

VARIOUS

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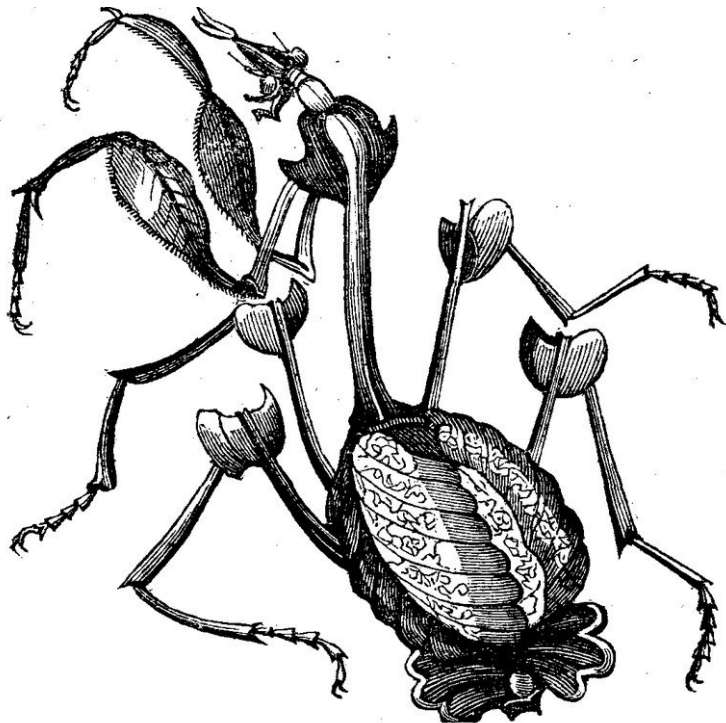
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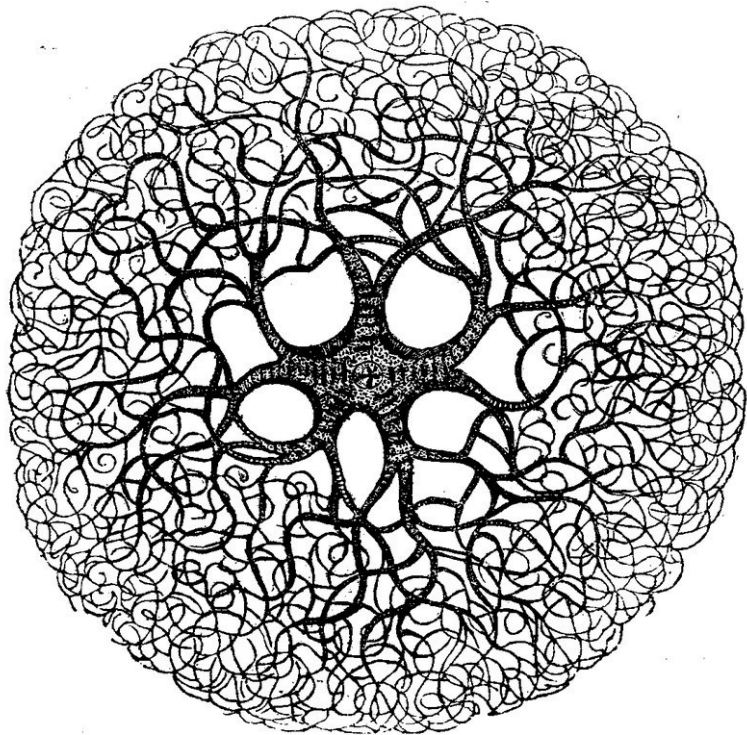
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THE NATURALIST





Castles, cathedrals, and churches, palaces, and parks, and architectural subjects generally, have occupied so many frontispiece pages of our recent numbers, that we have been induced to select the annexed cuts as a pleasant relief to this artificial monotony. They are Curiosities of Nature; and, in truth, more interesting than the proudest work of men's hands. Their

economy is much more surprising than the most sumptuous production of art; and the intricacy and subtlety of its processes throw into the shade all the contrivances of social man: a few inquiries into their structure and habits will therefore prove entertaining to all classes of readers.

1. THE PRAYING MANTIS

The Mantis is a species of cricket, and belongs to the Hemiptera, or second order of insects. Blumenbach enumerates four varieties:—1. the Gigantic, from Amboyna, a span long, yet scarce as thick as a goose-quill, and eaten by the Indians. 2. Gonglyodes, from Guinea. 3. the Religious Mantis, or Praying Cricket. 4. Another at the Cape, and considered sacred by the Hottentots. The cut represents the third of these varieties.

It mostly goes on four legs, holding up two shorter ones. The hind legs are very long; the middle ones shorter. It is sometimes called the *Dried and Walking Leaf*, from the resemblance of its wing covering, in form and colour to a dry willow leaf; it is found in China and South America, and in the latter country many of the Indians believe that Mantises grow on trees like leaves, and that having arrived at maturity, they loosen themselves, and crawl or fly away.

Mr. T. Carpenter² has recently dissected the head of this species, in which he found large and sharp cutting teeth; also strong grinding ones, similar to those in the heads of locusts: the balls at the ends fit into sockets in the jaw. The whole length of the insect is nearly three inches; it is of slender shape, and in its sitting posture is observed to hold up the two fore-legs slightly

¹ Manual, translated by Gore.

² Gill's Technological Repository, vol. iv. p. 208.

bent, as if in an attitude of prayer, whence its name; for this reason vulgar superstition has held it as a sacred insect; and a popular notion has often prevailed, that a child, or a traveller having lost its way, would be safely directed, by observing the quarter to which the animal pointed, when taken into the hand.

Its real disposition is, however, very far from peaceable: it preys with great rapacity on smaller insects, for which it lies in wait, in the first mentioned posture, till it siezes them with a sudden spring, and devours them. It is, in fact, of a very ferocious nature; and when kept with another of its own species, in a state of captivity, will attack its fellow with the utmost violence, and persevere till it has killed its antagonist. Roësal, a naturalist, who kept some of these insects, observes, that in their mutual conflicts, their manoeuvres very much resemble those of hussars fighting with sabres; and sometimes the one cleaves the other through, or severs the head from its body with a single stroke. During these engagements the wings are generally expanded, and when the battle is over, the conqueror devours his vanquished foe.

Among the Chinese, this quarrelsome disposition in the Mantis, is converted to an entertainment, resembling that of fighting-cocks and quails: and it is to this insect that we suppose the following passage in Mr. Barrow's *Account of China*, alludes:—"They have even extended their inquiries after fighting animals into the insect tribes, and have discovered a species of locusts that will attack each other with such ferocity, as seldom to quit their hold without bringing away at the same time a limb of

their antagonist. These little creatures are fed and kept apart in bamboo cages; and the custom of making them devour each other is so common, that during the summer months, scarcely a boy is to be seen without his cage of locusts."³

The country people in many parts of the continent, look upon the religious Mantis as a divine insect, and would not on any account injure it. Dr. Smith, however, informs us, that he received an account of this Mantis, that seemed to savour little indeed of divinity. A gentleman caught a male and female, and put them together in a glass vessel. The female, which in this, as in most other insects, is the largest, after a while, devoured, first the head and upper parts of her companion, and afterwards the remainder of the body.⁴ Roësel, wishing to observe the gradual progress of these creatures to the winged state, placed the bag containing the eggs in a large enclosed glass. From the time they were hatched they were very savage. He put various plants into the glass, but they refused them, in order to prey upon each other. He next tried insect food, and put several ants into the glass to them, but they then betrayed as much cowardice as they had before done of barbarity; for the instant the Mantises saw the ants, they attempted to escape in every direction. He next gave them some common house flies, which they seized with eagerness in their fore claws, and tore in pieces; notwithstanding this apparent fondness for flies, they continued to destroy each

³ Travels in China.

⁴ Tour on the Continent.

other. Despairing at last, from their daily decrease, of rearing any to the winged state, he separated them into small numbers, in different glasses; but here, as before, the strongest of each community destroyed the rest. He afterwards received several pair of Mantes in the winged state, which he separated, a male and female together, into different glasses; but they still showed a rooted enmity towards each other, which neither age nor sex could mitigate. The instant they came in sight of each other, they threw up their heads, brandished their fore-legs, and each waited the attack. They did not, however, long remain in this posture; for the boldest throwing open his wings with the velocity of lightning, rushed at the other, and often tore it in pieces.

The last mentioned species is the supposed idol of the Hottentots; the person on whom the adored insect happens to light, being considered as favoured by the distinction of a celestial visitant, and regarded ever after as a saint.

2. BRANCHED STARFISH

This is the most curious species of *Asterias*, or Sea Star. They are crustaceous animals, and many of the species are noxious to oysters, others to cod-fish, &c.

The species represented by the Cut, has five rays, dividing into innumerable lines or branches. The mouth is in the centre, armed with sharp teeth, which convey the food into the body, and from this mouth goes a separate canal through the rays. These the animal, in swimming, spreads like a net to their full length; and when it perceives any prey within them, draws them in again with all the dexterity of a fisherman. It is an inhabitant of every sea; and is called by some the Magellanic starfish and *basketfish*. When it extends its rays fully, it forms a circle of nearly three feet in diameter; and Blumenbach tells us that 82,000 extremities have been reckoned in one of these curious creatures.

In another species of the *Asterias*, the power of reproduction is particularly striking. "I possess one," says Blumenbach, "in which regeneration had begun of the 4 rays that had been removed out of 5 which it originally possessed." We have picked up on the seashore many of the species to which he alludes, and they are much less rare than that in the Cut. Of the latter we have seen three or four specimens—one in a small Museum at Margate, and, we think, two others in the Museum in the *Jardin des Plantes*, at Paris. They resemble a bunch or knot of dark

brown small rope or cord.

There is a popular idea among the Norwegians, that this animal is the young of the famous Kraken, of which Pontoppidan has related so many wonders.⁵ This monster, it will be recollected, is supposed to live in the depths of the sea, rising occasionally, to the great danger of the ships with which it comes in contact, at which times the projection of its back above the surface of the sea, resembles a floating island.

Blumenbach has some sensible observations on this subject. When all that has been said about it is carefully examined, it is clear that various circumstances have given rise to the misconception. Much of it is applicable to the whale;⁶ much is referable to thick, low, fog-banks, which even experienced seamen have mistaken for land,⁷ an opinion coinciding with what has been said of this same Kraken, by a Latin author of considerable antiquity.

We are persuaded that our readers will be delighted with these attractive facts in the history of the Mantis and Starfish. The Illustrations themselves are extremely interesting and effective; but in order to gratify the admirer of Art as well as the lover of Nature, we have selected for the *Supplement* published with this Number, a splendid Engraving of the city of *Verona*, from a

⁵ Nat. Hist. Norway.

⁶ See, for instance, the narrative of an accident from the rising of such an animal, in W. Tench's "Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson."

⁷ See a remarkable instance in *Voyage de la Perouse autour du Monde*, vol. iii. p. 10.

Drawing by the late J.P. Bonington.

CATS

(To the Editor of the Mirror.)

Having read an interesting account of the "Veneration of Cats in ancient days," in a recent number of your entertaining and useful publication, I am induced to send you the following respecting the part they formed in the religious worship of the middle ages:—

In Mills's "History of the Crusades", we meet with the following:—"At Aix in Provence, on the festival of *Corpus Christi*, the finest tom cat of the country, wrapped in swaddling clothes like a child, was exhibited in a magnificent shrine to public admiration. Every knee was bent, every hand strewed flowers or poured incense, and grimalkin was treated in all respects as the god of the day. But on the festival of *St. John*, poor tom's fate was reversed. A number of the tabby tribe were put into a wicker basket, and thrown alive into the midst of an immense fire kindled in the public square by the bishop and his clergy. Hymns and anthems were sung, and processions were made by the priests and people in honour of the sacrifice."

It is well known that cats formed a conspicuous part in the old religion of the Egyptians, who under the form of a cat, symbolized the moon or Isis, and placed it upon their Systrum,

an instrument of religious worship and divination.

Cats are supposed to have been first brought to England by some merchants from the Island of Cyprus, who came hither for fur.

The prices and value of cats and kittens, mentioned by your correspondent, *P.T.W.* were fixed by that excellent prince, *Hoeldda*, or Howel the Good. *Vide Leges Wallicae*, p. 427 and 428.

[Greek: S.G.]

TO MISS MITFORD,

On reading her "Lines to a Friend, who spent some days at a country inn, in order to be near the writer."

IN NO. 386, OF THE MIRROR

(For the Mirror.)

"My noble friend! was *this* a place for thee? No fitting place"
"No fitting place" to meet thy "noble friend,"
Where "heart with heart" and "mind with mind" might blend?
"No fitting place?" now, lady, dost thou wrong
The magic might that appertains to song,
And humbly I refute thee—though it seem
Uncourtly bold; for at Castalian stream
I never drank; but oft my spirit bows
Before that altar where thy genius glows:
And who can fail to worship who have seen
Foscari's frenzy in thy tragic scene?
Beheld *Rienzi* light the latent fire

Of swelling liberty in son and sire;
Or left the seven-hilled city's Roman pride—
With Caesar's pump, and Tiber's classic tide;
And wander'd with thy muse to homely bowers,
Of verdant foliage wreathed with varied flowers.
But pardon, lady, scarcely need I tell,
That song delights in Nature's haunts to dwell;
Eschews the regal robe and stately throne,
To walk, enraptured, in a world its own.
O'er *sylvan* scenes the muse her radiance flings;
And hallows wheresoe'er she rests her wings.
And thou, all joyous in her blessed smile,
(Soft as the moonbeam on a monkish pile,)
Art gifted with the godlike power to give
A speechless charm to meanest things that live;
And lifeless nature where thy voice is heard,
Like midnight music of the summer bird,
Receives new lustre. E'en the "taper's" light,
Which in the lowly inn illumed the night,
The "wood-fire" warm, and "casement swinging free,"
Were stamp'd with teeming interest by thee.
What higher bliss than listening by thy side
Within that cot thy genius sanctified?
Though on thy "noble friend" the diamond shone,
Thy words were richer than the precious stone;
Though on that head there bent the rarest plume,
Thy looks could well a loftier air assume;
Though theirs the pride of coronet and crest,
Thyself wert clad in Inspiration's vest:

And all these baubles, beauteous in the sight,
Might veil their lustre in thy glorious light.

Then, lady, call it not a "*selfish* strain,"
Thy supplicating wish to "come again."
Deem not the "village inn" "no fitting place"
To greet congenial feeling face to face;
To learn that genius no distinction knows.
But doats upon the meanest flower that blows;
Where e'en thy friends might drop their title's claim,
Forgetting honoured race and ancient name;
Where round your souls the flowers of song might twine,
Lost in the rapture of the bard's design.

* * *H*

RETROSPECTIVE GLEANINGS

TOUCHING FOR THE CURE OF THE KING'S EVIL

(For the Mirror.)

The author of a treatise on this subject, tells the following anecdote, which may in some degree account for the numbers registered at Whitehall, (who were *touched*) which were from the year 1660 to 1664 inclusive, a period of five years, 23,601; and from May 1667 to May 1684, 68,506; viz. an old man who was witness in a cause, had by his residence fixed the time of a fact, by Queen Anne having been at Oxford, and *touched* him while a child, for the cure of the evil. When he had finished his evidence, the relater had an opportunity of asking him whether he was really cured. Upon which he answered with a significant smile, "that he believed himself never to have had a complaint, that deserved to be considered as the *evil*, but that his parents were poor, and *had no objection to the bit of gold.*"

When King Charles II. *touched* at Whitehall, he usually sat in a chair of state, and put about each of their necks a white ribbon,

with an *angel* of gold on it. Query.—Was not this the *original golden or angelic* ointment?

Edward the Confessor is generally mentioned as the first possessor of this art; although the historians of France are disposed to maintain, that it was originally inherent in their kings.

Dr. Johnson's mother is said to have been instigated by the advice of a celebrated physician, Sir John Floyer, to bring her son to London for the purpose of receiving the remedy, and it is recorded that he was *touched* by Queen Anne.

P.T.W.

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE AMONG THE EGYPTIANS

(For the Mirror.)

The Egyptians were exceedingly exact about the administration of justice, believing that the support or dissolution of society altogether depended upon that. Their highest tribunal was composed of thirty judges. They placed at the head of this tribunal the person who at once possessed the greatest share of wisdom, knowledge, and love of the laws, and public esteem. The king furnished the judges with every thing necessary for their support, so that the people had justice rendered them without expense. *No advocates were allowed* in this tribunal. The parties were not even allowed to plead their own causes. All trials were carried on *in writing*, and the parties themselves drew up their own cases. Those who had settled this manner of proceeding well knew that the eloquence of advocates *very often darkened the truth, and misled the judge*. They were unwilling to expose the ministers of justice to the deceitful charms of pathetic, affecting orations. The Egyptians avoided this by making each party draw up the statement of his own case in writing, and

they allowed a competent time for that purpose.⁸ But to prevent the protracting of suits too long, each party was only allowed one reply. When all the evidence necessary for their information was given to the judges, they began their consultation. When the affair was thoroughly canvassed, the president gave the signal for proceeding to a sentence, by taking in his hand a little image adorned with precious stones, which hung to a chain of gold about his neck. This image had no eyes, and was the symbol with which the Egyptians used to represent Truth. Judgment being given, the president touched the party who had gained the cause with this image. This was the form of pronouncing sentence. According to an ancient law, the kings of Egypt administered an oath to the judges at their installation, that if the king should command them to give an unjust sentence, they would not obey him.

⁸ All this must be understood with some limitations, otherwise we must suppose that all the inhabitants of Egypt had not only learned to write, but that they had sufficient talents and knowledge of the laws, to draw up their own defences, which is not to be supposed. This law then must have been liable to some exceptions and modifications. We must say the same thing of other countries where they tell us there are no advocates, and that all trials are carried on in writing, as in Siam, China, Bantam, &c. *Origin of Laws, G.M. Goguet.*

THE TOPOGRAPHER

CLIFTON HOT WELLS

(For the Mirror.)

Glide, Avon, gently glide....
More prodigal in beauty than the dreams
Of fantasy,... beneath the chain
Of mingled wood and precipice, that seems
To buttress up the wave, whose silvery gleams
Stretch far beyond, where Severn leads the train.

Gilpin says, and says truly, that "the west is the region of fine landscape;" it also follows as a natural consequence that it predominates in the number of its artists. The beautiful vignette of Clifton in a recent number of the MIRROR,⁹

⁹ See MIRROR, No. 390.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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