

THE INSTRUCTOR.

No. VIII.]

MONTREAL, JUNE 17, 1835.

[PRICE 2D

NATURAL HISTORY.



THE GOLDFINCH.

(FOR THE INSTRUCTOR.)

The goldfinch is a bird of the sparrow class, having a sharp conical bill and open oval nostrils. The front of the head is of a bright and beautiful red, and the crown black, the greater portion of the body is brown, and the wings blackish, with yellow across the middle of each.

These birds are not only found throughout Asia and Africa, but are very common in Europe, particularly in Great Britain and Ireland. Their nests are constructed in orchards and gardens, and the eggs are four or five in number, of a whitish colour spotted with brown. Having performed the duties of parents, they congregate in flocks, and thus spend the winter until the ensuing spring. The goldfinch is not only admired for the beauty of its plumage, but for the vivacity and sprightliness of its song. Added to these, it is capable of being taught many curious

tricks; one of the most remarkable is that of drawing up small buckets, containing their food and water, into their cage, and having satiated their hunger, they lower them again by the cords to which they are suspended.

W.

THE SPARROW.

Sparrow, the gun is level'd; quit that wall.
—Without the will of Heaven I cannot fall.

The sparrow is mentioned in this place only under a hope, in some measure, of rescuing it from the extreme degree of odium with which it is loaded, in consequence of the supposed injury it does by feeding upon corn. This bird is by no means without its utility, even to the very persons who incessantly seek its destruction. On a calculation made by Professor Bradley, it was ascertained that a pair of sparrows, during the time they have young ones, destroy, on an average, 3850

caterpillars every week. We observed the two parents to bring to the nest at least forty caterpillars in an hour, and, on a supposition that they might have been thus occupied 12 hours every day, it will yield the above number per week. But their utility is not confined to the destruction of caterpillars. They likewise feed their young ones with butterflies and other winged insects, each of which, if not thus destroyed, would be the parent of hundreds of caterpillars.

In many parts of the world sparrows are in considerable demand as articles of luxury for the table.

LITERARY DEPARTMENT.

THE WIDOW AND HER SON.

(CONCLUDED.)

The parents of the deceased had resided in the village from childhood. They inhabited one of the neatest cottages, and by various rural occupations, and the assistance of a small garden, had supported themselves creditably and comfortably, and led a happy and a blameless life.—“ Ah, Sir !” said the good woman, “ he was such a comely lad, so sweet tempered, so kind to every one around him, so dutiful to his parents ! It did one’s heart good to see him of a Sunday, dressed out in his best, so tall, so straight, so cheery, supporting his old mother to church—for she was always fonder of leaning on George’s arm than on her goodman’s, and, poor soul, she might well be proud of him, for a finer lad there was not in the country round.”

Unfortunately, he soon was tempted, during a year of scarcity and agricultural hardship, to enter into the service of one of the small crafts that plied on a neighbouring river. He had not been long in this employ, when he was entrapped by a press-gang, and carried off to sea. His parents received tidings of his seizure, but beyond that they could learn nothing. It was the loss of their main prop. The father, who was already infirm, grew heartless and melancholy, and sunk into his

grave. The widow, left lonely in her age and feebleness, could no longer support herself and came upon the parish. Still there was a kind feeling to her throughout the village, and a certain respect, as being one of the oldest inhabitants. As no one applied for the cottage in which she had spent so many happy days, she was permitted to remain in it, where she lived solitary and almost helpless. The few wants of nature were chiefly supplied from the scanty productions of her little garden, which the neighbours would now and then cultivate for her. It was but a few days before the time at which these circumstances were told me, that she was gathering some vegetables for her repast, when she heard the cottage door, which faced the garden, suddenly opened. A stranger came out, and seemed to be looking eagerly and wildly around. He was dressed in seaman’s clothes, was emaciated and ghastly pale, and bore the air of one broken by sickness and hardships. He saw her, and hastened towards her, but his steps were faint and faltering: he sank on his knees before her, and sobbed like a child. The poor woman gazed upon him with a vacant and wandering eye: “ Oh my dear, dear mother ! don’t you know your son ? your poor boy George ?” It was indeed the wreck of her once noble lad; who, shattered by wounds, by sickness and foreign imprisonment, had, at length, dragged his wasted limbs homeward, to repose among the scenes of his childhood.

I will not attempt to detail the particulars of such a meeting, where joy and sorrow were so completely blended; still he was alive! he might yet live to comfort and cherish her old age. Nature, however, was exhausted in him; and if anything had been wanting to finish the work of fate, the desolation of his native cottage would have been sufficient.

He stretched himself on the pallet on which his widowed mother spent many a sleepless night, and he never rose from it again.

The villagers, when they heard that George Somers had returned, crowded to see him, offering every comfort and assistance that

their humble means afforded. He was too weak, however, to talk—he could only look his thanks: His mother was his constant attendant; and he seemed unwilling to be helped by any other hand.

There is something in sickness that breaks down the pride of manhood; that softens the heart, and brings it back to the feelings of infancy. Who that has languished, even in advanced life, in sickness and despondency; who that has pined on a weary bed in the neglect and loneliness of a foreign land: but has thought on the mother “that looked on his childhood,” that smoothed his pillow, and administered to his helplessness? Oh! there is an enduring tenderness in the love of a mother to a son, that transcends all other affections of the heart. It is neither to be chilled by selfishness, nor daunted by danger, nor weakened by worthlessness, nor stifled by ingratitude. She will sacrifice every comfort for his convenience; she will surrender every pleasure to his enjoyment; she will glory in his fame, and exult in his prosperity; and if misfortune overtake him, he will be dearer to her from misfortune; and if disgrace settle upon his name, she will still love and cherish him in spite of his disgrace; and if all the world beside cast him off, she will be all the world to him.

Poor George Somers had known what it was to be in sickness, and none to soothe—lonely and in prison, and none to visit him. He could not endure his mother from his sight—if she moved away, his eye would follow her. She would sit for hours by his bed, watching him as he slept. Sometimes he would start from a feverish dream, and look anxiously up until he saw her bending over him; when he would take her hand, lay it on his bosom, and fall asleep with the tranquility of a child. In this way he died.

My first impulse on hearing this humble tale of affliction, was to visit the cottage of the mourner, and administer pecuniary assistance, and if possible comfort. I found, however, on inquiry, that the good feelings of the vil-

lagers had prompted them to do every thing that the case admitted: and as the poor know best how to console each other's sorrows, I did not venture to intrude.

The next Sunday I was at the village church; when, to my surprise, I saw the poor old woman, tottering down the aisle to her accustomed seat on the steps of the altar.

She had made an effort to put on something like mourning for her son; and nothing could be more touching than this struggle between pious affection and utter poverty; a black ribbon or so—a faded black handkerchief, and one or two more such humble attempts to express by outward signs that grief which passes show. When I looked round upon the stolid monuments, the stately hatchments, the cold marble pomp, with which grandeur mourned magnificently over departed pride, and turned to this poor widow, bowed down by age and sorrow at the altar of her God, and offering up the prayers and praises of a pious, though a broken heart—I felt that this living monument of real grief was worth them all.

I related her story to some of the wealthy members of the congregation, and they were moved by it. They exerted themselves to render her situation more comfortable, and to lighten her afflictions. It was, however, but smoothing a few steps to the grave. In the course of a Sunday or two after, she was missed from her usual seat at church, and before I left the neighbourhood, I heard, with a feeling of satisfaction, that she had quietly breathed her last, and had gone to rejoin those she loved, in the world where sorrow is never known, and friends are never parted.

RELIGIOUS.

PULPIT ELOQUENCE.

The following extracts, from a sermon of the Rev. J. Newland Maffit, at New Orleans, although somewhat too florid, are yet truly vivid and eloquent.

“He commenced with the text,—‘I have been young, and now I am old, yet have I

never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his ear begging bread.' In his pictures of youth and age, and of the sole consolation—'the one thing needful'—which should sustain both, he broke forth into the following sublime emblem :

'My friends, as I look down from this advantageous eminence, upon the different mortal ages that appear before me—upon cheeks painted with the rosy bloom of childhood, and lips redolent with the corrugated lineaments and snow-sprinkled temples of age, my mind labours with a fearful comparison. I contrast the full veins and fair moulded features of childhood, with the thin and shrivelled aspects of declining years : and I liken them all to the scenes which we meet with on the broad ocean of existence. In our better days, we leave the pleasant land of youth in a fairy bark ; the sunshine laughs upon the pennon, and trembles on the sail ; the sweet winds refresh our nostrils from the flowery shore, the blue vistas delight our eyes, the waves dance in brightness beneath our keel ; the sky smiles above us, the sea around us, and the land behind us, as it recedes ; and before, a track of golden brightness seems to herald our way. Time wears on, and the shore fades to the view. The bark and its inmates are alone on the ocean. The sky becomes clouded—the invisible wind sweeps with a hollow murmur along the deep—the sun sinks like a mass of blood over the waters ; which rise and tumble in mad confusion through a wide radius of storm—the clouds, like gloomy curtains, are lifting from afar. The sails are rent ; the tackle departs ; broken cordage streams and whistles to the tempest ; the waves burst like molten mountains upon the half submerged and shuddering deck ; masts are rent in splinters ; the seaman is washed from the wheels. Cries of terror, and anguish mingle with the remorseless dash of billows, and the howling of thunder and storm. The foundered boat sinks as she launches—the deck is breaking. God of mercy ! Who shall appear for the rescue ? Where fold the arms, the arms that are mighty to save !

Men & brethren aid is near at hand. Through the rifts of the tempest, beaming over the tumultuous waters, moves a pavillion of golden light. The midnight is waning ; gushes of radiance sprinkle the foam ; a towering form smiles on the eyes of the despairing voyagers, encircled with a halo of glory. It is the Saviour of Man—it is the Ark of the Covenant ! It moves onward, the waves rush back on either hand, —and over a track of calm expanse, the Ark is borne. Who steps from its side, and walks over the deep, as if upon land ? It is the great Captain of our Salvation—the Mighty to save ! —He rescues the drowning from death, the hopeless from gloom. He stills the fury of the tempest ; and for the spirit of mourning, he gives the song of rejoicing and the garments of praise. Ark of the Covenant roll this way ! We are sinking in the deep waters, and there is none to deliver. Let the prayer be offered, and it will save us all.'

Such is a faint sketch of the exhortation I have mentioned. In illustrating this point, the preacher said : ' Let not this sketch be deemed the dream of a fanciful mind. We are the voyagers, ours is the danger, and God is the Power who guides the Ark of deliverance : These things are not visible to the naked mortal eye, but their truth is the same. The things which are seen, are temporal ; from them depend those momentous things, which are unseen and eternal. How shall I illustrate the boundless difference between the glories of the spiritual and temporal world ? Some years ago, I remember, I was in a town in a neighbouring State, when there chanced an eclipse of the sun. I had forgotten the anticipated event, and was reading in my room, unmindful of the pale and sickly twilight that had gradually stole over my page. A friend came in, and said, ' Brother are you aware that the eclipse is now taking place ? ' I answered no ; and joining him, I walked down into the long, broad street. It was full of people ; and the houses of the town on all sides were covered with the population. I took a small fragment of smoked glass, and survey-

ed the sun. It was nearly obscured by the other sphere, and by the clouds which, clad in gloomy light, were sailing fitfully by. After a little while, I retired to my apartment, but for nearly an hour was totally blind. Now, my beloved friends, that mighty orb, even when, as at this present, it sails in unclouded majesty above us, throwing its flood of light upon the far off mountains, the arid desert, the fertile valley, or the heaving main, that glorious orb is but a faint spark at the foot of the Omnipotent—a dimly lighted lamp, feebly glimmering on the outer verge of that transcendent world, whose glories are unseen and eternal!

TRAVELS.

PALESTINE.

After becoming acquainted with our own native land, it seems of peculiar moment that we make diligent search for knowledge relating to the Holy Land, or Palestine. The reasons for this consist in the fact, that many of the most important moral truths of the Bible are illustrated by a reference to the natural history, &c., of that portion of the globe.

Palestine was formerly far more fertile than at present. This is owing to the miserable state of vassalage in which its inhabitants are now held, together with the devastating effects of perpetual wars. With the exception, however, of some mountainous districts about Jerusalem, the spontaneous productions are rich and numerous. Figs, vines and olives, are found among the lime-stone rocks of Judea. Canaan is said to have been a land 'flowing with milk and honey,' and now answers this description, containing as it does rich and extensive pasture-lands, and yielding from aromatic plants to the wild bees, which live in the hollow of the rocks, such abundance of honey as to supply the poorer classes with that article of food. Delicious wine is produced in some districts, and the valleys bear plentiful crops of tobacco, wheat, barley, and millet. Tacitus compares both the climate and soil to those of

Italy, and specifies the palm-tree and balsam-tree as giving the country an advantage over his own.

The country about Jerico was celebrated for its balsam; but Gilead was the country in which it chiefly abounded; hence the name—balm of Gilead. Very little attention has been paid to the cultivation of balsam, or indeed any thing else, since the country has fallen under the Turkish dominion. Some indigenous productions have either disappeared, or are confined to narrow districts.

The minerals do not exhibit a rich variety: Iron is found in the mountain range of Libanus.

Generally speaking, the climate is mild and salubrious. The sky is usually cloudless in May, June, July and August, but during the night the earth is moistened by a copious and refreshing dew. During other parts of the year there is no deficiency of rain; and to this circumstance is to be chiefly attributed the fertility of Palestine, in the absence of springs. The streams with which it is watered, with the exception of the river Jordan, are brooks or torrents fed by the copious periodical rains. The Jordan, from this cause, formerly rose periodically above its banks.

Whether it has worn for itself a deeper channel, or discharges its superfluous water by some other means, or has not so much as formerly to discharge, is not ascertained, but the rise is not now sufficient to produce inundation.

In Zoology the Scriptures familiarly refer to the lion, the wolf, the fox, the leopard, hart, jackall, and wild boar, which lead one to suppose that they were native animals. The wilder animals, however, have mostly disappeared. The horse does not appear to have come into use until after the time of Solomon, and still a greater use was made of this animal after the return of the Jews from Babylon:

In Ornithology, the eagle, the vulture, the cormorant, bittern, stork, owl, pigeon, swallow, dove, &c. were familiar to the Jews:

partridges, wild geese, ducks, the widgeon, snipe and water fowl of every description, abound in some situations.

Lizards, different kinds of serpents, locusts. flies of every species, ants, &c., are found in great abundance.

MISCELLANEOUS.

FOR THE INSTRUCTOR.

BELIEVING WHAT WE DO NOT UNDERSTAND.

It too frequently happens that people dare to deny the existence of a supreme Being, because they do not sufficiently comprehend or understand his nature and attributes. But if such people will look into the book of nature, they will find, that, on the same ground, they may deny the existence of most of the common occurrences of life. With the external senses we observe, smell, feel, and hear. But spiritual things we must observe with the inward senses—feeling the influence of the spirit, and seeing the power and the work of the spirit. This the worldly man enjoys not, for he requires, as it were, external proofs of the truth of spiritual things, which he cannot have, but which the spiritual or really Christian enjoys internally. It follows, then, that by comparing worldly things with spiritual, our point will be gained; it will be proved that our not understanding a doctrine is no reason why we should not believe it. In many spiritual subjects we must call upon faith for assistance. They are given to us as objects of faith, and we are not required to understand them. Some are given as mysteries; then, to comprehend a mystery will leave it no longer a mystery. The words faith and belief are often confounded; serious mistakes occurring in consequence of using one for the other, and misapplying them. Having faith in what is revealed in the scriptures means giving assent to what we do not or cannot understand. Belief means giving assent to that which agrees with our understanding. Faith is the evidence of things not seen. In believing the

assertions of man we require reasonable ground whereon to rest our belief; but with respect to spiritual things, we have only to enquire whether God hath revealed so and so in his word. W.

A CHAPTER ON EXERCISE.

Upon this theme, how many pages have been written; and yet not more than the importance of the subject, as it affects health and intellect, requires. A few words spoken in season will, however, produce a better effect than volumes which are read for a moment, and then are laid aside to be forgotten. The present season, in which the country looks so sweet and inviting, and when the smile of nature would win us away from the severer duties of life—is an appropriate one for a few remarks respecting the true enjoyment of blessings which are within the reach of all. A walk among the beautiful scenes of nature is a pleasure which every one may possess, who is or who is not favoured with the smile of fortune and the splendour of wealth. Here, the rich and the poor man are alike invited to indulge in the pervading freshness and beauty with which God has clothed the earth; and often, too, will the poor man look upon the scene, with thoughts that cannot be equalled and feelings that cannot be surpassed. The birds are making for him the sweetest harmony—the trees and flowers are breathing their incense into his heart; and his spirit is often lifted up to its Creator in gratitude, and with an emotion of love that carried with it an affection for all living things. Some persons may remark that they have sufficient exercise in the house, or in their usual pursuits, both for health of body and of mind. But we consider a walk in the country or on the common, as tending to gratify rather than to weary those who have become fatigued with the toils of the day. There is no weight upon the mind, no care upon the brow; man goes forth, with those who are dearest to him, among the beautiful scenes of nature. The soul is burthened with hope and with affection; and a music, sweeter than

that of many instruments, is stealing into his soul.

THE NIAGARA WHIRLPOOL.

The whirlpool, which is several miles below the fall, is one of those scenes which are too grand for description. Incidents of accidents happening there can best convey an idea of the horrors of that dreadful abyss. The whirlpool is a large deep basin, in which the waters of the mighty St. Lawrence revolve in one perpetual whirl, caused by their being obstructed by an angle of the steep and dreary bank which overhangs this dreadful place. The whirlpool, like the falls, has frequently caused the loss of human life; one instance of which I will here relate:—

“Mr. Wallace, the blacksmith, had a son, a fine youth, of whom he was exceedingly proud, and the lad one day went down to the whirlpool, and the current proving too strong for him, he was carried into the whirl. His poor distracted mother sat on the gloomy bank hours and days, and beheld the body of her own darling child carried round in a circle by the waters, sometimes disappearing for a time, and then coming up and revolving on the surface of his watery grave; and thus continuing for several days, no human aid being available even to obtain his remains. An acquaintance who resides at the whirlpool, informed me, that in the course of five or six days, bodies which get into the dismal cauldron are carried down the river. It is usual for persons rafting timber from places between the falls and the whirlpool, to get off the raft before the basin, first placing the raft in such a position as may best enable it to float down the stream without being carried into the whirl. On one occasion, however, one of the raftsmen refused to leave the raft—he was not afraid, all go safe—enterprise was unavailing, and the raft with the unfortunate headstrong man upon it made its way downwards, and was soon drawn within the fatal circle; around which, for three days and nights, it continued to revolve; all the efforts of a thousand anxious spectators proved un-

availing. The continual and sickening motion he underwent robbed the poor sufferer of all power to eat—sleep he could not—a dreadful death was before his eyes, so much the more terrible that it was night after night in such a place. At last a man was found who ventured into the whirl as far as he could with hopes of life, a strong rope being tied round his middle, one end of which was on the shore. He carried with him a line to the raft—succeeded: the agonized sufferer fastened it to the raft, and in this way he was drawn on shore, and his life preserved.”

FEMALE CHARACTER.

I know not which is most lovely, a female born to affluence, and accustomed to all the luxuries, the attentions, and the gratifications which wealth and influence can control, who still preserves a courtesy, and even a modesty, in her intercourse with those in lower circumstances; or one who, in the depths of poverty and obscurity, maintains a dignity, a propriety of deportment, tempered with a submissive sweetness of disposition, which commands the respect of all who can appreciate true nobility.

POETRY.

[FOR THE INSTRUCTOR.]

THE PARENT'S HOPE.

First born! A mother's fondest hope and joy.
Nurturing with affection tender,
She, anxious, watch'd my infant progress.
Her love increas'd as I increas'd in years;
Till, passed my school-days, I resolved
To seek a home upon the teach'rous way—
'To leave my home of comfort, and away,
Heedless of my father's admonitions,
And my mother's tears. The time approach'd—
My mother sank dejected on her chair,
Heaved a long-drawn sigh, and gently utter'd,
“My son adieu,” and cast her eyes towards
heav'n;

My father paced the room, with downcast looks,

Sunk in the deepest avenues of thought,
Pond'ring o'er the fate of his departing child.
He now approach'd, and seized my hand,
exclaim'd,

"My son farewell—may heaven protect you;"
And then my little brothers—sisters—all
Flock'd round to bid their brother long adieu.
In dread suspense I paused twixt two intents;
Confus'd—still resolute—I left the house.

Oft have I since, when in the midnight watch,
'Tween life and death, and distant far at sea,
Oft have I thought with pleasure upon home.

How fickle human mind:—now I have left
That line of life which I had made a choice,
And come a wanderer, Oh Canada,
To seek a dwelling in thy dreary woods. W.

THE WATER-CRESS GIRL.

The spring, and playtime of the year,
That calls the unwonted villagers abroad—
to pluck

A cheap, but wholesome salad from the brook.
COWPER.

She leaves her bed, while yet the dew
Is sparkling on the flowers,
And ere Aurora's golden hue
Hath tinged the old church towers;
Ere yet the matin bell hath tolled—
Ere yet the flock hath left the fold—
Or the blithe lark his bower—
Before the shadowy mountain mist
By the first sunbeam hath been kissed.

Her way is o'er the dewy meads,
And by the violet dell,
Where the rough plank her footstep leads,
By the old haunted well;
And there she steps from stone to stone,
In the brooks gurgling waters thrown,
To where the cresses dwell;
And many a lily decks the scene
Where she presides, the Fairy Queen!

Ah, little would she blush to see,
The wave give back her face;
And her dark tresses wand'ring free,
In all their native grace;

No blight hath mowed her cheek's bright bloom,

No mark of care's depressing gloom,
On that smooth brow ye trace;
For love—false love—hath never yet,
His seal upon her young heart set.

Fair creature! I would wish that thou
Might'st pass thy life away,
E'en pure and tranquil as is now
The morning of thy day!

That Heaven may take thee 'neath its care,
And guard thy steps from every snare
In this world's dangerous way;
That Hope be thine, without its fears—
And Love, without his sighs and tears.

WRITTEN BY BISHOP HORNE WHITE,
STAYING AT AN INN.

The world is like an inn, for there
Men call, and storm, and drink, and swear,
While undisturb'd the Christian waits,
And reads, and writes, and meditates.
Tho' in the dark I oft times stray,
The Lord shall light me on the way;
And to the city of the sun
Conduct me when my journey's done.
There by these eyes shall he be seen
Who sojourn'd for me at an inn;
On Zion's hill I those shall hail
From whom I parted in the vale.
Why am I heavy, then, and sad,
When thoughts like these should make me glad?
Muse then no more on things below,
Arise, my soul, and let us go.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED EVERY WEDNES-
DAY, BY

J. E. L. MILLER,

At the low price of TWOPENCE a number,
payable on delivery; or 1s. 8d. per quarter, in
advance. To Country Subscribers, 2s. 4d.
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