blue sea lay abroad in their boundlessness, and the peaceful sky bent over and blessed them. The little creature at my side was in a delirium of happiness, and her clear, sweet voice came ringing upon the air as often as she heard the tones of a favourite bird, or found some strange and lovely flower in her frolicsome wanderings.—The unbroken and almost supernatural tranquillity continued until noon. Then, for the first time, the indications of an approaching tempest were manifest. Over the summit of a mountain, at the distance of about a mile, the folds of a dark cloud became distinctly visible, and, the same instant, a hollow roar came down upon the winds as it had been the sound of waves in a rocky cavern. The cloud rolled out like a banner-fold upon the air, but still the atmosphere was as calm, and the leaves as motionless as before, and there was not even a quiver upon the sleeping waters to tell of the coming hurricane.

To escape the tempest was impossible.—As the only resort we fled to an oak that stood at the foot of a tall ragged precipice. Here we remained and gazed almost breathlessly upon the clouds, marshalling themselves like fierce giants in the sky. The thunder was not frequent, but every burst was so fearful that the young creature who stood by me shut her eyes convulsively, clung with desperate strength to my arm, and shrieked as if her heart would break.—A few minutes and the storm was upon us. During the height of its fury, the little girl raised her fingers to the precipice that towered above us. I looked up and an amethystine flame was quivering upon its grey peaks—and the next moment the clouds opened, the rocks tottered to their foundations and a roar like groan filled the air, and I felt myself blinded and thrown, I knew not whither. How long I remained insensible, I know not, but when consciousness returned, the violence of the tempest was abating, the roar of the winds dying in the tree tops, and the deep tones of the cloud coming in fainter murmurs from the eastern hills.

I arose, and looked trembling and almost deliriously around. She was there—the dear idol of my infant love—stretched out upon the wet, green earth. After a moment of irresolution, I went up and looked upon her. The handkerchief upon her neck was slightly rent, and a single dark spot upon her bosom told where the pathway of death had been. At first I clasped her to

my breast with a feeling of agony, and then laid her down and gazed into her face almost with a feeling of calmness. Her bright dishevelled ringlets clustered sweetly around her brow, the look of terror had faded from her lips, and an infant smile was pictured beautifully there, the red rose tinge upon her cheek was lovely as in life, and as I pressed it to my own, the fountain of tears was opened, and I wept as if my head were waters. I have but a dim recollection of what followed—I only know, that I remained weeping until the coming on of twilight, and that I was then taken tenderly by the hand and led home, where I saw the countenances of parents and sisters.

Many years have gone by upon their wings of light and shadow, but the scenes I have portrayed still comes over me, at times, with a terrible distinctness. The old oak yet stands at the base of the precipice, but its limbs are black and dead, and its hollow trunk, looking upwards to the sky as if 'calling to the clouds for drink,' is an emblem of rapid and noiseless decay. A year ago I visited the spot, and the thoughts of by-gone years came mournfully back to me—thoughts of the little innocent being, who fell by my side like some beautiful tree of Spring rent up by a whirlwind in the midst of its blossoming. But I remembered, and oh! there was joy in the memory—that she had gone where no lightnings slumber in the folds of the rainbow cloud, and where the sun-lit waters are never broken by the storm breath of Omnipotence.

My readers will understand why I shrink in terror from the thunder. Even the consciousness of security is no relief to me—my fear has assumed the nature of an instinct, and seems indeed a part of my existence.

POPULAR SUPERSTITIONS.

Continued.

Several years afterwards, an old woman, who long had filled the place of a sick nurse, was taken very ill, and was attended by a medical member of the club. To him with many expressions of regret, she acknowledged that she had long before attended Mr. —, naming the president, whose appearance had surprised the club so strangely, and that she felt distress of conscience, on account of the manner in which he died. She said, as his malady was attended by a light headedness, she had been directed to keep a close watch upon him during his illness. Unhappily she slept, and during her sleep the patient had awakened and left the apartment. When on her own awaking, she found the bed empty, and the patient gone, she forthwith hurried out of the house to seek him, and met him in the act of returning. She got him, she said, replaced in the bed, but it was only to die there.—She added, to convince her hearer of the truth of what she said, that immediately

after the poor gentleman expired, a deputation of two members from the club came to inquire after their president's health, and received for answer, that he was already dead. This confession explained the whole matter. The delirious patient had very naturally taken the road to the club, from some recollection of his duty of the night. In approaching and returning from the apartment, he had used one of the pass keys already mentioned, which made his way shorter. On the other hand, the gentlemen sent to inquire after his health, had reached his lodging by a more circuitous road, and thus there had been time for him to return, to what proved his death-bed, long before they reached his chamber. The philosophical witnesses of this strange scene, were now as anxious to spread this story, as they had formerly been to conceal it—since it showed in what a remarkable manner, men's eyes might turn traitors to them, and impress them with ideas far different from the truth.

Fortune-tellers often predict some calamity, as sickness or death, which actually comes to pass. Here we see the power of imagination in producing the effect feared. The fear of death has often deprived one of life. An instance of the power of imagination in this respect, is given by Stuart in his journal of a residence at the Sandwich Islands; one of the most entertaining and instructive books in our language.

'A thief,' says he, 'was put to flight from our yard one day, while we were at dinner. A lad joined in the chase, and seized the culprit, but lost his hold by the tearing of his outer garment. The thief was greatly exasperated, and immediately engaged a sorcerer to pray the boy to death. Information of this reached the lad in the course of the afternoon; and we soon perceived him to be troubled by the intelligence, though he attempted with us to ridicule the superstition. The next morning, he did not make his appearance with the other boys; and upon inquiry from them, they said he was sick. We asked the nature of his sickness; to which they replied—that he was sick from the prayer of the sorcerer perhaps. We found him lying in the corner of his house, pale with fear, and trembling like an aspen leaf, and discovered that he had not slept during the night; we were satisfied that the whole arose from terror; and compelled him, notwithstanding his declaration that he was too sick to come from his retreat—diverted his mind—set him to work, and before noon he was as full of life and spirits as ever—laughed at his fears, and began to defy the power of the sorcerer.'

To be Continued

FOR THE MIRROR.

The following brief account of the downfall of a youth, affords a melancholy instance

of the fatal consequences of permitting our covetous disposition to predominate.

D— was the son of a poor but respectable farmer, who lived not many miles Eastward of Halifax. He received a fair education, and at the age of 16 he entered the services of Mr. D—, as clerk in his store. Here he exhibited many tokens of future usefulness to his master—being intelligent and active, and well acquainted with the Gaelic—the only language that many of his master's customers could speak. But, ere he was long in his new situation, temptation in some of its most delusive forms, presented itself to him. Mr. D—'s many engagements elsewhere prevented him from being very much in the shop, and D— was thus left in charge of his master's property.—With his first deviation I am unacquainted; probably he at first shuddered at the idea of meddling with what was not his own, and formed resolutions of integrity. Had these, his first resolutions been strictly adhered to, he might in future life, have proved an ornament to his profession; but being from home, he had no kind friend to warn him—no affectionate parent to dissuade him, when tempted; under these circumstances he could not overcome his covetous disposition. He extracted from his master's drawer a portion of his profits. This was the commencement of a speedy downfall. The practice became frequent—and in his eyes the sin less heinous, or perhaps no sin at all, to retain for himself a portion of his master's profits. Among other things a valuable watch was purchased with the money thus obtained. Having free access to the cellar, he purloined therefrom, night after night, a number of wine bottles, which were carried to the workshop of an acquaintance, who instead of admonishing him, cheerfully regaled himself upon their contents.

Thus rapidly did poor D— hurry down the stream of dissipation overcome by temptation in every form it might present itself. But these things could not remain long. A circumstance unnecessary now to relate, led to a discovery of the whole affair—a search was made and it was found that property to a great amount had been purloined by this injudicious, unhappy youth, who was immediately discharged from his master's service, with the loss of that which he ought to have esteemed more valuable than riches, namely a good character.

Had you during the last summer, entered the Jail-house in —, you there would have observed, confined within its limits, a man of grey hairs, bending under the inirmity of old age, with a countenance fully indicating sorrow within. Upon inquiry, you would have been told, that he was the unfortunate parent of the youth whose unhappy history we have just narrated. Rather than permit his son to suffer the punishment due to his crime he became security for the pay-

ment of the lost property. But being poor, and unable to pay the amount when demanded, he was confined in jail for the recovery of the same. Unhappy parent! he thus procured his son's liberty by the sacrifice of his own.

This, dear reader, is the short history of this wayward youth. May it prove an instructive one to you. You perhaps are young, and exposed to many temptations; but beware of the consequences if you permit them to overcome you. Temptation may present itself in many ways, but your first care should be to shun the place where it is most apt to present itself. Thus you will frequently pass in safety while others less judicious are overcome. MELVILLE.

P...u, April 1835.

WEEKLY MIRROR.

FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 1835.

The Annual Meeting of the Halifax Temperance Society, was held at the Acadian School room, on Tuesday evening, an interesting report was read by the Secretary, and an able Address delivered by the Rev. Mr. Ritchie. The officers elected for the ensuing year, were J. W. Johnston, Esq. President; B. Murdoch, Esq. V. P. Mr. J. H. Anderson, Treasurer; Mr. E. Ward, and J. Slayter, Esq. Secretaries. A managing Committee of 12 gentlemen, including all the resident Clergymen of the Town was also chosen. Presidents of other Temperance Societies to be members (ex officio) of the Committee.

LONDON, March 21, 1835.

THE FRENCH CLAIM.—With respect to the American Indemnity, the Paris correspondent of the London Times writes as follows:—"The fate of the American Question seems tolerably secure. It is expected that the report of the Committee will be presented on Saturday, [21st] and that the discussion will be brought on in course of the next week. An amendment on the motion for the adoption of the report, which is understood to recommend the simple and unconditional recognition of the Treaty, will suggest that the whole question be opened, that a rigorous investigation of the claims be entered into, and that nothing more be paid than such investigation shall show to be due. It is expected, however, that the ministers, with the aid of those earnest remonstrances which daily arrive from all the great commercial towns of the kingdom, will be able to command a majority of about 10, in favour of the simple adoption of the report; and the Legislative sanction of the treaty.

A Public Meeting of the Halifax Poor Man's Temperance Society will be held in the Methodist Protestant Church on Wednesday evening next, at half past 6 o'clock. The friends of Temperance and the public generally are invited to attend. Several Gentlemen may be expected to address the meeting.

POETRY.

NAUTICAL PHILOSOPHY

One night came on a hurricane—
 The sea was mountains rolling—
 When Barney Buntline turned his quid,
 And cried to Billy Bowline—
 "There 's a sou-wester coming Billy,
 Don't ye hear it roar now?
 Heav'n help 'em, how I pities them
 Unhappy folks on shore now.
 Fool-hardy chaps as lives in towns,
 What dangers they are all in—
 At night lie quaking in their beds,
 For fear the roof will fall in—
 Poor creatures, how they envies us,
 And wishes, I've a notion,
 For our good luck in such a storm,
 To be upon the ocean.
 Now as to them that's out all day
 On business from their houses,
 And late at night are walking home,
 To cheer their babes and spouses,
 While you and I, upon the deck,
 Are comfortably lying,
 O my!—what tiles and chimney tops,
 About their heads are flying!
 You and I, Bill, have often heard,
 How folks are ruin'd and undone,
 By overturns in carriages,
 By thieves and fires in London—
 We've heard what risks all landmen run,
 From Noblemen to tailors,
 Then Billy, let's bless Providence
 That you and I are sailors."

THE WINDS.

*When the loud North, with heavy sweep,
 Roars at the forest side;
 Or, driven above the raging deep,
 Its hurrying storm-clouds ride:
 Amid the scene sublime will rise
 That sympathy, for those
 Now on the ocean, which denies
 The feeling mind repose.
 The East's ungenial vapors cling
 To every herb and tree:—
 The South may listless languor bring
 With its serenity.
 But when the West's reviving breeze
 Chases the morning showers,
 Then will a mind and heart at ease
 Joy with the opening flowers.*

BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF MAINE.

Since the separation of this State from Massachusetts, Maine has increased very rapidly in wealth and general importance.—The country has been found far superior to what it was supposed to be twenty or thirty years ago. The inhabitants were then ranged along the coast and the banks of the principal rivers, where the soil is generally poor.

But within the last fifteen or twenty years, the settlements have been extended into the interior on the great swells between the Penobscot and Kennebec, and the Androscoggin, where the quality of land is very good.—On the St. John and indeed in the whole northern section embraced in the valley of the St. John, and in the basis of the great rivers Aroostook, Temiscouta, St. Francois, Allagash, and Walloostook, the soil is far superior to any in the other parts of New England, except, perhaps, some portions of comparatively small extent. Unless the present boundary question should have more serious consequences on the prosperity of Maine than is generally apprehended, we may shortly expect to see the whole of the Northerly portion of the State inhabited.

The coldness of the climate of the eastern country has often been regarded as a great misfortune,—but we may observe in the first place, that mistakes of some consequence on the subject have been prevalent even in New-England,—and secondly that the severity of the winters appears to have diminished within the last twenty-years. Besides a climate can be regarded as good or bad, only as it has a good or bad effect on important agricultural products, on the health and pleasures of the inhabitants, or on the facility of the intercourse between the various sections. Now all those articles of agriculture that are produced in New England, except some things of little or no consequence can be successfully cultivated in this State, and wheat,—the most important of all agricultural products,—which can hardly be raised at all in Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island, is one of the most healthy in the Union, and the cold steady winters, instead of diminishing the ease of communication between the various parts, produce facilities for the traveller, and for the transportation of heavy commodities, that are enjoyed in no other seasons. The vast forests which are an inexhaustible source of wealth, would not only be valueless, but a great incumbrance, if it were necessary to make a smooth road of earth to every valuable tree.

Besides the conveyance of the agricultural productions to the great market towns, in a country yet unprovided with permanent roads to an extent adequate to its wants, can be performed only during the continuance of the snows. A winter like that of Carolina or even Maryland, would be a heavy calamity to the country,—and even the late moderate unsteady winters have been regarded as detrimental. Without discussing the possible or probable effects of the climate on the future prosperity of the State, we may consider it at present as the best fitted for the wants of the inhabitants.

How long the great lumber trade will be carried on with the same vigor, as at this time it is impossible to determine,—but no

on, acquainted with the forests of the country can have any fear of its decline within the present century. Much of the best timber in the lower parts of this State, has, however, been taken away, and many logs within a few years, have been driven from ports as high as the lakes Caribou, Chesuncook, on the Penobscot, and Moosehead on the Kennebec.

Those who form their notions of the forests from the Southern portion of New England, have but a poor idea of the appearance of the luxuriant and heavy growth of wood in the vast wilderness in the upper part of Maine. The traveller here is shrouded in perpetual gloom,—the sun's rays are hidden by a thick canopy raised far above his head, and he moves in a cool refreshing atmosphere during the most sultry day. His attention is almost constantly attracted by the wild birds and animals, which with an awkward curiosity and surprising tameness watch all his motions. The forests form a very important feature in almost every prospect in this State.

Some of the views on the mountains and broad swells between the large rivers, are extremely beautiful; the ocean at a distance of forty or fifty miles on the one hand, and Katahdin, with the greatest cluster of mountains in the centre of the State on the other, are plainly visible. During the autumn in the northern part, the forest assumes the most gorgeous colors,—the leaves of the maple and some other trees are then of a bright red or yellow, and combined with evergreens, present a beautiful appearance.—*N. A. Review.*

QUESTIONS FOR EXAMINATION.

METALS—*What mines are noted for yielding tin?—What metal is most malleable?—Which is most difficult to melt, iron or silver?—Which is the strongest of the metals?*

ASTRONOMY—*What is the Sun?—How much is he larger than the Earth?—Which planet is nearest to the Sun?—What planet is the third in order from the Sun?—How are days and nights caused?—How are the seasons caused?—Why is the Moon called a secondary planet?—How long does the Moon take to go round the Earth?—What planet is next the Earth?—Which is the greatest planet in the solar system?—What planet moves next to Jupiter?—What is Saturn remarkable for?*

Printed and Published every FRIDAY, by
 James Bowes, Marchington's Lane.

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