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AUTUMN

BOOK

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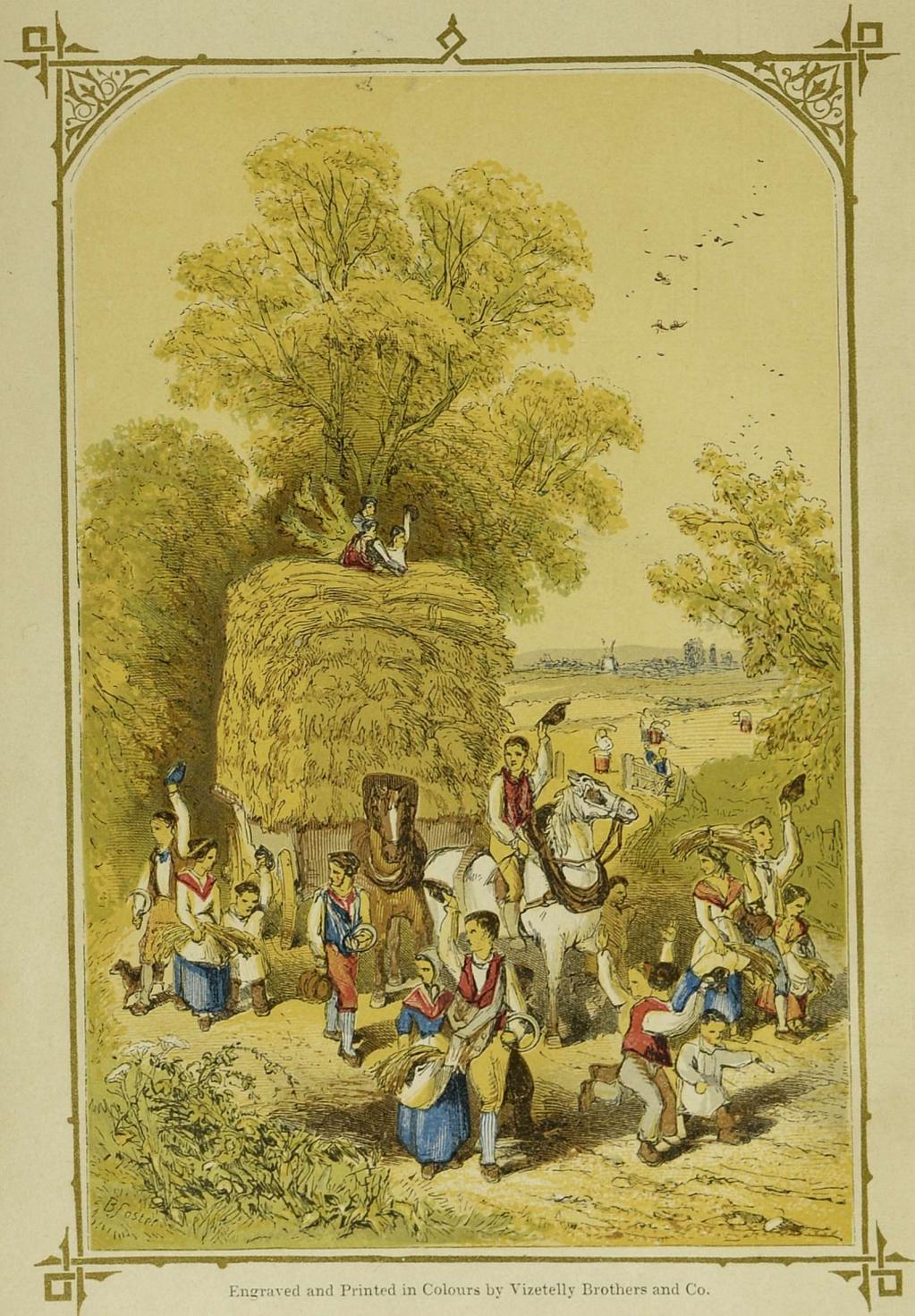
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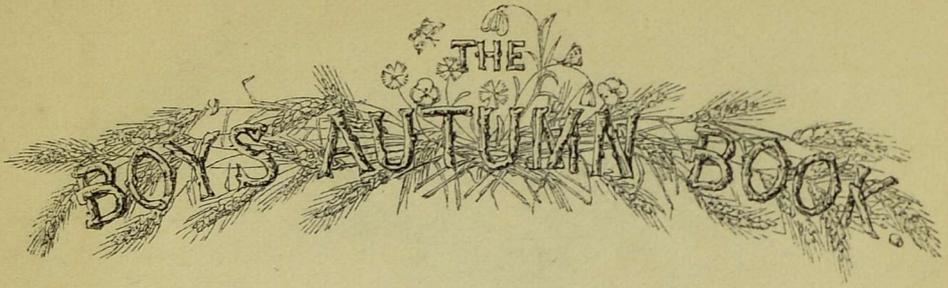
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AUTUMN :—HARVEST TIME.





THE
BOYS' AUTUMN BOOK.

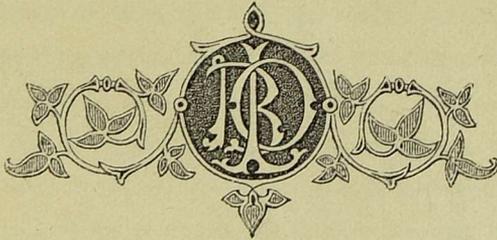
Descriptive of the Season,
Scenery,
Rural Life, and Country Amusements.

BY THOMAS MILLER,

AUTHOR OF "BEAUTIES OF THE COUNTRY," "RURAL SKETCHES," &c. &c.

WITH THIRTY-FIVE ILLUSTRATIONS,

Engraved on Wood, by HENRY VIZETELLY and Others.



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BEAUTY OF AUTUMN—PICTURE OF HARVEST; ANXIETY OF THE FARMER
GROUP OF GLEANERS; DESCRIPTION OF CORN REAPING; HARVEST-HOME;
STUBBLE-FED GEESE; THE FEAST OF HARVEST-HOME—BEAUTY OF WOODS IN
AUTUMN—AGARICS AND FUNGI—WOODLAND SCENERY—CORRINGHAM SCROGGS
THE WILDEST SCENERY IN ENGLAND; OUR BLACKBERRYING, CRABBING, AND
SLOE AND BULLACE GATHERING IN THE SCROGGS; THE BIRDS AND WILD
ANIMALS WE SAW THERE; DESCRIPTION OF THE DREADFUL THUNDER-STORM
WE WERE OUT IN, ON CORRINGHAM SCROGGS—ARRIVAL OF THE WOODCOCK;
ITS CURIOUS HABITS—OWLS IN THE FOREST—OUR NUTTING EXCURSION IN THE
WOODS; HOW TWO BOYS WERE LOST IN THE WOOD, AND WHAT THEY SAID
AND DID, AND WHAT COURAGE ONE OF THEM DISPLAYED WHEN ALL THE DANGER
WAS OVER—ADVENTURE WITH A WILD CAT IN THE FOREST; HABITS OF THE
WILD CAT—BATTLE BESIDE A WOOD IN THE TIME OF THE CIVIL WARS—
DESCRIPTION OF THE MARTIN; THE HAVOC IT MAKES AMONGST POULTRY, &c.
—THE OLD MISER OF MARTIN; HOW HE TAUGHT HIS LAD JACK TO BECOME
SAVING; AND HOW HE DINED FOR A PENNY: TOGETHER WITH OTHER ADVEN-
TURES THAT BEFEL HIM—MY UNCLE'S ORCHARD AT THONOCK; THE PLEASANT
DAYS I SPENT THERE IN AUTUMN, HELPING TO GATHER IN THE FRUIT; THE
STORE ROOM; GOING TO MARKET—HOW WE ONCE CAPTURED A BADGER; WHAT
WE DID WITH IT, AND WHAT IT DID FOR ITSELF—AUTUMN FLOWERS: SAPFRON;
CROCUS; PEPPERMINT; WILD-THYME; LING AND HEATHER; OX-EYE DAISY;
GOLDEN-ROD; EYE-BRIGHT, &c.—POISONOUS BERRIES—DESCRIPTION OF THE
GARDEN SPIDER, AND ITS CURIOUS WEB—FATHER LONG-LEGS AND HIS LARGE
FAMILY OF LONG-LEGS—THE CHEESE HOPPER—WHEAT-FLY AND ICHNEUMON—

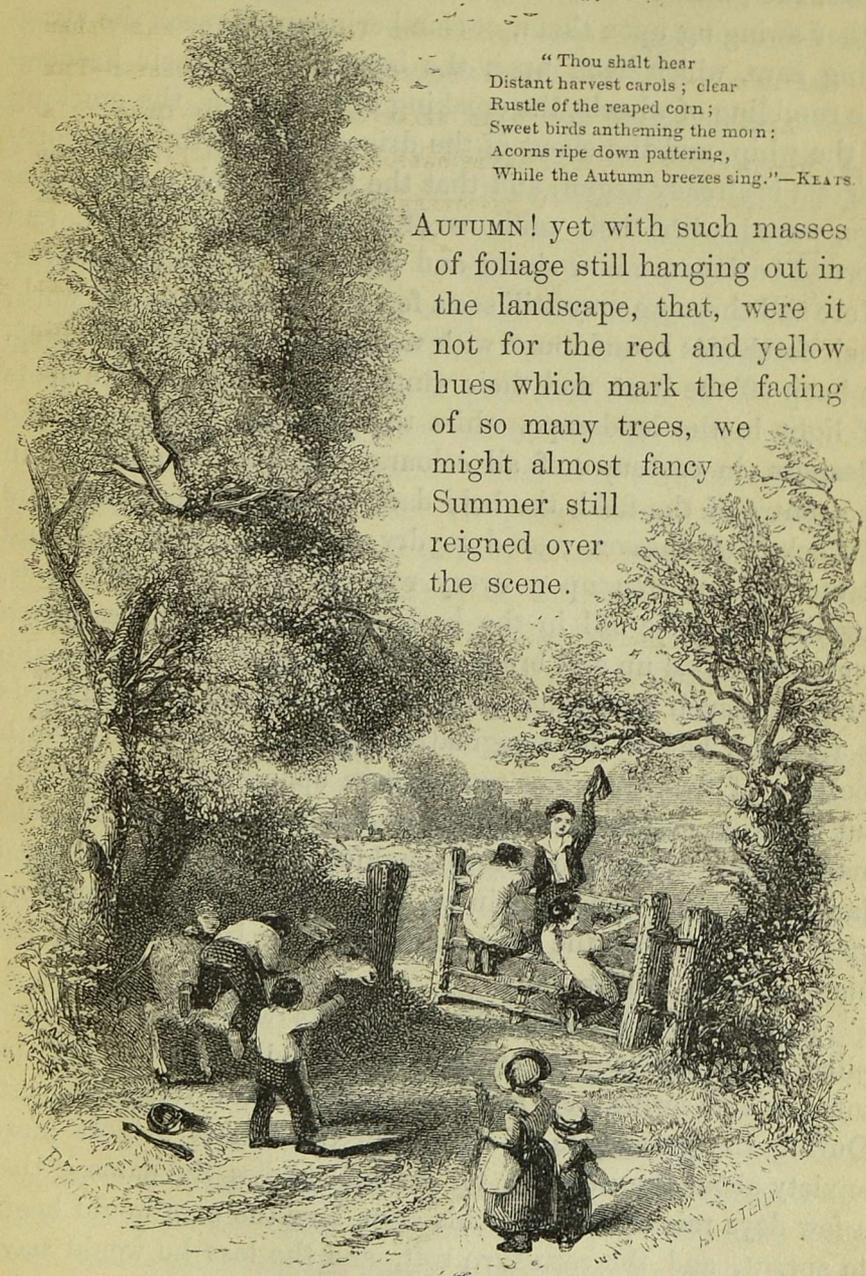
CONTENTS.

HARVEST MOUSE, AND ITS CURIOUS NEST—COMMON HOUSE MOUSE—SONG OF THE THREE BLIND MICE—HOGS FEEDING IN THE FOREST IN AUTUMN—CRUELTY OF THE ANCIENT FOREST LAWS—WOLVES AND WILD BOARS IN THE OLDEN TIME—BATTLE BETWEEN TWO WILD BOARS IN THE NEW FOREST—THE HAUNTED LAKE, A BALLAD NOT TO BE BELIEVED—BEAUTY OF DEER IN A FOREST: RED DEER; ROEBUCK—BRANDY-BALL JACK; HOW HE MANUFACTURED HIS BRANDY-BALLS, AND HOW WE DISCOVERED HIS SECRET; JACK'S ADVENTURE WITH HIS PORK-PIE—HISTORY OF THE DOG: BLOODHOUND; STAG-HOUND; GREYHOUND; TERRIER; SHEPHERD-DOG; NEWFOUNDLAND-DOG; SPANIEL ANECDOTE, ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE DEVOTED ATTACHMENT OF THE SPANIEL;—SEA-SIDE SCENERY; SAILING ON THE SEA; DESCRIPTION OF THE SEA WHEN CALM, AND DURING A STORM—HABITS OF THE SHELDRAKE—A SEA-SIDE YARN OR THE ADVENTURES OF BILLY, THE OLD SAILOR, AND HOW HE SWAM A THOUSAND MILES; AND BEAT THE BLACK NIGGER—A COUNTRY FAIR, WITH A DESCRIPTION OF ALL THE WONDERFUL THINGS WE SAW THERE, NOT FORGETTING THE "WORSER"—MIGRATION OF BIRDS: SWALLOWS, AND THEIR HABITS—FIFTH OF NOVEMBER, AND HOW WE MADE A GUY—LAND AND WATER SHREW; SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEF IN THE SHREW ASH; SONG ON BURYING A SHREW MOUSE—BEAUTY OF PHEASANTS; THEIR HABITS—PARTRIDGES DESCRIBED—INJUSTICE OF THE GAME LAWS—LIZARDS—HOP-PICKING; ITS BEAUTY; HOP-PICKERS DESCRIBED—END OF AUTUMN.



"Thou shalt hear
Distant harvest carols; clear
Rustle of the reaped corn;
Sweet birds antheing the morn:
Acorns ripe down pattering,
While the Autumn breezes sing."—KEATS.

AUTUMN! yet with such masses
of foliage still hanging out in
the landscape, that, were it
not for the red and yellow
hues which mark the fading
of so many trees, we
might almost fancy
Summer still
reigned over
the scene.



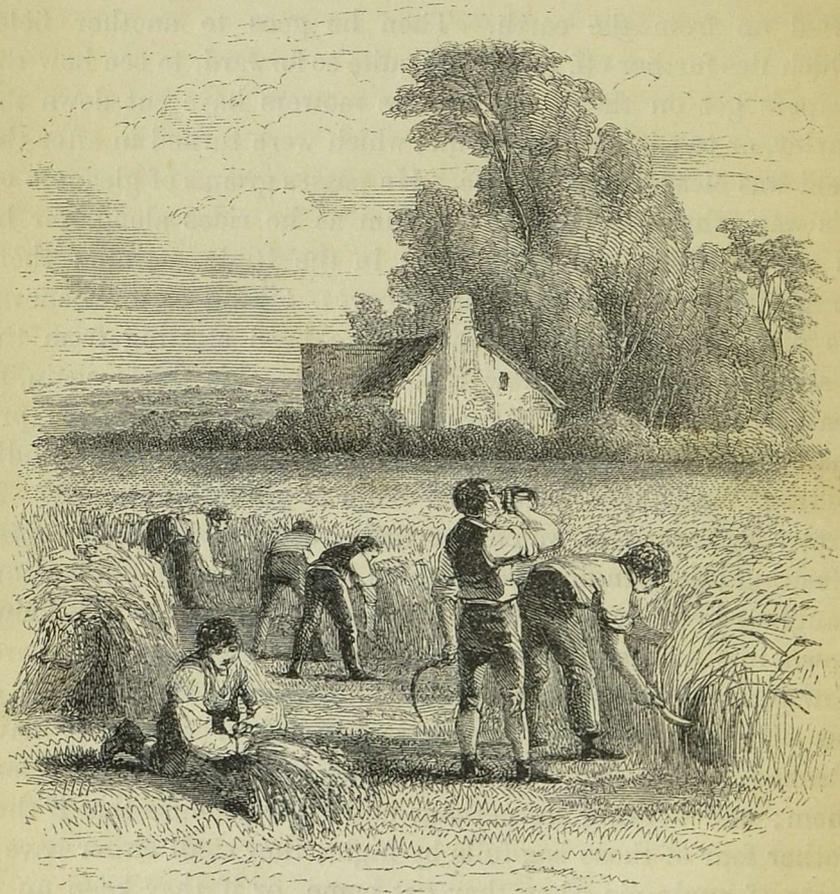
But the ears of corn which trail on the hedges in narrow lanes, the gates that here and there stand open, with children either swinging upon them, or clambering up to reach the straggling ears, which hang upon the boughs above their heads—the rumbling of wheels, the creaking of the wagon, the cracking of the whip, and the shout of the driver, tell us that the corn-harvest is already begun, and that the fields which, a few weeks ago, waved with their millions of heads of heavy wheat, and horned barley, are now shorn and piled up in golden sheaves. Here and there we may still see a few sun-burnt reapers at work, their foreheads bound round with various coloured handkerchiefs to keep off the heat, and their white sleeves showing like spots of light in the landscape, while the stooping attitudes of the gleaners, in costumes of all colours, the half-laden wagon in the centre of the field, the bold dark outline of the horses, the “shocks” of sheaves reared to dry at regular distances, and stretching in rows upon every rounded and stubbly furrow, together with the hill in the background, and the trees which everywhere rise up and break the level lines of the scene, make altogether such a pleasing picture, that for months afterwards it rises up before the imagination, and we think of it with feelings of delight. Nor can we gaze upon such a scene without thinking of the bountiful provision which the Creator has made for our wants, and feeling thankful that, amid the cold and darkness of the coming winter, we shall still be surrounded by plenty, and that the poor man will soon be enabled to eat his bread untaxed by the rich.

Beautiful as the hay-field is with its wind-rows and high piled cocks, and sweet perfume, still it falls far short of the interest and earnestness and sober bustle of the Wheat-harvest. During the getting in of the latter the farmer evinces more anxiety about the weather, for he well knows the damage that a few days rain would do to his crop, how the ears would begin to sprout, and the corn turn soft, and the loss he would have

GLEANERS.

to sustain in the market. The last thing at night he looks at the sky, and the appearance of a few dark clouds which hang over and threaten rain, are often the means of preventing him from enjoying a sound night's rest, however weary he may be. If the morning is fine, he is up and out amongst his men, feeling of a sheaf here, and handling a "shock" (a stack of eight sheaves) there, and carefully examining them to see if they will be dry enough, to be "carted off" and placed on the great stack in the rick-yard, or the high roofed barn, when the sun has been out an hour or two, and the morning dews are all dried up from the earth. Then he goes to another field, which lies further off, and is not quite so forward, to see how the reapers get on there, or how the mowers have cut down the barley, or to see that the swine, which were turned in after the field was cleared, are all safe. He passes groups of gleaners on his way, who curtsy and bow to him as he rides along, for he is one of those who, like Boaz in the Bible, permits them to glean even amongst the sheaves, taking care whenever he discovers that any of them have been stealing from the "shocks," never to allow them to enter his fields again, at least not during that harvest. Children he will only reprimand, and bid their mothers look closer after them, kindly adding, "that it is natural for them to get into mischief." A pretty sight it is to watch the little rustics, with their coarse gleaning bags hanging before them, and a pair of old scissors dangling by their side, dotting the corn-field, and ever bobbing down like so many crows, picking up an ear here and there, now pausing to straighten their aching backs, then halting to cut off the straw from the little handful of corn they have gleaned, before thrusting it into the bag which hangs before them; and working on, perhaps under the promise that if they gather four of those bag-fulls by night, they shall either have a piece of apple-pie when they get home, or if they keep up to their task until Saturday night, a halfpenny to spend in what

they like—not to be put in the money-box—no, no, for they know if it once gets there, it will only come out perhaps a year after, to help towards buying a pair of new, or second-hand shoes. Then to see how their little raw hands and red legs are pricked and pierced by the stubble, and are almost as hard and as rough as rasps, through being exposed to the weather. An important time is this for the poor mother who has a large family, and has the privilege of gleaning after her husband: Nor is it less interesting to watch the



REAPERS AT WORK:

HARVEST-FIELD.

to see how quick the sickle is put in amongst the standing corn, and when it is drawn out again, to notice that a great handful has been cut, and is then placed upon the twisted wheat-bands which are stretched across the stubble; and so they go on cutting down sheaf after sheaf, then tying them up, and, after a time, rearing the sheaves up into "shocks" or stacks," or "field-stacks," as they are called in some parts of the country, and which they place in two rows, three or four sheaves on each side, face to face, and all meeting together, and forming a fine yellow plummy top; then they plant another sheaf at each end, and leave the sun and wind to do their work; and, in a few days, the "shocks" are dry enough, and hard enough to be carried away in the wagon, load after load, until the whole harvest is got in. And rare gleaning is there, I can assure you, when those "shocks" are taken up; such a quantity of loose ears in the "cradle," as the spot is termed, where the sheaves stood, that there is sometimes a regular scramble amongst the gleaners, to see who can get the most; and the man who is loading the wagon is often compelled to threaten that he will lift them on the load with his fork, if they do not get further out of the way. Then to see the little harvest-mice and field-mice that scamper off when the shocks are removed; and which I will tell you all about when I have done with harvest-time, and all the bustle of the corn-field is over.

But I like Harvest-home best to come upon me unaware; to be rambling down some narrow, winding lane, which leads to nowhere but the fields, or to some old-fashioned footpath across them; a road which is never used only when the farmers get in their corn or hay. This is the spot to be sauntering in, and be startled by the loud "huzza!" and then to come suddenly upon the corn-field, and see the last load approaching the gate, while gleaners and all are shouting to the very top of their voices; just as they did in the days of Herrick, who lived in Shakspeare's time; and a capital poem Herrick wrote about Harvest-

home, which contains a description of how the boys ran after the last load and shouted, and what the farmer provided for the Harvest-feast. But I must extract a few lines, which are so plainly written that you cannot but understand them. The "thill" is an old Saxon word for shaft; the "thill horse" is the shaft horse, and was called so in the time of King Alfred. It is a true old English word, and is still used at the present day in many places in the country. And now for the extract from Herrick's "Hock-cart, or Harvest-home:"

" About the cart hear how the rout
Of rural younglings raise the shout,
Pressing before, some coming after,
Those with a shout, and these with laughter;
Some bless the cart, some kiss the sheaves,
Some prank them up with oaken leaves,
Some "pat" the thill-horse, some with great
Devotion stroke the home-borne wheat;
While other rustics, less attent
To prayer than to merriment,
Run after, with their garments rent."

Is not this a capital description, to be written above two hundred years ago? The "rural younglings," you know, means the boys and girls, who shouted and laughed, and ran before and after the load, some "with garments rent;" for you see any thing was good enough to glean in, and there were poor ragged children in those days. Some were so thankful, that they "stroked the corn-sheaves with great devotion;" for their hearts were glad, when they saw how bountifully Providence had again provided for their wants.

Onward comes the wagon—the last load reaches the village, at the end of which the good farmer lives, and every cottager rushes out to welcome it, and to shout as it passes. The tailor uncrosses his legs, throws down his goose and sleeve-board, and with his stockings hanging about his heels, and his spectacles shoved up to his forehead, raises his weak voice and

brandishes his shears, snapping them together over his head, and dancing a queer kind of a polka, and seeming so delighted that he would almost jump out of his skin if he could. The great brown blacksmith comes out of his smoky smithy, leaning on his ponderous hammer, and shouting so loudly with his deep rough voice, that you might hear him a mile off. The wheelwright leaves the spoke half-driven into the "nave," and untying his coarse, dirty apron, waves it over his head like a banner, making the chips and dirt fly in all directions: out also rushes the lame shoemaker, brandishing one of the big farmer's top-boots which he was at work upon, and shouting like the rest of his neighbours, and seeming quite as pleased as if the load of corn was his own; and he has every reason to be pleased, for his wife and four children have been allowed to glean in all the farmer's fields, ever since the first day that the reapers began to cut down the corn. The old deaf grandmother, who seldom leaves her creaking wicker chair in the chimney-corner, has for once quitted her spinning-wheel, and, shading the sunshine from her wrinkled face with her thin skinny hand, while the other rests on the horn-tipped staff, which has been her companion for fifty years, comes out, followed by the old grey cat, who looks almost as grave as herself, and seems sorely puzzled to know what it can be that has called forth its venerable mistress from her snug warm corner. And the poor old creature raises her shrill, cracked voice, to welcome home the last load: and she will be chatty and communicative all the evening after, and tell her grand-children what Harvest-homes she has seen in her day; and then she will begin to lament over good old customs, May-day games (which only live now in name), sheep-shearing feasts, and the merry doings there used to be at Christmas-tide, when she was a young woman.

Onward moves the wagon, amid the shouts of old and young. The very dogs run barking after it. A flag hangs out at the

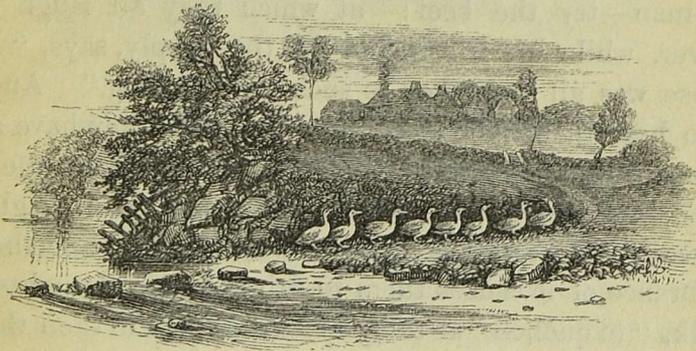
village ale-house, with its sign of either "The Old Wheat-sheaf,"—"The Plough,"—or "The Barley-mow." The landlord stands at the door, and flourishes his pipe round his head: the ostler pauses with the wisp of hay in his hand, and ceases to rub down the horse, which stands under the shed: the chamber-maid leans out of the window, and nods and smiles at everybody she knows: and the heavy wagon approaches the stack-yard. The farmer's wife and daughter are at the door dressed in their holiday attire, and smiling welcome on all alike, right proud in their hearts of the many good things they have provided for the sun-burnt reapers:—the shouting becomes louder—the men on the wagon take off their hats—you see them point to the sheaf which stands up in the centre of the wagon, and is covered with blue ribands and beautiful flowers—they rend the air with loud huzzas. The very horses jerk their heads with pride, and toss the ears of corn and ribands and flowers about, with which they are adorned, while they draw in the last load; as if they, too, were conscious that they had done their duty towards the gathering in of harvest. And now the wain is drawn up beside the huge corn-rick, where so many loads have been deposited; sheaf after sheaf is added to the stack, until the last one is lifted upon the fork. Then rings out the great shout—the gathering together of all huzzas—and three-times-three is timed by the men on the corn-stack, the last loud welcome of Harvest-home. Then a feast is prepared in the barn, or under the large tree in the orchard, for the reapers; and huge pieces of beef, and large plum-puddings are attacked by the hungry labourers, who every now and then empty great bumpers of ale, as they drink welcome to Harvest-home. Bloomfield, in his collection of poems, entitled, "Wild Flowers," describes the Harvest-feast, which he calls the "Horkey," and how one of the maidens, who had helped to reap the corn, rode on the top of the wagon, and was called the "Harvest Queen." He says:—

HARVEST-HOME.

“ Home came the jovial ‘harvest’ load,
Last of the whole year’s crop ;
And Grace amongst the green boughs rode,
Right plump upon the top.

* * * * *
This way and that the wagon reeled,
And never queen rode higher ;
Her cheeks were coloured in the field,
And ours before the fire.”

The last line alludes to the “cheeks” of the old gossip, whom Bloomfield has made to describe the scene, and whose face, like those who had assisted her, was coloured through exposure to the fire, whilst cooking and preparing the many substantial things which were consumed at the great Harvest-feast ; amongst which we must not forget to mention the roast geese. Oh ! such prime ones, for they have been turned out into the stubble, to make them fat against Michaelmas, a “ stubble-fed goose” being considered the finest eating of any ; and such a dish you know, with a plum-pudding to follow, is not what we often meet with at school—and oh, how you would laugh to see in an evening the



GEESE RETURNING HOME,

as Bewick had often seen them, all in a row, and from whose admirable illustrations, we have copied this little sketch ; but whether it be a love of home, or a fear of the fox, that causes

them to keep such good hours, I must leave to the old goose who is seen leading the way to decide, and of whose wisdom, Skelton, who was poet laureat to King Henry the Eighth, makes merry mention, when he says,—

“When the rain raineth,
And the goose winketh,
Little wotteth the gosling
What the goose thinketh.”

Wotteth is a very old English word which signifies “knoweth,” and is often met with amongst our ancient authors.

But I was telling you about the Harvest-feast, before I set out on this wild goose-chase. You should be there to see them eat and drink; how you would stare at the holes they make in the roast geese! and some one, who perhaps has never tasted such a dainty dish since the last Harvest-feast, thrusts his plate forward to the man who is carving, and says, “May I trouble you for another leg of that goose?”—sitting too far off to perceive that both legs and wings have long since been devoured. Then the carver exclaims, “Why thou’st had two already, do’st think the goose had three legs? Try the beef again, man—try the beef;” at which they all laugh louder than ever, while he, who asked for the supply, says, “I wish the goose was all legs, they’re such easy picking.” And then again to hear them talk about the feats that they have accomplished in the harvest-field—the number of sheaves they have cut, tied, and reared up, within the space of a single day. They recall the hottest day they have reaped in, and the mere remembrance of it causes them to drink deeper draughts while they talk, “to quench,” as they say, “the spark in their throats.” They recount the many hours they have reaped between sunrise and sunset; who worked the longest, and who was the first to give in; what land was the heaviest cutting, and which field bore the lightest crop. Then there is ever a sly joke aimed at some one, who was almost always inquiring, whether it was

HARVEST-FEAST.

not time for luncheon or dinner; who visited the ale flagon oftener than he ought to do; and who liked



RESTING IN THE HARVEST-FIELD

better than reaping in the hot sun; “not that he was afraid of work,” say they, with knowing looks, “not he—he was so fond of it, that he would lie down and go to sleep beside it.” Then they laugh heartily, as if such a stale joke was quite new, and commence eating and drinking again, as if they had found new appetites, and never intended to leave off. Many such-like random shots of country wit are bandied about; for where all feel so great an inclination to be merry, it requires but little to furnish them with laughter. And nowhere does mirth abound more than at one of these old-fashioned feasts, which welcome in Harvest-home.

AUTUMN.

Beautiful are the woods at this season of the year, and never did the hand of an artist throw such rich colours upon the glowing canvas, as may now be found in the variegated foliage of the trees. The leaves of the beech are dyed in the deepest orange that ever the eye saw gathered in burning gold around an Autumn sunset, along the western slope of heaven. The dark green of the oak is in parts mellowed into a bronzy brown, blending beautifully with the faded yellow of the chestnut, and the deeper hues of the tall elm; while at intervals the sable fir settles down into dark shadows, between the alternate tints; and far as the eye can range along the wide outskirts of the forest, it revels in the mingled hues of mountain, field, ocean, and sky, as if the flowered meadow, and the purpled mountain, and the green billows of the sea, the blazing sunset, and the dark clouds of evening, had all rolled together their bright and sombre dyes, and gathered about the beautiful death-bed of the expiring Summer. Over the hedgerow trails the rambling briony, and we see bunches of crimson and green berries, half tempting us by their gushing ripeness to taste the poisonous juice which lies buried beneath their deceptive beauty. The hips of the wild rose rest their rich scarlet upon the carved ebony of the luscious blackberry, while the deep blue of the sloe throws over all the rich velvet of its fruit, as it stands crowned with its ruddy tiara of hawthorn-berries. On the ground are scattered thousands of polished acorns; their carved and clear cups lying empty amongst the fallen leaves, until gathered by the village children, who deck their rustic stools with these primitive tea services, and assemble round them with smiling faces, and looks of eager enjoyment, while they sip their sugar and water out of these old fairy-famed drinking vessels.

In addition to all these lights and shadows of Autumnal splendour, we every now and then stumble upon great groups of agarics, or fungi, of all hues and of all names, as mushrooms, toadstools, giants'-buttons, fuzz-balls, &c., stained with every

dye that can be seen upon the face of heaven, blue and silver and gold and crimson, and some of them rising to near a foot in height, and as large round as the crown of a man's hat; and many a time have we gathered an agaric whose gaudy colours baffle all description, and so richly spotted, that for variety and beauty of tint, the proudest flower that ever opened beneath the sun must have bowed before it. We have seen them scattered about the grassy glades of forests in broad round clusters of yellow and white, as if an army of fairies had been contending, and startled by some human footstep in the midst of the affray, had cast down their shields of gold and silver in their affright, as they retreated somewhere into the deep and undisturbed solitudes. As for puff-balls, we have many a time seen them larger than a man's head, weighing several pounds, and when broken to pieces, covering many feet of ground. Far away stretched acres of broad-leaved fern, now changing from their glossy green into a deep brown russet; while around them gathered an armed host of thistles, the sport of every passing breeze that flew by, which plucked with its unseen hands the proud plumes from their feathered helmets, and sent them floating over the gathered lines of the banded fern. Blue below bowed a little army of harebells; their azure cups ever moving as if they rang out a dying dirge for the departed Summer—a low, mournful peal, which rings not upon mortal ears, sounding over the graves of the buried flowers which sleep still and mute below, each under its little hillock of fallen and faded leaves. Above them waves some solitary woodbine; its lonely tendril rocking to and fro with a mournful motion, as if the last flower it bore had lost its way, wondering where its Summer companions had gone, and afraid of being left alone in such a changing solitude. All these, and many another object rise before us, marking the solemn majesty of Autumn, and throwing over the scene a gloomy kind of grandeur, causing us to reflect how all that is beautiful in this world is subject to

fade, and making us thoughtful while we witness the slow decay of all that we so recently admired. But Autumn is not without its pleasures, and it is only to one fond of solitude and musing alone, that his mind would find in the falling leaves, images of melancholy, and in the departed flowers recall scenes which the heart sighs for in vain ; these are but the regrets that come with after years, when we have lost dear friends whom we fondly loved, and who, perhaps, many a time had been our companions, when we wandered over such scenes in the sunshine and Summer of bygone years.

But now I am about to bring before you wild scenes and solitary places, which I often rambled over in my boyish days with my light-hearted schoolfellows, when we sallied out a blackberrying and nutting and crab-gathering, visiting such strange out-of-the-way places, as you never read about before in any books but romances ; and such as you perhaps never saw in your life, although I have, and am glad of it now, because it enables me to tell you of many strange things, which but for this, you might perhaps never have known. You can hardly believe the pleasure it gives me to tell you about my boyish days, and the adventures I met with in those vast forest-like woods, and how freshly every scene rises before me whilst I am writing, even to the very shapes of the trees, and the open spaces between them, and the great gorse bushes that rose like walls, all around the spot—while every way stretched sharp thorny bushes covered with sloes and bullaces, from which have sprung all our beautiful varieties of damsons. Oh, what fine wild hedge-rows we saw ! hedges which had never been cut within the memory of man ! where the brambles had grown one over another, year after year, until they covered the whole of the waste land up to the very edge of the brown dusty high-road—so wide, so interlaced together that, would they but have borne the weight, you might have driven three wagons a-breast over miles and miles of bramble-berry bushes—over a waste

which no man could ever remember having been cultivated. High up the bushes went, even to the summit of the hedge, which engirded the field beyond, and down they came sloping to the very foot of the roadside—a vast embankment covered every way with sloe and bullace-bushes, and brambles, on which hung millions and millions of blackberries: where we could fill our baskets in a very short time. Along the stone causeway, and up by Corringham, and far out it extended, until you came to the wild unenclosed, primeval, uncultivated Scroggs.

And now, as I promised to do, I am going to describe to you such a scene as you never beheld in your life—a spot that stands alone—for I have never met with another that bears any resemblance to it in all the hundreds of miles that I have ridden and traversed on foot, throughout England. A wild pathless place covering hundreds and hundreds of acres of land, and that was never turned up by the ploughshare, or reclaimed from its wild, savage, original state, since the day when England first rose up, a vast island from the depths of the ocean. Here grew hawthorns, so huge and old and grey and weather-beaten, that they looked as if a hundred stems had grown twisted and knotted together, and had become so hardened by time, that they had at last got fused into a mass like iron, over which the elements had no further power. Beside these grew great gigantic crab-trees, their knotted stems overgrown with the mosses and lichens which had gathered there for centuries, and from the very decay of the parent bole shot up amid the dead, white, withered, and skeleton boughs, a new tree that overlooked the wilderness. At irregular distances, uprose some mighty and majestic oak whose giant head had been struck by the bolt of Heaven long centuries ago, and which had lived on in spite of the thunder that clove its stem, and the lightning that singed its branches—standing like the wreck and monument of an old and forgotten world. And all around this vast wilderness, of venerable and hoary trees, stretched a wide

pathless expanse of entangling underwood, where the hazel, and the blackthorn, and the bullace, and the sloe, and the long thorny bramble, and the armed holly, and the pointed gorse, and the trailing woodbine, and the matted ivy, were blended with the broom, and the deep umber of the Autumn-browned fern, in one close impenetrable mass, so armed, and so impassable, that it was only here and there we were enabled to force our way, through the pointed and speary mass of underwood. We saw trees covered with ripe crabs, and great round dark bullaces, which we in vain attempted to approach, for unless armed in mail from head to heel, we never could have got to where they grew, without tearing ourselves to pieces—and those who have never seen such a sight will wonder, when I tell them that there were hundreds of gorse bushes matted together from twelve to fourteen feet in height—that far away there stretched one immense covert of sloe and bullace bushes, between which hundreds of crooked branches shot up and trailed over, as if they had been struggling years and years for the mastery, and ever above this solemn wilderness hovered scores of great birds, sharp-beaked hawks, and wide-winged kites, and great gleads, and dusky ravens, and horned owls, that we have started with staring eyes, from the hollow trees at noon-day, and that went sailing above the wild underwood, and between the white and withered branches of the trees; many of them perhaps having never been before startled by the sound of a human voice. From out the shadowy barrier of the copse-wood rushed many a wild, strange-looking animal, such as could only be found in so old and solitary a place,—the wild-cat, and the fox, and the founart, the stoat, and the weasel, and the martin, and the quick-footed hare, and the grey badger, that run off wondering who it was that had dared to invade his solitary dominions; and every now and then great hairy-armed bats darted by on their leathern wings, started from the hollows of the decayed trees, by the blows which we had struck upon the

THUNDER STORM.

stems—and there was something so lonely and desolate which hung about this strange, wild, solitary scene, that, when in the midst of it, we never dared to wander far from each other; for there were no fields near it, but on either hand, woods went stretching into woods,—Springthorpe wood, and Somerby wood, and Caistor wood, and White's wood, and Lea wood; all running into each other, with no other boundary than here and there the deep dark water-course, whose banks were infested with snakes, and whose waters were haunted with thousands of newts, and frogs, and toads; and in this wild, dreamy, old, out-of-the-way woodland world, we were wont, when boys, to go and gather nuts, and crabs, and bramble-berries, sloes, and bullaces, and hips, and haws, and all those forest fruits which had grown there wild, ages before the ancient Druids worshipped the old oaks in our island—perchance, before the painted and naked Briton was startled in his hut at midnight, by the long howl of the wolf, and the sound of the wild boar, sharpening his glittering tusks in the moonlight, upon the iron stem of some old misletoe-covered oak.

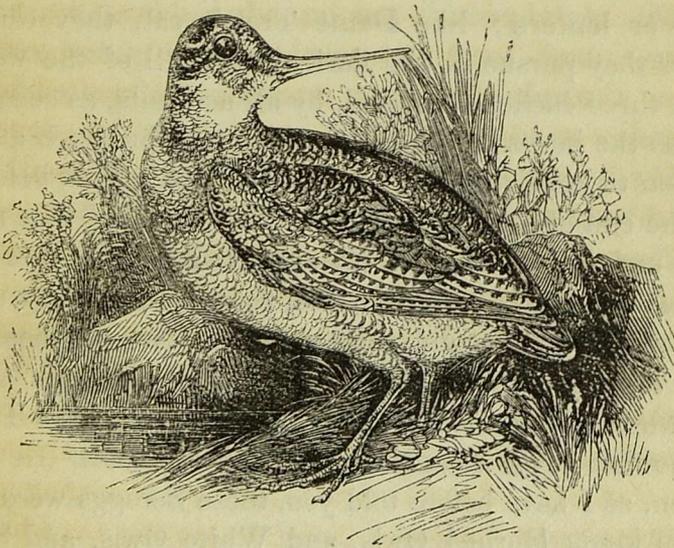
Grand and awful was the thunder storm which I once witnessed on those scroggs; just fancy such a spot darkened over with deep thunder-clouds! looking as if night was descending upon the earth, ere the sun had accomplished little more than half his journey across the sky. Imagine a blackness and a stillness, amid which not a leaf appeared to move; where even the light down of the thistle rested upon the spot where it had alighted, and the very air seemed not to breathe in its sleep. Then in a moment this awful silence was broken by the loud, sudden bursting of the deep-mouthed thunder, as if shaking the very earth on which we stood, Over the vast wilderness it went sounding, dark, and far away, to where in the distance the trees looked as if resting upon a sky of ink; so black and lowering hung the thunder-clouds. Then came the blazing lightning, making, for a moment, the whole forest scene red as the

mouth of a burning furnace ; it passed on, and all again settled down into a deep twilight gloom. A few moments more, and a silence more awful than the first seemed to reign over the scene. Then came another peal of thunder, longer and louder than the first. The foundations of the earth jarred, as they rocked beneath it : and then in an instant there descended a heavy deluge of rain, as if the floor of heaven had burst, and some mighty river was rushing through its deep bed. Again the wild woodland was lighted up for an instant, and in the distance the trees appeared resting upon a background of fire ; so red and lurid was the glare of the lightning, that filled up the whole scene. Heavier and heavier descended the rain, falling like an avalanche upon the leaves and the boles of the trees ; and when the loud artillery of heaven had again sent forth its earth-shaking thunder, a mighty wind sprang up, and went sweeping through the forest, making the old trees groan again, as it tore through their grey, gnarled, and knotted branches. Awful and startling was that contrast, from the silence which but a few minutes before had rested on all around ! Trees, whose roots had been anchored in the earth for centuries, seemed now struggling with the tempest to retain their ancient footing ; while their branches clashed together as if in anger, as they were bowed, and bent, beneath the overwhelming element. Although in a few minutes we were thoroughly soaked to the skin, yet we still remained in an open space in the under-wood, well knowing how dangerous it is to seek shelter under a tree during a thunder-storm, as the lightning generally strikes the objects that stand most prominent. Oh what a scene it was ! I have witnessed many thunder-storms, but never remember one like that which we saw, and were out in, on Corringham Scroggs !

A rare haunt was this in Autumn for the Woodcock, a bird which we seldom see in summer : which somehow seems to make its appearance all at once, coming, nobody can tell how,

WOODCOCK.

and contriving almost always to land in the night. As the woodcocks bring no luggage with them when they return from their long sea voyage, they put up at the first inn they come near, which is generally either a hedge, or a ditch; and without disturbing either boots or ostler, chambermaid or innkeeper, there they take up their quarters until the following morning. They mostly rest a day or two before they proceed further into the country, for they have neither had the assistance of sail or steam, to aid them in crossing the stormy sea—nothing but their poor little wings to beat up against the wind with, and dash off the cold sea spray—that is if it ever reached so high as where they flew; and you marvel that they have come so far to feed only on such simple fare as insects and worms. The



WOODCOCK

leaves the woods in the evening twilight, where at such times you may hear scores of them making a shrill noise, not unlike that of the snipe. Poor little things! hundreds of them, during the season, fall a prey to the fowler and the gunner.

AUTUMN.

The former captures them in his net; and the latter fires at them when resting on the ground, or on the trees, whenever he can find an opportunity. They are a sadly persecuted race, and I dare say, if they ever wish at all, would be glad to have as strong a savour as the pole-cat, if it would but save them from being shot at so often. You will not often meet with them out of the woods in the daytime, whilst in the evening, they are here and there and everywhere, breaking out like a lot of boys who have just escaped from school; and at this season they breakfast, dine, and sup, like regular dissipated rakes, who love to turn night into day. Their eyes seem to be of no use to them in the daytime, excepting to enable them to see when danger is at hand, for they can catch their prey in the dark, feel a worm, or smell out an insect, without either the aid of lamp or lantern; like Dame Trott's cat, they can catch whatever they pursue in the dark. The bill of the woodcock is about three inches long, and, by all accounts, as sensitive to feeling as the horns of the snail. Had man but such a nose in proportion to his size, he would have to look a yard before him to see the end of it. The plumage of this bird is a mixture of black and grey, while the under parts are of a dim yellow, with dusky streaks. It sometimes, though very rarely, remains with us all the year round, when it builds a nest of moss, grass, and dry leaves, within which it lays four or five eggs of a yellowish white, spotted with brown and ash colour. The eggs are somewhat larger than those of a pigeon.

Then, as I have before told you, these Scroggs were famous for all of kinds Horned Owls, and White Owls, and Sparrow Owls, and Little Horned Owls; some of them with large heads, looking, as they peeped through the trees, for all the world like cats; and unless you have seen young owls, you never saw such white, little, woolly things in your life as they are; and famous mousers were these owls, I can tell you, nor would a farmer drive one out of his barn for the world, for he knows that an

OWLS



OWL

will destroy as many mice as the best cat he has got. Oh how stupid an owl seemed, if we once started it from its roost in the day time, when the sun was shining bright; for then it went blundering along, hitting its head first against one thing, then against another, until sometimes it would fall bang upon the ground; and then, perhaps, after receiving a sharp bite upon the finger, which drew the blood, we were enabled to carry off the great, staring, stupid creature in our hats. Then there was another owl with a smaller head, which we were never able to make head or tail of, for it used to spring up from out of the fern and long grass, fly a little way, and then alight again; but we never once saw it settle upon a tree, and sometimes had our doubts whether it was an owl at all, although the country people called it the Mouse-hawking owl.

And now, having, I hope, prepared your minds for a ramble in the woods, I will endeavour to carry you along with me, and make you fancy, whilst you are reading these pages, that we are out amongst the great oaks, and strolling along wild alleys, between the trees. So, hurrah! hurrah! and now, my boys! come along, and let's be off upon our journey. Bundle the books out of your school-bags: get the longest

hooked stick you can : fill your pockets with bread and cheese : put on the worst clothes you can find ; then let us assemble together with a loud huzza, before we set out for a day's nutting in the woods. Let us, for once, forget all about school, and our tasks, and hard sums, undone, and German-text copies unfinished, and give up our minds to the joys of another glad holiday ; to dream of the clusters of brown ripe nuts we shall gather before night, and the rich banquet we shall find spread for us, in some great hall of blackberries.

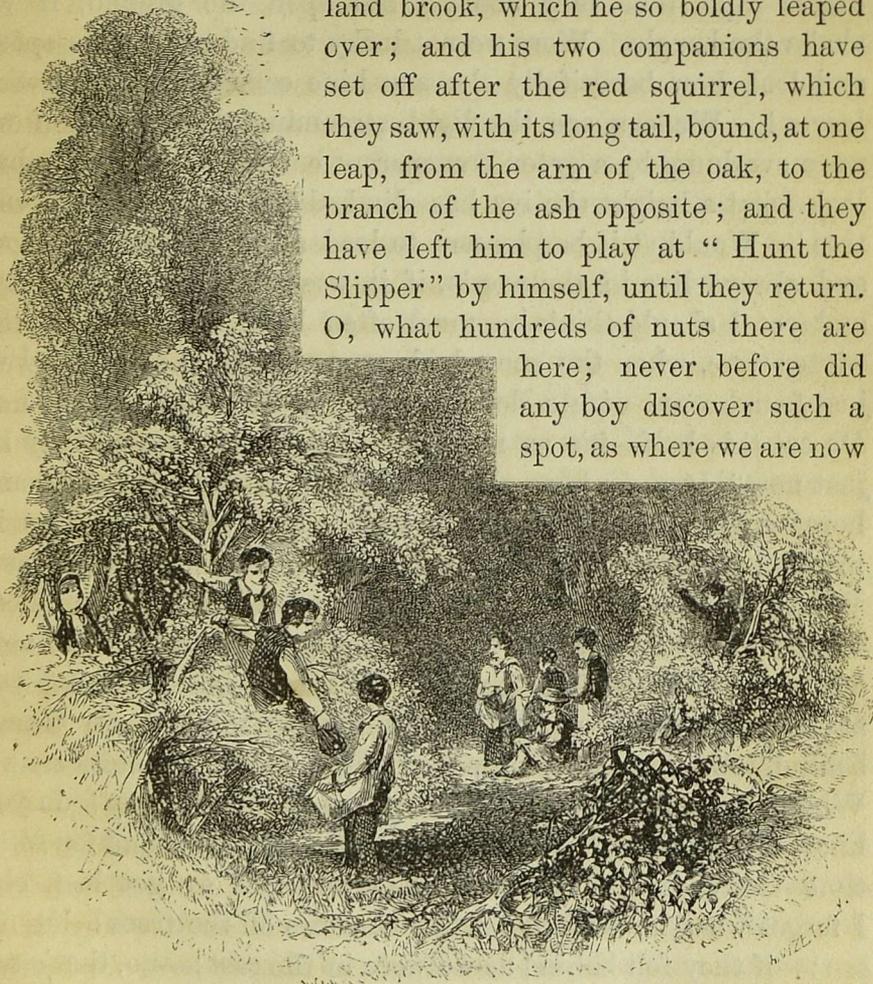
Here we are ! Bang through this open gap in the hedge let us go—we cannot make it worse ; for the sportsmen, with their guns, have been here before us, and the mounted hunters will come after us, as they chase the poor fox—all helping to make a rich harvest for the fagot gatherer ; so that it would only be a waste of labour to repair the fence again before Spring. “ But we shall be taken up,” squeaks some tiny boy, with a weak voice ; “ Then they may set us down again,” exclaims some daring lad, with a bolder heart ; for he well knows, that many a boy has gone a nutting there years before us ; and the kind old squire is too much of an Englishman to disgrace his woods with notice to trespassers ; and the worst we can do will be to trample underfoot the bracken, the bramble, and the useless underwood. For my part, I have no love for those purse-proud selfish proprietors, who will neither enjoy the woods they possess themselves, nor permit others to spend a merry day, now and then, within them. Æsop had his eye on such men as these, when he shadowed forth the “ Dog in the Manger,” in his fable.

Now, before we separate, we must make a bargain :—One or two boys shall remain here, under this large oak tree, to keep a guard over our basket of provisions, and to blow a loud blast occasionally on the whistle, so that in case any of us should get lost, we may know what point to steer for by that sound. You see which way the shadows of the trees fall :

NUTTING.

you cannot well mistake east from west now—so off we go. Hurra! hurra! “Oh dear!” exclaims one, “I’ve got fast in a bramble bush;” while his companion, twenty yards ahead, is calling upon him, in vain, to come and admire the large clusters of nuts, seven of which hang in a bunch on the highest bough, where the top of the hazel catches the sunshine, far beyond his reach. Little Dick has lost his shoe, somewhere amid the dead leaves, that strew the bank beside the wood-

land brook, which he so boldly leaped over; and his two companions have set off after the red squirrel, which they saw, with its long tail, bound, at one leap, from the arm of the oak, to the branch of the ash opposite; and they have left him to play at “Hunt the Slipper” by himself, until they return. O, what hundreds of nuts there are here; never before did any boy discover such a spot, as where we are now



NUTTING IN THE WOOD.

Such a place!—do come and look! Not a soul has been here before us—not a branch is broken—not a tall tuft of grass trampled down! Now, as I hook down the boughs, do you lay fast hold of 'em, and be sure and don't leave go; for, if you do, you'll get such a switch over the face as you have n't had for many-a-day, I can tell you. Did you ever see such a quantity of nuts together in your life! and such a size too! Here's a bunch! but I have n't time to count how many there are on it; and many of the nuts are so ripe, that they actually fall upon the ground, if we shake the bough. Were we not lucky to find out such a spot? and look how beautifully the sunshine comes down upon the leaves! We can see the light streaming through, as if we were overhung by a green transparent curtain of silk. Do but look what a height the ivy has climbed up that great tall ash tree! Wouldn't it be pleasant to lead a life like Robin Hood, and always live in the woods, if it was all summer like this; and yet I should think he must often have been cold in the winter-time, when the snow laid upon the ground. Oh! I've just found a nut with a double kernel in it. Such a fine one! Do eat this half—it's so nice. Did you see that bird fly by just now? It was a jay—should n't I like to catch it! Do come here—make haste—never saw such a load of blackberries in my life! so ripe, and as big as damsons! Now we have a feast! What's that—a snake? I think it's an adder. Let's be off. Where's my bag and nuts?—have you got my stick? Do stop a minute till I've found my cap. What a frightened chap you are to run off that way! I was n't going to leave my things behind, just because we happened to see a poor harmless snake. What a way you run without stopping for me, I say! do you know where we are? I haven't heard the whistle sound for some time—have you? Whatever shall we do, if we get lost, eh? I forget what he said about the shadows of the trees: let me see;—if they fell behind us we were in the east;—no, that's not it. Well, it must be the west then. But the sun seems to stand

straight over our heads; and I do feel so hungry, I would n't mind giving a good handful or two of nuts for a slice of bread and cheese. I don't know which way to turn: but I am not a bit frightened. What's the use of talking about the "Babes in the Wood" and blackberries now?

"I am sure we 're going wrong," exclaims some timid boy, "it's no use venturing further this way. There does n't seem to be any road out here—whatever should we do if a great wolf were to jump up and show his teeth at us?"—"Nonsense!" answers his braver companion, "you know there are no wolves now—do n't you remember reading about them in the History of England, and how so much a head was paid for destroying them, in the time of the Saxons?"—"But might n't one or two escape and breed in the woods, and then you know the old wolves would show the young ones, where they used to hide themselves; and so they may have gone on for years concealing themselves. We often hear of scores of sheep being devoured in a night—who knows but it may be the wolves that come out of the woods to worry 'em?"—"Nonsense—come along—I tell you, there are no wolves now, and haven't been for hundreds of years. Don't talk so."—"Well, but if there are no wolves, there may be something worse—you know we've heard of lions, and tigers, and leopards escaping, and running away out of wild beast shows; and, of course, they always hide themselves in the woods, and who knows whether they ever catch them again or not? I think we'd better climb up into one of these high trees, till they come to look for us, we shall be safe there—oh, dear, what's that running up there? Look it's red with a great long tail like a lion. What's that?"—"Why it's only a fox, which perhaps mistook you for a great goose, as you are, to talk such nonsense. You talk about Robin Hood—why, if a wild cat was only to come and look at you, with its great eyes, you'd be frightened to death; come along with you, there's a footpath here: it's sure to lead somewhere,

let's go straight along it—listen! do you hear that sound, it's the tinkling of sheep-bells, we're not far from the side; didn't I tell you we were all right? Look you, here we've come out at an opening in the wood; and see, there's a woman and her child going along, and the spire of a church in the distance, let us go up to the woman and inquire our way back."

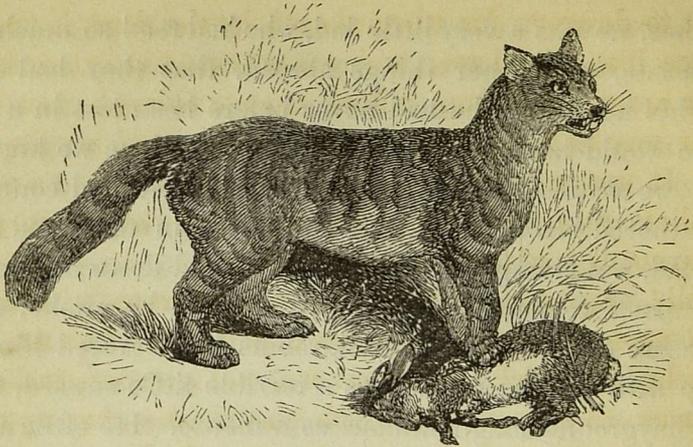
Such was the adventure which befel two youths, many years ago, who lost their way, one Autumn, whilst out nutting in the woods. The poor woman and her child, whom they chanced to stumble upon, had been out in the woods gathering blackberries: and she, like Comus, in Milton's *Mask*, bearing that title (a work which every boy ought to read who is fond of beautiful descriptive poetry), led them back without any difficulty to the large oak, from which they had started before they were lost, for like Comus she knew—

"Each lane and every alley green,
Dingle, or bushy dell of that wild wood,
And every bosky bourn from side to side,
Her daily walks and ancient neighbourhood."

A few pence amply rewarded her for her kindness, and with the loss of a satchel and a hook-stick, they fell to, with an excellent appetite, and enjoyed their rural repast of bread and cheese and home-brewed beer; and he who had evinced so much fear, sat down and ate heartily, and thought no more about wolves, lions, tigers, and leopards, than if no such things existed in the world; and even when his hunger was appeased and he was twitted a little by his companion, he leaped up courageously, and brandishing his little stick amid a score of his schoolfellows, said he should just like to see a wolf come—that was all—they would see what he would do—at which they all laughed aloud, especially when one of them imitated the growl of a tiger, at which our little hero, whose heart appeared to be no bigger than a bumble-bee, dropped his stick, looked very pale, and exclaimed, "Oh dear, what was that?" But

remember, he was a very little lad, who had read so much about wild beasts, and other things abroad, that they had almost turned his head, and he had never before been lost in a wood ; what he would have done had he been left alone we know not, though we scarcely think that he would have had courage to have gathered blackberries, like the babes in the wood in the the ballad, but giving it up for a bad job, laid down at once, and cried himself to sleep, fully expecting when he awoke, to find that a score or two of little cock-robins had covered him carefully up with leaves ; for he was a terrible little coward, though in the playground magnanimous as a mouse. He often amused us, by showing how he could kill a lion with the first blow—make a tiger run off without so much as bidding him good morning—and as for an alligator, Waterton's feat of riding upon the back of one, was not to be named beside what he would do, if one happened to come marching up into the school-yard some fine morning. Poor little fellow ! we had often meditated a plan for losing him in the wood, watching him at a distance to see what he would do, but not one of us was hard-hearted enough to put such a plan into execution.

And now I will tell you an adventure which befel myself, and two other boys, whilst we were out nutting in Warton wood—that large wood which I have before told you about in my Summer Book—and how we met with a real wild animal that looked as savage, and was half as big as a young tiger. “ I know we shall see something,” exclaimed a little timid boy, who greatly resembled the one I have been describing. And a minute or two after he came running up out of an avenue, or opening between the trees, up which he had ventured a few yards by himself, looking quite pale with fright, as he said, “ Oh ! yonder it is ; don't go, or you'll be killed, then what-ever shall I do ? I can never find my way home again by myself ! ” But we were not so easily daunted, and away we went to look ; and there it was sure enough, a large, savage-looking



WILD CAT,

striped like a tiger. Oh! you should have seen it; such strong, stout legs, and such a thick tail! not tapering to a point like that of a tame cat, but thick and bushy all the way up; while it showed its sharp teeth, and growled like a tiger; as if it intended to spring upon us, as it stood with its claw fixed upon a rabbit which it had killed. Nor would the bravest gamekeeper, that ever traversed a forest, like to have met with such an enraged wild cat as we saw, unless he had had his gun with him, for it is the only really dangerous animal that is to be found wild, in our English forests, in the present day, and it would require a powerful and courageous dog to worry one of them. The female forms her nest either in the hollow root of some large old tree, some hidden opening in the rocks, or concealed dell in the woody mountains, where she brings forth four or five young ones, so savage, that they will spit at you when they are only a few days old. The wild cat often conceals itself amongst the darkest and thickest branches of the trees—when, should a poor bird chance to come within reach, it springs upon it in an instant; and there is no escaping from the clutch of its hooked claws, and the deep, piercing bite of its trenchant teeth. In former times the wild cat was very common in the old English forests, and was in those days very

difficult to destroy; for when chased by the dogs, it could run up a tree like a squirrel; and you may readily imagine that a bolt, or arrow, shot from a bow, oftener missed, than hit it, when it was high up amongst the old gnarled boughs of the trees. It was only in after days, when powder began to flash, and bullets to whistle about its ears, that they were able to thin the country of this ferocious animal.

Well! there stood this savage-looking brute, with his paw planted upon the dead rabbit, his eyes flashing like fire, while he switched his thick tail to and fro, and growled, and set his teeth at us, as if hesitating which he should spring upon first. I need not tell you how we took to our heels; one big boy, however, having daring enough to throw a stick at the wild cat before he started off after us. Off we went, straight a-head, through ferns and brambles and bush-thorns, as if no such things existed in the wood. We neither stopped to look at the fallen acorns, nor the beautiful brown nuts, that hung so temptingly over our heads; we left the ripe wild crabs untouched, and paused not to gather either blue sloes, or black bullaces, from the numerous bushes we hurried past; for bold as the bearing of the bigger boy was, when he hurled the stick at the wild cat, it no more resembled true courage, than that manifested by a lad, who will dare to knock at twelve o'clock at night at a church door, and the moment he has done so, be the foremost to run away. Nor would it have been wisdom for him to have come to close quarters with such an armed enemy; for if the cat had once flown at his face or throat, it might perhaps have left such a wound, as would have been a long while healing, even had it done him no more serious injury. But you must not think that every cat you chance to see in a wood is a real wild one; for many stray cats are to be found in such spots, which have wandered from home, or been lost, and they manage to breed and live well enough in these wild places, abounding in birds and field mice as they do.

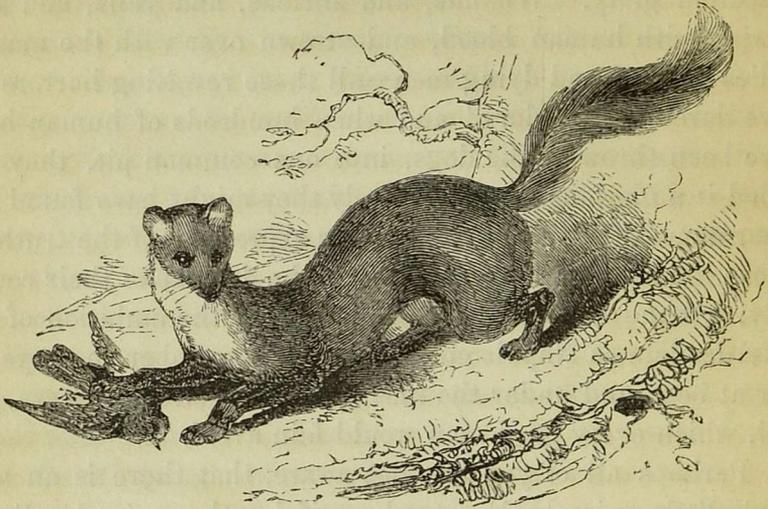
But to return to our adventure. We run on, and on, until we were fairly lost; and had not chance at last led us into a path, which had been made by the gamekeepers, when they went round to look after the game, there is no knowing to where we might have gone in the end: for I can tell you this was a real old English wood, with oaks in it hundreds of years old; and a battle had been fought beside it above two hundred years ago, between the soldiers of Cromwell, and the royalists, who drew their swords for the cause of King Charles the First, all of which you have no doubt read about in English history.

But, thank God, there are no such scenes now-a-days in this country, and I trust that war will soon cease in every corner of the world. Just fancy what a shocking sight it must have been for us English boys to have beheld as we returned from nutting, if when we had gained the outskirts of the wood, we had seen a lifeless soldier here, a dead horse there; further on another bleeding, and wounded, and groaning piteously; the ground strewn over with arms—swords, and spears, and pistols, battered helmets, and coats of mail; and far down in the valley below, the pursued and the pursuers still in sight, their course marked by death and desolation. Yet about two hundred years ago, such sights were not uncommon in England; and while we read the glowing pages of history, we are too apt to forget how much bloodshed and death—how many sighs, and heart-rending groans, and tears, it took to complete a single victory. Ever bear in mind also, that the boasted laurels which crown the conqueror, have been gathered in fields of blood: that the drums, and trumpets, and glittering arms, of our boldest soldiers, are but the shop-front decorations of men whose trade is slaughter—who are compelled to commit murder, when called upon by the rulers of their country to do so. These are hard truths for young minds like yours to digest, but they are truths that must be told: and although in all ages of the world, men have been justly branded as cowards, who have refused to fight

in the defence of their country, still there have ever been found amongst mankind, those who preferred war before peace—who have done all they could to get men to murder one another, only for the love they had of fighting—and this they have miscalled glory. Wounds, and shrieks, and yells, and fields flowing with human blood, and strewn over with the mangled bodies of dead and dying men—all these revolting horrors they have dared to call glory! and when hundreds of human bodies have been thrown, like dogs, into one common pit, they have called it a glorious grave! Surely they might have found some other name, if they had tried, more expressive of the truth: for where ten soldiers have perished in the defence of their country only, a hundred have been sacrificed by the ambition of such cruel leaders as Napoleon. No! ever remember, my boys, that war at best, and under the most justifiable circumstances, is an evil, which every good man would fain avoid.

Perhaps all of you are not aware, that there is an active lively little animal, almost as beautiful as the squirrel, called the Marten, which inhabits our woods, and is so wild that it is almost impossible to tame it. And although this little creature is not more than eighteen inches long, yet it can readily destroy either a hare or a rabbit; and as for rats, mice, and moles, it can nip them up like winking. It would make you stare to see a marten run up a tree, you never see it slip back an inch, you behold it at the root one moment, and the next, it is lost amid the thick foliage of the branches; for you have no idea of the hold it has with those long sharp claws. Only let a bird nestle anywhere amongst the leaves, and up goes its big round ears, when it opens its large eyes, and quick as thought, it is upon the poor feathered victim in a moment, not even leaving it time to say, “Bless me! what a hurry you’re in!” for its sharp pointed mouth is at the throat of its winged captive in an instant. If once it gets concealed anywhere about a farmyard, the old dame may bid good-by to her hen and

chickens ; for while there is one on the perch, or any where near, the marten never knows what it is to go to bed without its supper. The old cock may bluster and crow, and shake his spurs and flap his wings, but it's all of no use ; for if the



MARTEN

is not caught, he's sure to go at last ; and if it finds good quarters, it will make itself quite at home, erecting its nest in the barn, or any ruined outshed, for it's nowise particular, but seems quite contented, even if it's a hole in a tree, so long as there is a duck or a goose left in the neighbourhood. And then it sometimes brings up two or three families in a year, each consisting of four or five little martens, who begin to pick chickens almost as soon as they can run, and whose example is followed by every succeeding brother and sister. For they seem very fond of, boarding and lodging, near a large comfortable farmyard, making themselves as much at their ease, as if they had come to spend a week there ; and would, no doubt, if they wore stockings, have brought their knitting with them. And then the fur on their skins is so long and soft and beautiful, and above all, so valuable, that could you but kill a

marten for every chicken that is destroyed, strange as it may sound, you'd become a gainer by the loss. It has also a bushy tail, about nine inches long, which is of great use in balancing it when it runs among the long narrow branches. There used to be one in the Surrey Zoological Gardens, which, when driven out of its box, seemed as mad as a March hare; but how mad that is, it would puzzle me to tell you; though I can assure you that it used to run out, and bang itself against the wires, as if its head had been made out of the end of a poker.

But the name of the marten has recalled a queer, odd, old fellow, whom I well knew, and who was called the Miser of Martin; for such was the name of the village in which he lived. You never heard of such an old save-all as he was; not but what economy is highly to be commended; but when, like him, persons have plenty, and yet deny themselves the common comforts of life, and only hoard their money up for the sole love of money, without making any use at all of it, either to benefit themselves or any body else, then it is that they become miserable misers, like the old man of Martin.

And now I'll tell you all about the old miser, who was a downright nip-pinch, and too miserable to live. The old women used to say that he would have skinned a flint to have saved a halfpenny, if he had spoilt a sixpenny knife in doing it; and what made it all the worse was, that he had plenty of money, and possessed several houses in the neighbourhood. Nobody could ever remember him having had a new coat, and the one he did wear he seldom put on properly, except in wet weather, for he used to throw it over the shoulders, and tie it at the front with a string, leaving the sleeves to dangle down. If any body asked him why he wore his coat in that fashion, he would answer, "to save the sleeves." He used to carry his money sewed up in the waistband of his leather breeches, until it came to twenty pounds, when he put it in the bank. Nothing in the world would have induced him to have un-

ripped one of those stitches and taken a sovereign out when he had once placed it there, until he had made up the appointed sum of twenty pounds, when off he trudged to the bank. He used to mend his own shoes, and do his own washing; and you could not have found an old-clothes dealer from Whitechapel to Westminster, who would have given half-a-crown for the whole suit he wore. Yet, miser as he was, he always kept some little boy as a servant, and you may readily guess what sort of a place a lad had, under such a nip-pinching sort of a master. The first question he always asked the boy was—"Could he whistle!" for I must tell you the old miser used to keep a barrel of small beer in his cellar, and he would never permit a boy to go down and draw any of the beer, unless he whistled all the time, while he himself stood listening at the cellar-head; for he used to say, "he can't drink and whistle at a breath." But he had one lad called Jack, who was too deep for him, for Jack often contrived to have a playmate outside the cellar-light, who used to thrust his head down and whistle while Jack drank; Jack, in return, whistling again while his companion emptied a mug of beer. It strangely puzzled the old miser, for a long time, to account for the barrel so soon becoming empty; but as Jack had occasionally thrown a jug or two of water down the cellar-light, the old man, of course, concluded that the barrel leaked; so Jack and his companion whistled the old man out of cask after cask, always contriving to keep up a swim beneath the barrel. To save firing, he used to make Jack boil bacon and potatoes sufficient to last for three or four days, at one time; and one day he sent Jack ten miles to a market-town, on an errand, and gave him a penny to get his dinner at a cook-shop: "You'll make a very good shift with a penny Jack," said he, "for you're a fine growing lad and don't want much meat; I would give you more, only I have no change; and as to breaking into a sixpence, you know it's a thing I never do Jack, for if you once begin to change

silver, it makes sad havoc with your accounts, and is sure to throw you wrong; halfpence you may remember. I dined there once myself Jack, for a penny, and a very good dinner I had. I'll tell you how I went on: I ordered a pennyworth of potatoes, and they brought me three fine, nice, mealy ones, as ever you'd wish to see; then I begged a spoonful of gravy, which they gave me, and very delicious it was Jack; mustard, salt, and pepper, always stand upon the table for any body to help themselves as likes, and there's no charge for that; and you'll generally find a little ketchup in the cruet, but it's best to look round before you empty it, as they might grumble when you only pay a penny for your dinner. Then you'll see a beautiful large jug of toast-and-water on the table, Jack, with a piece of toast in it as big as both your fists, that's for the customers, there's no charge for that, Jack, and when you've had a hearty drink, if you don't feel as if you'd had sufficient dinner, wipe your hands clean on the table-cloth, then take out the toast and eat it. That's the way to dine for a penny, Jack. It's true the man grumbled a bit, and said he'd thank me to take my custom somewhere else another time, but I paid him what he charged, and what more would he have had; besides, Jack, it saved my changing a shilling. Now be a good lad, mind what I've said to you, and take care of the money you have got to receive, which is ten and three pence halfpenny; then, perhaps, I may give you the halfpenny for yourself when you come back, Jack, or save it for you, and if I do, you know that'll make three halfpence I owe you, Jack; and four three halfpences make sixpence, and two sixpences make a shilling, and it only takes twenty shillings to make a pound. You'll soon be a rich man, Jack." Jack, however, had his journey of twenty miles for nothing, not so much as getting the promised halfpenny. He had knocked, he said, but, there was no answer.

"Perhaps they've run away in my debt," exclaimed the old miser, "must go myself to-morrow morning, the first thing—

to lose such a sum would ruin me; I shall leave you out a piece of bread, Jack, and as there are plenty of blackberries on the hedges now, you can run out for an hour and dine like a prince. Be sure and lock the door, and take the key with you, for fear anybody should run away with the fitch of bacon and the ham, Jack; and when you dine off the blackberries, Jack, you may as well take the pig with you, it may pick up a few acorns, and you can drive it into the sty when you get back, it will save giving it a meal." So the old man took his stick in his hand, and with a slice of bread in his pocket, and a small piece of cold fat bacon, set out on his journey, resolving within himself that if he did not get the money, he would not be so extravagant as to lay out a penny in dining at the cook's shop. After a walk of ten miles the old man found that as the son had gone to the village where he resided, he had taken the money with him, intending to leave it. "Dear me," said the old man, "if he should happen to call while Jack's at his dinner what a bad job it'll be—I must go back again directly." "It's a bad job both ways," said the man who had sent his son with the money, "for the person he's gone to see has called here since he went, and has bought and paid for the horse which he has gone to ask him to come and look at; and what is worse, he wants it home to-day, it's a neighbour of yours, farmer Swift, you may ride it home if you like." The old miser consented, after having obtained the twopence to pay the toll-gate. While the old man was trotting leisurely along, occasionally nibbling at his brown bread and fat bacon, and wondering whether the son would pay Jack or not, or whether Jack would be in or not, or if Jack had neglected to lock the door, and anybody had stolen the bacon and ham while he went out to his sumptuous repast, or whether the pig had run away, or the barrel again leaked, or Jack in his ignorance, if paid, had chanced to take a bad shilling: while these and divers other thoughts floated through the old

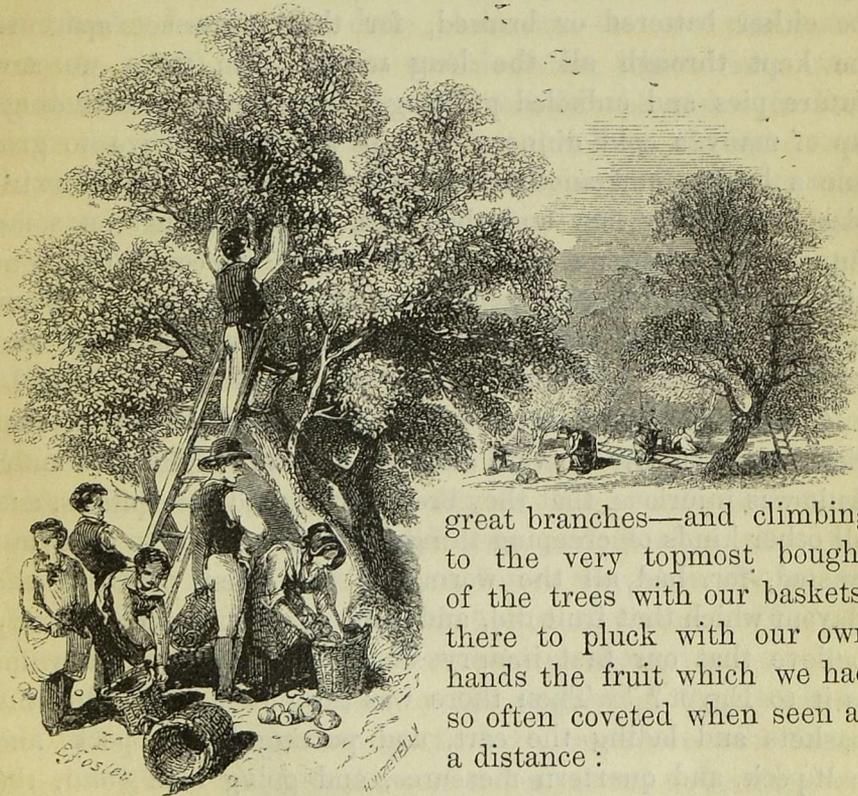
miser's brain, bang went a fowling-piece, and off started the horse, soon leaving the old man's hat a quarter of a mile behind. Off sped the horse at full gallop, and while the old miser pulled with all his might and main at the reins, snap went the string which secured his coat, and as his arms were not in the sleeves, after his hat it flew. "Oh dear! oh dear!" exclaimed the old man, "hat and coat gone, I can never afford to replace them." On went the horse, until he came just within reach of the miser's own door, when seeing the young man who had brought the money, leaning and looking out of his own window, the remembrance of the ten and threepence halfpenny, nerved him with more than ordinary courage, and twining the reins tight round his wrist, he jerked at them with all his strength, suddenly pulling the horse up on one side of the road, when down the poor animal fell, as if by a shot, and broke both its knees on a stone-heap. Out came the man's son who had sold the horse—out rushed Jack with a rasher of ham, and a slice of bread in his fist—out flocked a dozen of the neighbours, all exclaiming that the horse was ruined—and up rode farmer Swift at the same time, declaring that it was not now worth as many shillings as he had given pounds for it that very morning. Farmer Swift threatened to sue the young man's father for the value of the horse—and the young man threatened the old miser with a law-suit for breaking the horse's knees—while the old man threatened that he would break Jack's bones for cutting into the forbidden ham—and Jack's father, who stood by, threatened to drag the old miser through a fish-pond if he dared to lay a hand on his lad, while he up and told them, how the old miser had sent Jack twenty miles the day before, and only allowed him a penny to pay his expenses with. Added to this, the instant Jack turned out the pig, it set off like a race horse, for it was nearly as gaunt as a greyhound, and where it had run to no one knew. How the old miser got out of his troubles you will

readily guess, when I tell you that it was twelve months beyond the usual time before he next took his twenty pound to the bank—and ever after that time he went by the name of “Penny wise and Pound foolish.”

Glorious news was that which arrived from Thonock in the Autumn, when uncle sent word he was going to gather in his apples; for, I can assure you, his was something like an orchard, not a little bit of a place shoved up in a corner, as if to be out of the way, but a great, large, square, wide, grass field, filled everywhere with all kinds of old English fruit trees. Then, you never saw such green, old-fashioned, strange looking trees in your life as some of them were, for they were knock-kneed and in-kneed, and bow-legged and hump-backed and round-shouldered; some leant on this side, and some on that; some had to be held, and others supported, by crutches; and many and many had their branches so heavily laden with fruit, that strong props were compelled to be put beneath them to support the weight. I cannot tell you half the names of the apples, and pears, and plums which grew in that old-fashioned orchard. There were codlins, and russets, and summerins, and rennets, and golden pippins, and ripston pippins, and lemon pippins, and the whole family of pippins; and large bell-tongued pears, and burgamots, and windsors, and jargonelles, and old men’s, and old women’s, and other sorts I cannot tell you of. Then there were plums, purple, and yellow, and green, and red, some of them with such thick stones in that nothing less than a hammer would break them; together with rows of damson trees, which, like the plums, had so many odd kinds of names that I dare not venture upon enumerating them. And, oh! what a treat to us boys was the morning which followed a windy night; what baskets and baskets full of all kinds of fruit did we then gather! There they lay upon the long grass, hundreds and hundreds, higgledy-piggledy together—here a red and rosy-cheeked apple, with the

THE ORCHARD.

sunny side uppermost, reposing by a golden goose-egg—a plum so ripe that it made your mouth water only to look at it. But light were the breakfasts, and dinners, and suppers, which we partook of in those days in the large thatched farm-house; for what boy was there ever yet found who cared about bread and butter, and meat and puddings, and such like things, while living in a land abounding with ripe apples, and mellow pears, and plums that melted like honey in the mouth? But if the mere windfalls afforded us so much pleasure, and furnished us with such a feast, just fancy what a treat it was to gather in the real fruit harvest of the orchard—to ascend ladders and clamber up



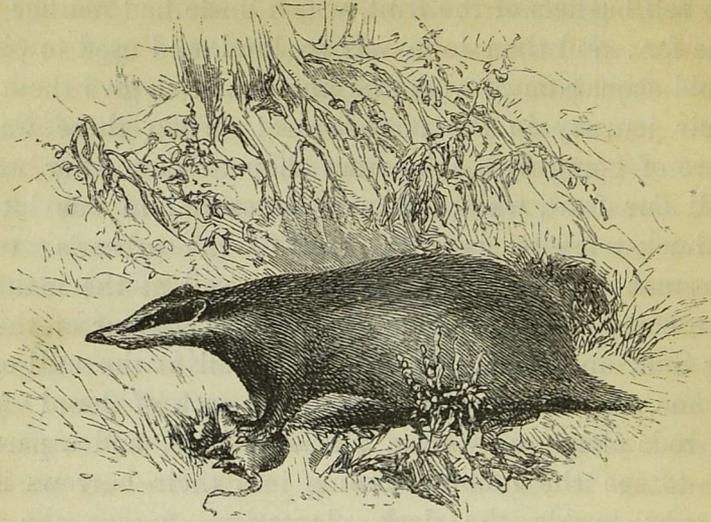
great branches—and climbing to the very topmost boughs of the trees with our baskets, there to pluck with our own hands the fruit which we had so often coveted when seen at a distance :

GATHERING APPLES,

which we had watched day after day changing from green to a delicate pale yellow, while on one side the sun threw in a few of his richest touches of finishing red—then to know whilst up there, we could eat whichever we chose—that we were sole king of the tree—that the apples were our subjects, and that every one we reigned over we could devour at our royal will and pleasure—and then, whilst giddy at the very thoughts of the power which we possessed, to come down, head foremost, basket, apples, and all, and lie sprawling amid the deep grass at the foot of the tree? Then there were the journeys to and fro into the great store-rooms of the old farmhouse—basket full after basket full to be carried up and spread out and arranged in rows, not one of which must be either battered or bruised, for they were set apart to be kept through all the long winter. In them we saw future pies and unboiled puddings, the comfortable windings up of many a cold dinner; and if we did contrive to give one a bruise, and another a pinch, and to let one of extra size and beauty now and then fall, we knew that on some future day, when we went up with aunt, we could pick out the very identical apple again, and then we had only to show her how this was going, and that one would not keep, and to throw in an additional “May n’t I have them, Aunt?” and so, by such pardonable policy, to become sharers of that rich wintry store? In vain did kind old aunt say that so much fruit was injurious, that they bred worms, and caterpillars, and all other kinds of creeping things; her kind words were but wasted, for, had all the worms “i’ the Nile” produced the flavour which that fruit did, and been in all the year, we verily believe that our first inquiry would have been, “How far is it to Egypt?” Then there was the pleasure of filling the baskets and lading the cart, and putting in the peck, and half-peck, and quartern measures, and going with John, the foreman of the farm, to a neighbouring town, the next market-

day, to sell bushels of the fruit, which uncle had neither room, nor use for ; and then John was so kind, and used to pick up some old acquaintance whom he knew, and so give them a lift on their journey in the market-cart ! Then there was the pleasure of going with John from shop to shop after we had sold all our fruit, which we sometimes did in one lot to a large huckster,—to go with him to the grocer's, to the harness-maker's, and to the cooper's, to call at the maltster's, and the hop-dealer's, then to dine in the parlour of the Old Rising Sun, and, when all was done, call at the mill on our way home, and bring with us the large sack of flour ! Then, as we rode along, to start a pheasant here, and a partridge there—to see the rabbits running into their burrows in the sand-banks beside the dark plantation—to see the hares limping across the silent stubble-fields, which were now cleared of the corn-harvest—and behold the swine feeding upon the ripe fallen acorns, under the huge old oak-trees, that threw their broad gnarled branches over the forest-paths—were a part of the many pleasures which I have found when residing with my uncle in the country !

I remember one of our moonlight adventures, in Autumn, was to capture a badger, which had often been seen in the neighbourhood of that very wood which I have described before, and we had never been able to discover the hole in which it hid, until it was pointed out to us by an old woodman. Now a badger is, no doubt, the bravest animal that can be found in England, in a wild state, and it takes a first-rate dog to master him ; and I have, before now, seen the badger conquer five or six dogs, when that cruel amusement of badger-baiting was so common in the country, about a quarter of a century ago. You will see, by the engraving, that he looks as if he could take his own part ; but I cannot describe to you the strength of his jaws, those of a dog are not to be compared to them ; once let a



BADGER

bite, and it is no easy matter to escape his hold, until he pleases to leave loose. We had borrowed a strong sack, which we placed in the badger's den, leaving the mouth of the bag outward, and open, and keeping it in that position, by bending a few light twigs across it. Then we had a running noose at the mouth of the sack, so that the moment his head struck the end of the bag, the opening was drawn up tight, and became closed, just as your own school-bag would do, if it was made with a running-string round the mouth, and a heavy stone dropped into it; the mouth of the bag, you know, would close up at once. But I must tell you that we had first watched the badger out of his hole, for it is his custom to hide in his den the whole of the day, and only come out to feed in the night, when he devours whatever he can find, either frogs, mice, roots, nuts, eggs, or birds if he can catch them asleep, great beetles, or even a snake, for nothing seems to come amiss to him. You never saw such a queer hole as he had made to get into his apartments underground; first, it went deep down, then it turned to the left, then went still deeper, bending to

the right, and seeming to go a little upward. You would not have caught us feeling and poking about his house in the way we did, had we not have watched my gentleman go out to his supper—no, no, we had seen one of his brethren before that day, and well knew what wonders he could work with those powerful jaws of his.

Having made the strings of the sack fast to the roots of some strong underwood, away we went with our couple of lurchers, making a wide circuit, that we might get beyond his haunts, for we had no wish to encounter him on his way home. We then set up a loud halloo, at which both the dogs began to bark—had you but have heard the noise we made, you would have thought Bedlam had broken loose. I'll be bound the badger had never heard such an uproar before in his life; and that he thought it boded him no good; and perhaps, poor fellow, before he had finished half his supper he began to lift up his strong black feet, and putting the best leg foremost, turned his sharp snout towards home. Perhaps, when he had gone a little way, our shouting and hallooing might cease for a few moments; and he would pause beneath the shadow of the dark underwood, and say to himself, "Dear me, it's very hard that I cannot have one meal in peace in twenty-four hours; here have I, like a great silly broc as I am, been running away without having finished my supper, passing by a nice little shrew-mouse in my hurry, and two or three such fine plump frogs, and a beautiful desert of acorns, and hazel-nuts, real brown shellers, and all because of a little noise which is nothing after all, and—but, bless me! it comes nearer—'bow, bow,' hey, I wish I had hold of you, I would change your note, but there seems too many to one; and, oh dear! they are nearly upon me, bless me! how they come rattling through the bushes; oh dear! I wish my legs were a little longer, but a few more yards will do it, under this furze bush, and through these prickly brambles, how they do lug my poor rough jacket, now then beyond this fern,

and hurrah for my snug home under the bank; I wish you may catch me now"—and bang he went into the mouth of the bag; and what he said when he found himself caught in such a trap, I cannot undertake to tell you, but this I know, he had never been in such an apartment before in his life.

Oh! did n't he kick about! we could trace his sharp snout bobbing here and there inside the sack, as we stood in the moonlight; and after we had tied him up more securely, then came the question of who should carry him home? He might eat his way out; might bite us on the back, if we carried the bag over our shoulder; scratch a hole through the sack with his long sharp claws, and prove, to our sorrow, that we had for once caught a "tartar." There was only one safe plan, and that was to fasten a string to the bottom of the bag, and so carry him between us, leaving him to do his worst whilst he swung in the middle—although I much question whether we should not have thrown down the sack, and run off, had we but have seen his black and white head, and sharp snout thrust through. When we reached home, we were as much puzzled as ever: to leave the poor badger in the bag would be to smother him alive; then how were we to let him out? he might fly at us, bite a piece out of our hand while we undid the noose. Supposing we shut him up in the stable, or in the hay-loft, then how were we to get out without hindering the badger from running out at the same time? Something, however, must be done, and I undertook to liberate the poor beast in the stable, on condition that I should have the two dogs with me; this was acceded to. I then mounted astride one of the partitions which divided the stalls in the stable, and having loosened the string at the mouth of the bag, before I climbed up, held it fast by the cord which we had placed at the bottom of the sack, to carry it by, drew up the bag with the mouth downward, and out came the badger upon the straw on the stable floor. His first act was to bite one of the dogs, which began to whine and

cry out piteously, and the boy who owned the poor brute, threw open the stable door, to save his dog from being worried, when out rushed the badger in an instant; under the shadow of the hedge he ran, in the direction from whence we had brought him, and we never set eyes on him after; and glad enough we were, I can assure you, to escape as we did, without having had a taste of his sharp teeth. When taken young, the badger becomes as tame as a dog, will play with children, and show an affection towards those who are kind to him. Badger-baiting was very common when I was a boy: and nothing could be more cruel, both to the dogs that were set to "draw him" out of the cask in which he was placed, and to himself, though he seldom failed to punish his tormentors. But this barbarous sport is rarely ever heard of now, and I am glad of it, for all such revolting exhibitions only brutalize the mind of boys, and make them grow up into cruel men. Badger-baiting and cock-fighting are no longer heard of in England; and, in a few more years, they will only be remembered as the brutal amusements of a past age, as the bear-garden cruelties of Elizabeth's days are thought of now.

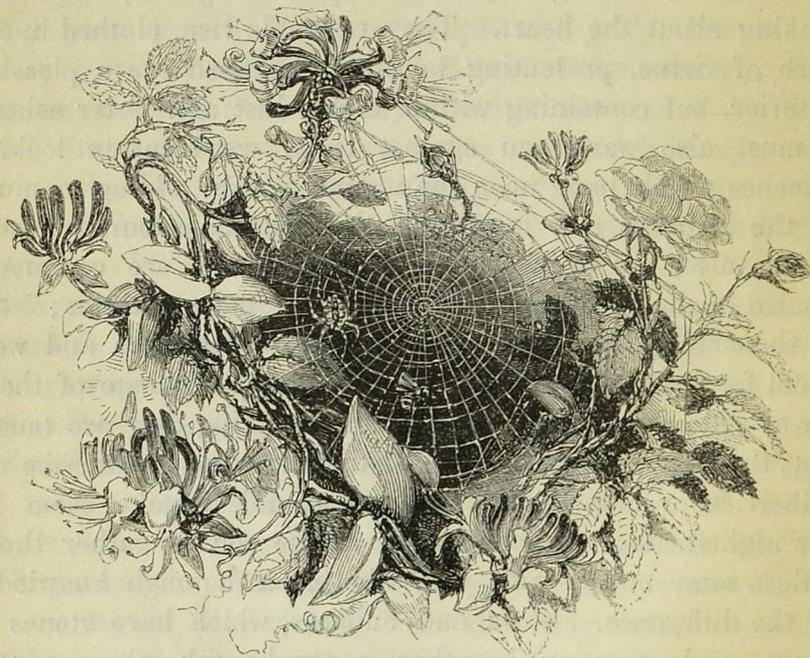
Although many of the flowers, like the singing-birds, have fled with Summer, a few still remain behind, and amongst these the Autumn crocus, from which the saffron used in dyeing is prepared. The wild mint is also in full flower, and a more delicious perfume we cannot stumble upon, than a whole bed of it in some moist shadowy place in the woods; nor must we forget the wild thyme, which is in full blossom on hundreds of little rounded hillocks and dry mounds, where it furnishes the bee with many a load of honey, after hundreds of the fragrant beauties, which ornamented our fields and woods, are withered and dead. Then we have multitudes of delicate harebells still left behind, so frail, and blue, and fair, and beautiful, shaking their bells, beneath every breeze that blows, and looking the more lovely because they seem to stand

almost alone. And now the heaths and hill-tops, that before looked to the eye so brown and barren, burst forth in all their bloom and beauty, for they are covered everywhere with the purple and crimson hues of the ling and heather. Oh! what a luxury it is still to be able to walk over acres and acres of these beautiful wild flowers! to see the rose-tinged purple heather stretching away for miles, as we have done in some places, sleeping like a great sea of flowers, whose waters were without either wave or ripple. Then there is the large ox-eye daisy, which may still be found in hundreds of fields and wild lanes. The common golden rod, and the yellow hawk-weed, which look not unlike the hen and chicken. Daisies have not yet disappeared from the landscape. On the borders of rivers and streams we still find the beautiful arrow-head; with its long, green, pointed, arrow-ended shaped leaf, and its pearly-white three-leaved flower, from the centre of which it is ever peeping with its eye of purple and gold. Nor must we forget that beautiful little inhabitant of the cornfield, the deep rose-coloured pheasant's-eye; which was called by the dames of ancient times the rose-a-ruby, and which is supposed to resemble the red rim round the eye of the pheasant: but of all our Autumn favourites none excel in beauty the little eye-bright; it is a cheerful-looking, bright, little flower, seldom growing above six or seven inches high, looking not unlike a beautiful white insect, marked with green and gold, resting on its dark back-ground of deep serrated leaves—the very fairy queen of all Autumn flowers. In the gardens, too, we have the beautiful yellow amaryllis, and many varieties of Michaelmas daisies, some of them rising to the height of several feet; and there a few of the large, broad, yellow sunflowers still linger, round which the bees hover all day long. In the hedgerows, too, still blooming amid the green and crimson berries, we find the flowers of the woody nightshade, or bitter-sweet; with the leaves

of its purple flowers bent backward, and its pointed centre projecting out, not unlike the top of a Chinese pagoda—but beware of tasting those ripe and crimson berries, for, though pleasing to the eye, and not at first even unpleasant to the taste, the consequences that follow are serious; and were you to eat many of them, I have little doubt they would produce death: but more fatal still is the deadly nightshade or dwale, whose berries are first green, then afterwards a glossy black, and are the deadliest poison that can be found in England, for the poison which one berry contains is sufficient to kill any person, and only this summer (1846) two or three persons died in London in consequence of eating the berries of the deadly nightshade. Never, on any account, lift these false and tempting berries to your lips; they resemble many things which you will find in life, pleasing to the eye, but when once partaken of, leaving a bitterness upon the palate, and a sad sinking about the heart. They resemble vice, clothed in the garb of virtue, presenting to the unpractised eye a pleasing exterior, but containing within only “dust and bitter ashes.” I must also warn you against those coral currant-looking bunches which hang upon the mountain ash, adding so much to the richness and beauty of the Autumn-coloured woods: these, also, are of a poisonous nature, and are commonly known in the country by the name of “poison-berries;” but in the country the little children, who string them and wear them for neck-beads, seldom or ever venture to taste of them, for as soon as they can understand any thing they are taught that they are poisonous. Nor shall I attempt to describe the bilberries or cranberries, lest you should mistake them for the nightshade; neither would I advise you to gather them, unless some one is with you, who has a thorough knowledge of the difference. Sloes and bullaces, which have stones in them, and grow on branches covered with sharp-pointed thorns, you cannot be mistaken in, any more than you can in

the berries of the wild rose and hawthorn, called hips and haws. These, together with wild crabs and blackberries, are perfectly innoxious, and free from all hurtful qualities. Numbers of butterflies are still hovering about; the bee still continues to visit the few flowers that remain behind; and occasionally we hear a bird or two singing somewhere amongst the bushes, like the last lingering notes that swelled the great anthem of Summer; and the deep humming with which the air was lately filled has now all but died away. Each week the sun rises later from his golden bed in the east, and each evening sinks earlier into the western chambers of heaven; but still the sunsets and twilights of Autumn are not excelled in beauty by any within the whole circle of the year.

During a walk in Autumn, almost every boy must have observed the web of the



GARDEN - SPIDER,

which is thrown from hedge to hedge, and bush to bush, across every narrow lane, hanging in scores over ditches, wherever a thistle, or a reed, or a stout blade of grass can be found, to form a pillar on which to fasten this wondrous piece of mechanism. In the morning, by placing yourself in a favourable light, you may see the little weaver work, from the first commencement of forming its net, until every spoke and circular mesh is woven as accurately as if it had been marked out by a pair of compasses. Having first spun a long line, or thread, she leaves it floating in the air until, blowing across, it attaches itself to some object opposite. When it has once caught she crosses it twice or thrice, each time adding to its thickness, until she has formed what may be called the cable, to which she attaches her web. This cable, you will often observe, hangs in a sloping line, which is caused by the current of air not blowing it straight across. Sometimes, however, the spider will throw out two or three of these floating lines, only selecting the one, for a cable, which she considers most favourable to her purpose. To test its strength, she not only pulls at it with her legs, but, suspended by a line, drops down the whole weight of her body from it; and you may often see her, while applying this test of its strength, swinging to and fro, like the pendulum of a clock. To strengthen the frame, in the centre of which her star-shaped net is woven, she attaches to the ends of her strong cables additional lines in a triangular position, as you would place the two broad ends of the letter V on two opposite walls in a room, that you might have a double attachment before you drew a string across from each of the points; but you will understand this by examining the engraving of the netted web of the common garden spider. In forming the centre of this curious geometric net, the spider has no other measure but her limbs, by which to lay out the accurate distances of these wheel-like spokes, and rounded meshes, by which they are intersected. These meshes always

vary according to the size of the spider: through the centre of the larger ones you might thrust a black-lead pencil without breaking a line; while, in the smaller ones, even the passing of a straw might disarrange the web. The spider generally, though not always, takes up her station in the centre of this wheel; when this is not the case, she may usually be found concealed beneath a leaf, or stationed at some remote corner of her house of business, ready in a moment to pop upon any casual customer who may chance to call in. Sometimes, however, a great, blundering blue-bottle will go in at the front door and out at the back, without so much as stopping to say, "Good morning," or to shake hands. We have been the more particular in describing the construction of this spider's web, as it is so common at this season of the year, that it must be familiar to you all.

Every boy, whether residing in town or country, must be well acquainted with Father Long-legs. He is almost as familiar a visitor as the common house-fly; day or night he walks into our apartments without ceremony, and if the candle is alight, he generally contrives to thrust one of his long legs into it; then, after making a few more circles round the table, he tries the other foot, which has a little grease upon it, to see how that will burn; and so he proceeds, unless he is unfortunate enough to get fast in the tallow, burning down every one of his long legs to the stump. We never see father long-legs walk, as he balances himself with his wings, but he reminds us of a boy practising his first steps in the stilts. Up goes one long leg, then he lurches a little to one side, down comes another, while his light body, as if settling itself into a proper balance, continues in motion; and just when you think he is really about to rest himself, off he goes again, all legs and wings, no bad representative of our Mr. Nobody, who has more mischief laid at his door within twelve months, than a whole school put together in the same space of time

was ever guilty of. What numerous thrashings has that Mr. Nobody saved us from. Talk about what our relations do for us! they are not to be named on the same day with Mr. Nobody; for he bears all—denies nothing—and the best of it is, never murmurs. What books he has torn—what quantities of ink he has spilt—what windows he has broken? If only one-millionth part of what is said of him is true, there never was such a reckless scapegrace—such a mischievous young rascal as that Mr. Nobody! But I was telling you about the crane-fly, or father long-legs, when Mr. Nobody came into my head, and you all of you know what a large family this jenny spinner has, for you must many a time have started a whole colony of legs, when you have been wandering out in the fields, and sent them skipping by thousands together over the tufted grass, putting, as we may say, their best foot foremost, and seeming to say, in their ungainly flight, as they jostled against one another, “I wish you would just move that long shaky leg of yours an inch or two aside, and let me pass, will you? What do you mean by straddling out that way, and taking all the road up? If I had but my shoes on, and I was n’t afraid of injuring my poor leg, I would fetch you such a kick that would send you into the middle of next week, that I would;” and away they go, one over the other, as if it was a matter of necessity that they should be constantly in motion to keep out of one another’s way. You would be delighted to see mother long-legs deposit her eggs in the earth. Away the old lady flies with her basket full of eggs, dropping one here and another there, wherever she can make a hole in the earth; and you know what a sharp-pointed tail the old lady has got, and you would laugh if you could but see her with her back stuck up, as she goes from place to place depositing her little black eggs everywhere, which look not unlike grains of gunpowder. You have no idea what a ravenous lot of little long-legs are left behind to provide for

themselves, as well as they can, when the Spring comes; for before they can either run or fly, while they remain under ground in the grub-state, they devour all before them; they eat away the roots of the grass and the flowers; the corn before it has pierced through the earth, and sometimes whole fields are destroyed by these hungry little long-legs, before they have even got a foot to run, or a wing to fly with. Hundreds of acres of pasture-land in one county have been destroyed by them, and left as brown and barren, and devoid of vegetation, as the smooth grassless sands upon the sea-shore.

Every boy has seen the little white maggots which are found in cheese, and which are the cleanest and most elegantly formed of all the class of insects, while in a grub-state; nor need any one be afraid to eat them, for they are perfectly harmless. But the most wonderful thing about the Cheese-hopper is the height to which it can leap, which is nearly thirty times the length of its little body. If a boy, according to his size, could leap as high as the cheese-hopper, he would be able to jump over the highest house in England. Before this little insect jumps, it bends itself into a circle, catching hold of the end of its tail with its hooked mandibles, then, throwing itself open with a sudden jerk, away it goes six or eight inches high, while the whole length of its body is frequently not more than a quarter of an inch. These maggots would, in time, turn to a very small black fly, with whitish wings; and one of these flies alone is capable of depositing from two to three hundred eggs in a cheese.

There is another insect called the Wheat-fly, which makes sad havoc amongst corn, sometimes seriously damaging the whole crop of a field. But such is the wonderful interposition of Providence that, while these insects are in their larvæ or grub-state, they are seized upon by another species of fly, with four wings, which belong to the class of ichneumons, who plunges the end of her sharp-pointed body into the grub of the wheat-fly, and there deposits her egg, where it remains until

the egg in its turn becomes a grub, that has been nourished by the body of the larvæ of the wheat-fly; but what is most singular, the ichneumon will not deposit its egg in the grub of the wheat-fly, if it has been already pricked by one of its own species. The earwig is also a great devourer of the larvæ of the wheat-fly, and it, in turn, falls a prey to other animals. Thus, you see, one insect lives upon another in endless succession; they then become the prey of birds, and so the destruction goes on, upward and upward, until they at last become the food of man. As it is on land, so it is with fishes in the ocean, and in rivers; the spawn of the large fishes is fed upon by the smaller fry, who again furnish a meal for the larger fishes, whose spawn they feed upon. A seed is dropped by a bird into the trunk of a decayed tree, and in that very decay the seed takes root, and thus we may sometimes see one tree growing out of another. Even a drop of water teems with life, and, by the aid of a powerful microscope, may be discovered within several species of animalculæ; and in that round silver drop, the same work of destruction is going forward, and the larger are found making the smaller ones their prey; even those which appear destitute of either limbs, or fins, or sight, possess some unknown power of perception, which guides them with unerring aim to the smaller species they feed upon. The very leaves which are whirled to and fro by the blasts of Autumn, which the rains and snows of Winter beat upon and rot, furnish a rich soil for the flowers of Spring; and but for this very decay, we should find the Summer woods devoid of many of their beautiful ornaments. Even the little fly has its mission to accomplish, and countless millions of these prey upon the decayed matter, which would otherwise impregnate and poison the air. For nothing was made in vain.

That little round bulk which you see suspended between the ears of corn that are still standing, and which is not larger than a cricket-ball, is the



NEST OF THE HARVEST MOUSE,

which is the smallest of all known British quadrupeds, only one sixth of the size of the common house mouse; for two harvest mice placed in a scale, will not do more than weigh down a single half-penny. Its little nest is beautifully constructed of leaves, and sometimes the softer portion of reeds. About the middle there is a small hole, just large enough to admit the point of the little finger; this is the entrance to the nest, which the mouse closes up when it goes out in quest of food; and yet this fairy structure, which a man might enclose in the palm of his hand, and which might be tumbled across the table like a ball, without disarranging it, often contains as many as eight or nine little naked blind mice; for even when full grown, the whole length of the head and body scarcely exceed two inches. During the winter months it retires to its burrow under the ground, unless it should be fortunate enough to get into a corn stack. It is one of the prettiest of our English animals. and

HARVEST MOUSE.

may be kept in a cage, like white mice, where it will amuse itself for several minutes at a time, by turning round a wire wheel; its chief food is corn, although it will occasionally feed upon insects. How the harvest mouse contrives to give nourishment to eight or nine young ones, in that round and confined little nest, was a puzzle to that clever naturalist, Gilbert White; and as he could not resolve so difficult a question, he imagined that she must make holes in different parts of the nest, and so feed one at a time. It is very amusing to watch the habits of this beautiful little creature in a cage, to see how she will twine her tail around the wires, clean herself with her paws, and lap water like a dog: it is the little tomtit of animals.

Even the common mouse, which is so great a pest to our houses, is an elegantly shaped little animal, although it is such a plague in the cupboard and the larder; wherever man goes, it follows him; let him build ever so princely a mansion, he is sure to have the little mouse for a tenant; he walks in, we cannot tell how, and when he has once obtained possession, he is in no hurry to start again; he helps himself to whatever he can get at, without asking any one's permission, and he never saw a carpet in his life, that he ever thought was too good for himself and his little companions to play upon. He is a capital judge of cheese, and were half a dozen sorts placed upon the shelf, he would be sure to help himself to the very best; and yet in Wales they think nothing of catching this pretty little inoffensive pest alive, tying him up by the tail, and hanging him before the fire to roast, believing that the screams the little mouse makes while writhing in this horrible agony, is the means of driving all the rest of the mice out of the house. What noble-hearted English boy would not like to crack Taffy's head with a good stick, while he was superintending such cruel cookery; for my part, I should think it no sin to hold his nose, for an instant, against the hot bars. None but a

AUTUMN.

person of most depraved and brutalized mind, could be guilty of such unnatural cruelty. But now I will tell you a story about—

THREE BLIND MICE.

There were three blind mice
All sat on a shelf eating rice :
“ I say,” said one, “ Oh, isn’t it nice ?”
“ I think,” said another, “ it wants a little spice.”
“ My dear sir,” said the third, “ you are rather too precise ;
 Eat more, and talk a little less,
Was our poor pa’s advice,
 A truth he oft tried to impress
On his little, brown, blind mice.”

The old grey cat
Sat on the thick rope mat,
 Washing her face and head,
 And listening to what they said.
“ Stop,” said she, “ till I’ve wiped me dry,
And I’ll be with you by-and-by,
 And if I’m not mistaken,
 Unless you save your bacon,
My boys, I’ll make you fly.”

She pricks up her ears,
 And to the cupboard goes,
Saying, “ Wait a bit, my dears,
 Till I hook you with my toes,
For, as I have n’t dined to-day,
I’ll just take lunch, then go away ;”
And as she walked quite perpendicular,
Said, “ I’m not at all particular.”

Without any further talk,
 She made a sudden spring,
And like many clever folk
 Who aim at every thing,
She overleaped her mark,
And in their hole so dark
The mice got safe away.
Said the cat, “ This is notorious !”
And she mewed out quite uproarious.

HOGS IN A FOREST.

But I have not yet done with the woods at this season of the year, nor shall I have space to tell you one half of the things I have seen in them during my rambles in the country.



HOGS IN A FOREST

in Autumn, feeding upon the fallen acorns, have a very different appearance to when seen in a sty! Running about amongst the underwood makes their bristly hides glitter like silver; and they have often a very picturesque appearance when seen beside the stems of gigantic trees, or breaking the deep green background with patches of agreeable light. Bloomfield, in his "Farmer's Boy," has given an admirable description of them, starting off at the rising of the wild-duck from a pool—how the whole herd set off, grunting and running as if for their very lives, through "sedges and rushes, and reeds and dangling thickets;" how, if they pause a moment, some one raises a new alarm, and off they scamper, helter-skelter, one after the other, squelling and squeaking as if they were about to be turned into pork. Those who live on the borders of

forests claim the privilege of turning their hogs out to eat the "mast," as the acorns and beech-nuts are called; and this custom dates as far back as the times of the Saxon, for in Doomsday Book, which was compiled from actual survey, by the order of William the Conqueror, we find in the returns that were then made the number of swine which were kept within the different forests during Autumn. The swine-herd collects his hogs together in the forest from the different farmers around, who pay him so much per head whilst they are under his care. He generally selects some huge oak tree, round the bole of which he runs a wattled fence, woven out of the hazels and brambles of the underwood; and inside of this he forms a good bedding of fern and reeds, or long withered grass, such as abound in forest glades; taking care, however, to select a spot near some brook or pool of water, and also to provide a famous feast for his herd on the first day, blowing his horn lustily all the while they are feeding, and what with the noise he manages to make, together with the squelling and quarrelling of the swine over their food, there is such a concert got up as Paganini never dreamed of in his wildest flights.

For the first two or three days the swine-herd has to look carefully after them, to drive them into their forest-sty in the evening, and teach them where to go to when they are thirsty; and after this period he may leave them safely to take their chance, for although they are but a lot of stupid pigs, yet there are always found a few sensible enough amongst them, to find their way home to their bed under the huge oak in the evening, and whenever these lead the way the rest follow; and a pretty sight it is to see several hundreds of them trudging through the wild solitudes of a forest when the evening sunset gilds the mossy and weather-beaten trunks of the trees. Neither are hogs such an unsocial race as some believe them to be: they have their likes and their dislikes, like the rest of us; who can

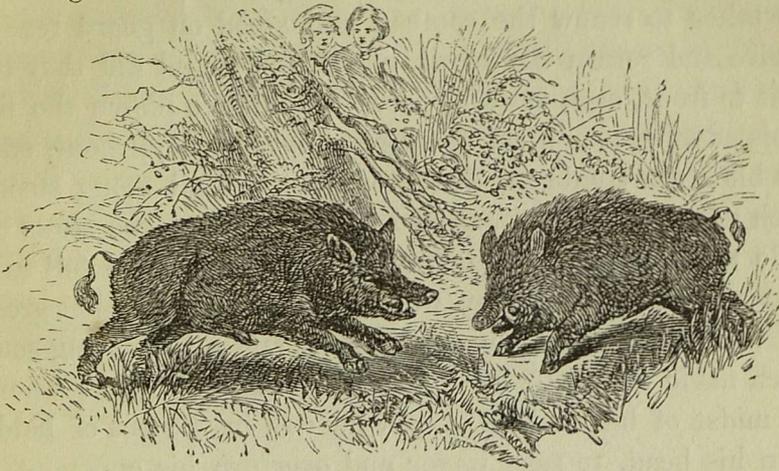
forget Sir Walter Scott's pet pig, that used to follow him like a dog about the grounds of Abbotsford! And even when ranging about the forest, and feeding on the yellow acorns, they will congregate together in different groups, forming a kind of friendship amongst themselves, which is never broken up whilst the mast-feeding lasts, for the same groups regularly separate from the herd, keep their own company, and return quite orderly in the evening, that is, in a well-conducted colony of pigs. Nor was the hog always a low animal grovelling in a sty: his ancestors were a fine-spirited race having the range of the forest like deer, and had often the honour of being hunted by kings—if it is an honour to be chased and worried in such choice company, for the wild boar was a dangerous and powerful animal, who used to sharpen his great tusks on the hard stems of trees, and run at whatever dared to oppose him. Many a noble horse has been ripped open by his formidable tusks in past ages, when he was a beast of chase in the old primitive English forests. What think you of a law which ordained that a man should have his eyes torn out if he was found guilty of killing a wild boar? Such a law did William the Conqueror make about eight hundred years ago, and there is no doubt but that it was put into execution. And now they are talking about erecting a statue to this Norman invader, who was the cause of putting thousands of poor Saxons to death. There were wild boars in England, in the New Forest, no further back than the time of Charles the First, but they were swept away under the iron sway of Cromwell, who was a thousand times a better man than William the Norman, although he did countenance the beheading of King Charles, who would have beheaded him, if he had but found an opportunity for doing so.

It was a much nobler exercise to hunt a savage wild boar, than it is either to chase a poor fox, or a harmless hare, because the boar could, and did often, defend himself to some purpose; it was either kill or be killed when they came to

blows with him, he neither gave quarter nor craved it, but made a bold rush at whatever opposed him; man, horse, or dog were often compelled to make way for him, it was death to dispute the path with him when he had once made up his mind for a plunge; and it was no joke to stand in the way of an old one, which sometimes measured between five and six feet in length, with great tusks sticking up sharper than the horns of a bull. Just fancy yourself coming home through one of those wild forests in the evening, and hearing a great wild boar sharpening his tusks on the iron stem of some knotted oak, making every dell and dingle ring again with the sound, would n't you have scampered off as fast as your legs could have carried you? Then if he had chased you, and you had climbed into a tree, perhaps he would have come just to have given his tusks another whet, or laid down to have a bit of a snooze, and get his appetite in good order against you descended. Not much of a treat to have gone a nutting in the forests in those days, with a prospect of being turned into brawn before morning; yet such was the England we now live in once: and beside the wild boar there was a pretty sprinkling of wolves—a company of customers one would fain have had no dealings with, if they wanted to bargain for a supper with one. Just fancy living in a nice little cottage near a wood at that period, first comes a boar and tries the door with his tusk—not quite like a watchman, who, when he has broken your sleep by sounding the shutters, consoles you by calling out “all right.” He goes, then up come two or three wolves smelling about, and serenading you with a few long howls, asking you, in their way, “if you have any thing nice for supper,” and not at all particular whether it was a dear old grandfather, or a little brother, or sister, in the cradle. It would n't have done to have played at “I spy” amongst the forest trees in those days after dusk. Just fancy what you would have done yourself had you lived then instead of now?

WILD BOARS FIGHTING.

Awful must it have been to have beheld those tusked and savage



BOARS FIGHTING ;

and I have heard of two boys, who, while they were out nutting in Autumn, in one of the large forests in Hampshire, saw two of these monsters fight, while they stood behind a large oak to hide themselves ; well knowing that the boars were too seriously engaged to take any notice of them. Oh ! what an awful noise they made ! as they retreated back for a moment, then dashed their hard iron foreheads together, meeting with such a clash as made the forest ring again. They bit, they snorted, their jaws were flecked with white foam, they ground their teeth together, they made their tusks rattle against each other, while their eyes glared like fire. You could not have believed the strength there was in those short, brawny necks, unless you had beheld them fighting ; those boys fairly trembled again as they looked on—so savage and terrible was that combat. At length they fought with their heads down, each trying, if he could, to get under his opponent, and to tear him open with his sharp, projecting, and formidable tusks, which stood up like the points of scythes above those hideous and horrible jaws, that were now dyed over with blood and foam. For a moment

those two boars stood at bay, their eyes fixed, their heads bent, their muscular necks swollen with anger, as if each waited for the other to renew the combat, and stood on guard ready to receive and return the blow; round and round did they turn, front to front, each seeking an opportunity to pierce the flank of his adversary, and so, by ripping open his opponent, end at one blow the combat. The boar, that had all along stood so much upon his guard, that had oftener parried the blows than made the attack, had again drawn back, and stood full in the front of its enraged enemy, who had retreated to gather greater force, and now came along with a rush, and a thundering sound, which made the earth beneath his feet shake again! when in the midst of his career, just as he was in the act of holding down his head, to rush under and overturn his opponent, the other sprung aside, and in an instant drove his long white tusks into the flank of his adversary, and before he could turn himself, the blood rushed out of his side. But this only seemed to enrage him the more, for it was scarcely the work of a moment before he had ploughed open the side of the other boar—and there they lay bleeding and attempting to bite each other, long after they were too much exhausted, by loss of blood, to rise up and renew the combat. Whether they recovered or died, those two boys waited not to see, for they had hitherto stood powerless, and fettered to the spot through fear—not even daring to run away, lest their motion should arrest the attention of the enraged combatants. But these were not the real wild boars that infested our old English forests, and were hunted by kings and nobles in ancient days, though they fought savagely enough to have made the stoutest-hearted boy quail, and to have wished himself a mile or two away from the spot where they fought—for such were their strength and rage, that for yards around they had torn up the earth with their feet and tusks, as they rushed together in that terrible combat.

And now I must tell you a wild legend, connected with a

THE HAUNTED LAKE.

dark lake, which stood in the neighbourhood of a desolate and dreary wood ; wishing you, however, to bear in mind beforehand, that it is just about as true as the "Adventures of Baron Munchausen," or "Gulliver's Travels." Still, it will amuse you, if read on a dark Winter's night, in the shadowy gloom, by the fire-light ; and also, it will show you, that the conscience of a murderer can never be at rest, that he must ever be fancying he sees strange sights, and hears sad sounds, like the old man I am about to describe, in the little legend I have written, and entitled,

THE HAUNTED LAKE.

There is a wood which few dare tread,
So still its depth, so deep its gloom ;
The vaulted chambers of the dead
Scarce fill the soul with half the dread,
You feel while near that living tomb.

Deep in its centre sleeps a lake,
Where tall tree-tops the mirror darkens ;
No roaring wind those boughs can shake,
Ruffle the water's face, or break
The silence there which ever hearkens.

No flowers around that water grow,
The birds fly over it in fear,
The antique roots above it bow,
The newt and toad crawl down below,
The viper also sleepeth there.

Few are the spots so deathly still,
So mantled in eternal gloom ;
No sound is heard of babbling rill,
A voiceless silence seems to fill
The air around that liquid tomb.

The ivy creepeth to and fro,
Along the arching boughs which meet ;
The fir and bright-leaved misletoe
Hang o'er the holly and black sloe,
In darkness which can ne'er retreat.

AUTUMN.

For there the sunbeams never shine,
That sullen lake beholds no sky,
No moonbeam drops its silvery line,
No star looks down with eyes benign,
The very lightning hurries by.

The huntsmen pass it at full speed,
The hounds howl loud, and seem to fear it,
The fox makes for the open mead,
Full in the teeth of man and steed,
He does not dare to shelter near it.

No woodman's axe is heard to sound
Within that forest night nor day ;
No human footstep dents the ground,
No voice disturbs the deep profound,
No living soul dare through it stray.

For shrieks, they say, are heard at night,
And wailings of a little child,
And ghastly streams of lurid light
Flash red upon the traveller's sight,
When riding by that forest wild.

For they believe blood hath been shed
Beside the tangling brambles' brake,
And still they say the murdered dead
Rise nightly from their watery bed,
And wander round the haunted lake.

'Tis said she is a lady fair,
In silken robes superbly dressed,
With large bright eyes that wildly glare,
While clotted locks, of long black hair,
Droop o'er the infant at her breast.

She speaks not, but her white hand raises,
And to the lake, with pointed finger,
Beckons the step of him who gazes ;
Then shrieking seeks the leafy mazes,
Leaving a pale blue light to linger.

THE HAUNTED LAKE.

But who she is no one can tell,
Nor who her murderer may be—
But one beside that wood did dwell,
On whom suspicion darkly fell—
A rich unhappy lord was he.

In an old hall he lived alone,
No servant with him dared to stay ;
For shriek, and yell, and piercing groan,
And infant's ery and woman's moan,
Rang through those chambers night and day.

He was, indeed, a wretched man,
And wrung his hands and beat his breast ;
His cheeks were sunken, thin, and wan,
Remorse had long deep furrows ran
Across his brow—he could not rest.

He sometimes wandered through the wood,
Or stood to listen by its side,
Or, bending o'er the foaming flood,
Would try to wash away the blood,
With which his guilty hands seem'd dyed.

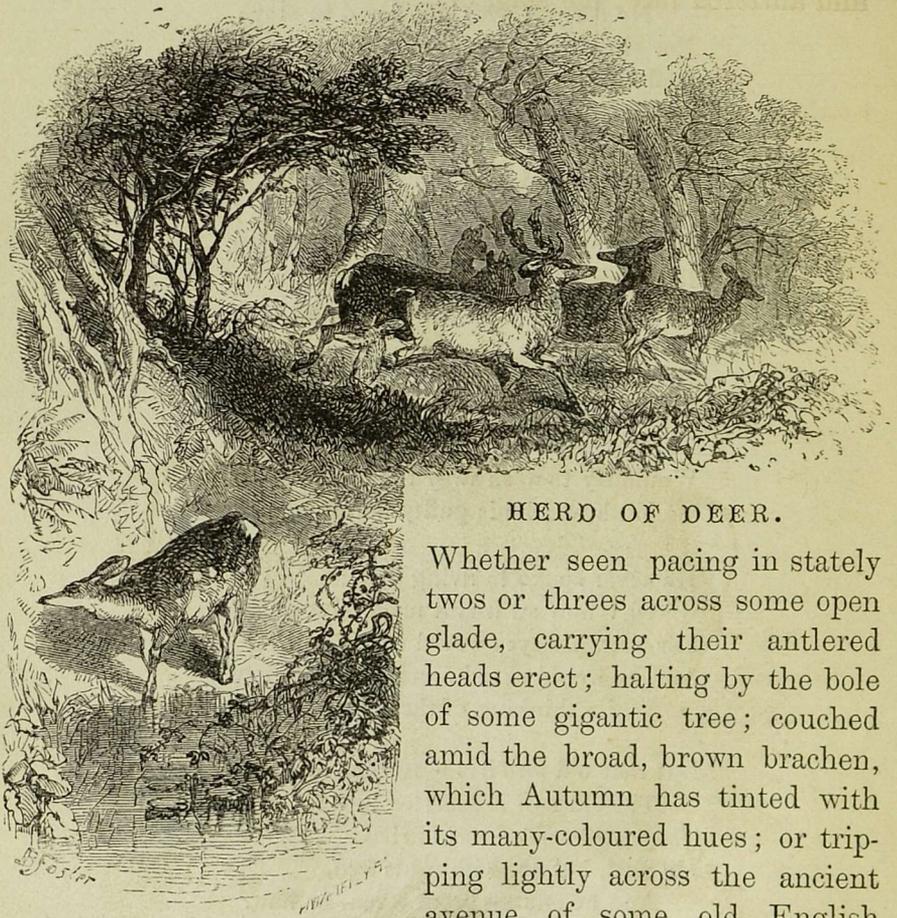
He never spoke to living soul ;
Oh ! how an infant made him quake ;
For then his eyes would wildly roll,
And he would shriek, and rave, and howl,
While thinking of the " haunted lake."

But that old lord has long been dead ;
The old hall is deserted now ;
They say he ne'er was buried :
He died, but not within his bed,
And no one knoweth when, or how.

Such was the legend first told to me by my uncle, at Thonock, and for your amusement I have put it into rhyme ; and although it is all stories about the ghost, and the woman with her child appearing, still it is true that their bodies were

found in that lake, and that the man who was supposed to have murdered them, left England for many years, and then came back of his own accord, for he could not rest any where, so he confessed to the murder, and was hung.

No objects give greater beauty to forest scenery, than a



HERD OF DEER.

Whether seen pacing in stately twos or threes across some open glade, carrying their antlered heads erect; halting by the bole of some gigantic tree; couched amid the broad, brown bracken, which Autumn has tinted with its many-coloured hues; or tripping lightly across the ancient avenue of some old English

park, where they are so often seen—in whatever place the eye alights upon them, they fill the mind with images of pleasure. Then there is something so graceful in the form of the fawns, so innocent in the expression of their countenances, as they trot lovingly by the side of the hind or

RED DEER.

the doe, that we fancy such a sight must have softened the heart of the haughtiest baron that ever cased himself in cruel armour, whenever he looked down from the high battlements of his moated castle, and gazed over the vast landscape which stretched everywhere around. But out of all the noble and antlered race, the stag, or



RED DEER,

is our favourite ; for it is associated in our mind with Shakspeare,

the forest of Arden, and the melancholy Jacques, who gave utterance to such exquisite poetry—

“As he lay along
 Under an oak, whose antique roots peep out
 Upon the brook that brawled along the wood:
 To the which place a poor sequestered stag
 That from the hunter's aim had ta'en a hurt,
 Did come to languish:”

it recalls the days when monarchs swept through the forest on foam-flecked steeds; when the deep baying of the hounds awakened a hundred echoes; and every dell and dingle rung again, “while with puffed cheek, the belted hunter blew his wreathed bugle horn.” But the stately stag, the largest of all the deer that exist in this country, is no longer found in a wild state in England. Cultivation and civilization have made a prisoner of this old monarch of the woods; and, instead of ranging free, for miles, over unbounded forests, he is confined within the enclosures of a few sequestered parks. On the heath-covered mountains of Scotland, only, does he ramble alone in his wild, unfettered majesty. But although the stag is the noblest looking animal of the species, yet the flat-horned, spotted fallow deer, loses nothing beside it, in comparison of beauty. Every boy who has visited Greenwich Park, must remember how tame these graceful animals are; and few, we dare say, have gone there without making them partakers of their apples or biscuits: and what boy, in his time, has not possessed a knife with a buck-horn handle? But the most curious thing is, that those large and stately horns which we see upon the deer, often weighing upwards of twenty pounds, come off every Spring; and within three months afterwards, a pair, equally as large and grand, grow out in the place of the old ones, to be shed again in the following Spring. We should be astonished to see a plant in a garden shoot up to such a size, in so short a space of time; and yet I can assure you that this

ponderous pile of bone, often grows to this enormous size in less time than I have stated. Deers' horns have been found measuring thirteen feet across the top, and six feet in length; but they belonged to a gigantic species, which are supposed no longer to exist. There would n't be much fear of such a gentleman as that walking into one's house. What a weight the poor beast must have carried on his head! and what a crashing he must have made when he ran thundering through a forest, clearing all above him for the wide space of thirteen feet! What a harvest would he but make for the old fagot-gatherers; if any rotten boughs but happened to hang in his way, what a rattle he would fetch them down with! Many a young bird has he sent tumbling out of its nest in his day, although he intended to do it no harm. Then his great forehead was a foot in width, and to have sat upon it, and rested one's arms upon the lower branches of his antlers, must, if he would but have allowed it, have formed a very comfortable seat. And should he then chanced to have set off at full speed, why, it would have been like travelling by the railway—not only as regards space, but the equal certainty that we should have been liable to accidents. There is another class of deer called the roebucks, possessing so fine a scent, that the hunters have the greatest difficulty in approaching them. If you saw one bound across a road when it was pursued, you would never forget it: just fancy its clearing twenty feet of ground at a single leap—and I can tell you this has been done by the roebuck many times before now. We sometimes see a good-sized pork-pie now—but oh! they are nothing to the venison pasties which our grandfathers made in the olden time. They thought but little of thrusting half a deer into a crust, that weighed two or three stone, in those days; then, making a clear space among the red embers on the ample hearth, covering it over again with the glowing wood-ashes, and leaving it all night to bake: and next morning a score of great, hungry fellows, with their coats

of mail on, and their helmets off, would sit around a huge, black, solid oaken table, and nearly devour all the pastry for breakfast, washing it down with huge wooden jacks of foaming ale, then, wiping the froth from their hairy lips, they would put on their helmets, grasp their spears, leap into their saddles, and sally out, ready to fight any one who dare assert, that the old baron whom they served, was not the boldest knight in England. But if you would know all about castles, and battles, and outlaws, and forests, and herds of wild deer, and herds of fallow deer, and the huge venison pasties they formed, and the brown ale they brewed in those days, you must read Sir Walter Scott's novel entitled, "Ivanhoe."

And now, lest I should weary you with too many of my descriptions of the country, I will tell you of a character whom we used to call Brandy-ball Jack.

Almost every country town and village have their celebrated venders of sweetmeats—from the little huckster's shop, where they profess to deal in every thing, to the distinguished manufacturer himself, who, as he cries his wares, wheels before him his little barrow, or cart, while he extols the richness of his hard-bake, tuffey, butter-scotch, peppermint, pincushions, sugar-sticks, bull's-eyes, and brandy-balls, and every other compound of sugar and molasses, flavoured with no end of essences and spices, and worked into such tempting forms, that hard, indeed, must be the palate of that boy, which would not melt and water at them. But of all the venders of sweetmeats, never was there one to approach our old favourite, Brandy-ball Jack, who was celebrated from one end of the county to the other. Ah! his was something of a cart—divided into partitions, and filled with every thing sweet that the taste could covet, while in the centre there rose up a huge mountain of hard-bake, so hard, that he was compelled to use a little brass hammer to break it up with: then he threw such lumps into his bright copper scales, and gave such bumping weight, tempt-

ing us to buy, whether we would or not, by thrusting the little bits he chipped off into our mouths, and calling out all the while, "A penny an ounce—a penny an ounce; there never was such times; this is made after the royal receipt, and is the very same that his majesty made his dinner of, at the last coronation; a penny an ounce—a penny an ounce!" and many a poor boy, who looked on, as his mouth watered, and who had seldom a penny to spend, vowed, within himself, that if he were king of England, he would dine upon such hard-bake every day. As for his brandy-balls, he said that they were both victuals and drink, and that if a man was left all winter on an iceberg in the Polar seas, he would neither feel cold nor hunger, while he had a good supply of those brandy-balls.

Now, as old Jacky went from fair to fair, and from feast to feast, and visited in turn each merry-making, wake, and "static" in the county, where his sweet wares were exposed to every shower of rain, and every cloud of dust that blew from the windy, naked highways; our young readers may readily imagine what a nice, brown, gritty covering sometimes encased all these delicious things; but as there is an old adage which says, that "every one in his lifetime is doomed to eat a peck of dirt," why we made no faces about the matter, but ate and champed away, as if a cloud of dust had never existed in the world; and as many birds pick up large quantities of sand to aid their digestion, there is no knowing but what a good sprinkling of clean dust might have counteracted the effects of the over-sweetness of old Brandy-ball's confectionary. But once he had a lot that were too bad even for our universal appetites; they had been rained upon, and blowed upon, wetted, and dusted, dusted, and wetted again, until they had accumulated layer upon layer, and strata upon strata, with every beautiful variety of grit and sandstone, which is so much admired in geological formation, though any thing but fit to eat. Day after day, and week after week, did

this pile of brandy-balls remain, looking at last not unlike sand-balls; and with every advancing week there came a reduction in price, from four a penny, we were offered five, six, and eight; but though there was a decline of cent. per cent., still there were no bidders. They became at last a standing joke amongst us boys, and I cannot tell half the witty things that we said about them; but all Brandy-ball Jack said was, "They'll be eaten some day:" and while we shook our heads in doubt, he, with a knowing wink, said, "You'll see," and, to our surprise, we did see, for the great dirty pile every day grew less and less, although we never saw one sold. This, for some time, was a great puzzle to us; but a greater still, was a new kind of brandy-ball, which he sold for six a penny, and so great a run was there for this new size, that there was but little call for the old four-a-penny brandy-balls. Strange, however, he could not supply us fast enough with this new article, for, as he said, they took a deal of manufacturing; and, when we inquired what he had done with the old dirty stock which he had had so long on hand, he knowingly closed one eye, which was a great habit of his, and answered, "Why, my lads, they're selling like wild-fire, wholesale and for exportation." Then it was noticed by all, that old Brandy-ball Jack did not converse so much with us as he used to do, and this one boy, who was keener-sighted than the rest of us, said, was owing to his having lately taken to chawing tobacco; of course, he couldn't be wrong, because he had seen the juice. But another boy, sharper still, noticed how often Jacky changed his quid, or chaw of tobacco, invariably putting the old one into a piece of paper, which he applied to his mouth, and then thrust it into his pocket. In the same mysterious manner was the new chaw put into his mouth, and for the life of us we could not discover what tobacco it was that old Jacky chawed. But time, that reveals many things, one day, when we were all gathered around his cart, divulged the mystery. He chanced

to pull his handkerchief out of his pocket, and with it there came three quids, all screwed up and still moist. In an instant a dozen hands were thrust towards them, for it had long been a dispute amongst us, whether it was tobacco or hard bake that Jacky chewed. When, lo, on unscrewing them, we found in each, two brandy-balls, the size of such as he sold at six a penny. We saw through the whole process of the slow manufacture in a moment—he had been sucking the dirt from off the old brandy-balls, which we had refused to buy at any price, and after turning them in every corner of his dirty mouth had sold them to us at six a penny. The murder was out—a dozen of us sprang upon him in an instant—we turned his pockets inside out—we compelled him to open his mouth, and every dirty brandy-ball that we found sucked, or unsucked, we made him swallow like so many pills. He made many a wry face, but we had no mercy upon him, until a very large one, covered with many an old crustation of dirt, chanced to stick in his throat, when thumping him on the back, until we brought the very tears into his eyes, we left him to his own reflections, discharging him as the Moor did Cassio in Shakspeare's "Othello," and saying,—

“ Brandy-ball Jack we lov'd thee,
But never more be sweetmeat man of ours.”

Brandy-ball Jack had hitherto been a great favourite with us, for he used often to amuse us with his curious stories, which generally related to himself; and I will try to imitate his manner as near as I can, while making you acquainted with the adventure of a pork-pie.

“ You see, my lads,” for so Jacky always commenced his narrative, “ I used to attend Nottingham goose-fair, ay, I may say, let me see, for this last twenty years; and during that twenty years I always dined at the Bell, and when I dined at the Bell I always paid a shilling for my dinner:

Now, a shilling for a dinner is a deal of money to a poor man, who sells brandy-balls; so I thought to myself, thought I, one day: 'Now goose-fair lasts three days, and three days is three dinners, and three dinners is three shillings I'll go out and I'll buy myself a bit of pork, and a bit of flour, and a bit of lard, and I'll make myself a nice raised pork-pie;' for, you see, I'd been making a great deal of hard-bake for Nottingham goose-fair, and I'd a good fire, and my oven was nice and hot, and I knew it would bake it beautifully. Well, although I say it myself, I made as nice a pork-pie as the king of England would wish to have sat down to; I seasoned it beautifully, and so you'd have said if you'd seen it; and I worked the meat about with my hands, so that it might have the same flavour all over alike, do you see; which I consider to be a great secret in making a raised pork-pie; for I can't bear at one bite to get a mouthful of meat, and at the next bite a mouthful of pepper and salt, and nought else. Oh! it was baked lovely, so nice and brown, I couldn't sleep for an hour or two after I had got into bed for thinking about it; and I thought to myself,—'Oh! how I shall but enjoy it at Nottingham goose-fair, I can eat my dinner now without leaving my cart, or neglecting my business; I can eat my dinner now, and cry a penny an ounce, at the same time.' Well, you know, next morning I put my things in my cart, ready for Nottingham goose-fair: the brandy-balls here, by themselves—the butter-scotch there—the tuffey in this place—the black-jack in that; and then I filled in with cure-all, and hard-bake, and peppermint pincushions: really it was beautiful to look at it, I'd done it so nicely. I'm sure if a duchess had looked at it that morning, she couldn't have resisted buying either a penn'orth of bull's-eyes, or brandy-balls; and then I covered in and tucked it in all round with a nice, clean, white cloth. Well, you know, my lads, just as I'd got it all ready, and was preparing to start for Nottingham goose-fair, I re-

membered, all at once, I'd forgotten my raised pork-pie; and I didn't know whatever was to be done with it, for I couldn't think of unpacking my cart again; besides, it was full, and it would have been so much trouble. First of all I thought of putting it into my coat pocket, but as I must have put it in sideways, I thought it might break, and then all the gravy would have run out, and, you see, that wouldn't have done at all, 'cause it would completely have spoilt the flavour; so after a good deal of thinking, and turning it over in my mind, first on this side, and then on that, at last of all I decided on putting it into my hat, and placing it bottom downwards on the top of my head. Although it was a tight fit, I managed to stow it away very nicely in my hat. Well, my lads, after having arranged everything nice and comfortable, I set off for Nottingham; it was very early, and rather a cold morning, for the mornings do set in rather cold in October. Well, on I went, wheeling my cart, for, you see, I'd got five or six miles to wheel it before I got to Nottingham goose-fair, and although I felt very cold—so cold that, every now and then, I was obliged to stop, and beat my hands across my chest to warm them; yet, do you know, just as I got to Nottingham Trent bridge, I broke out all at once into a violent perspiration—never was in such a perspiration in my life. 'Bless me!' said I, to myself, 'here am I, all down from head to foot as cold as a frog, and yet the sweat's trickling down my cheeks in torrents—it's very strange!' Well, I kept wheeling on, and on, and on, sometimes stopping, and taking out my handkerchief to wipe the sweat off my face; but it was of no use, the more I wiped, the more I sweated. The sweat trickled down my cheeks, and on my neck, and along my back; all my hair was wet with it. 'Bless me!' said I, 'it's very strange, I never perspired so much in my life.' I'd often heard talk of cold sweats, and I thought to myself, 'Why, surelie, this must be one of those cold sweats, as they call 'em.' Well, do you know, as I got to Nottingham, it begun to go off a little,

and I thought to myself, 'When I get to goose-fair, I'll give my head a good rubbing, and then it'll be all right.' Well, my lads, would you believe it, when I got there, and took my hat off, I found, to my astonishment, I had n't been sweating at all; for the bottom of the pork-pie had broken, and let all the gravy out; for, after all, I had n't sweated a bit, it was only the gravy out of the pie after all? Now, was n't that very strange, my lads?" Of course, we thought it was.

But I have not yet told you any thing about the history of the Dog: the most sagacious animal in all the brute creation; the friend and companion of man in all ages of the world: ever true and faithful in his attachment; as susceptible of kindness as any of our own race; and, in many instances, displaying such a fondness towards its master, as causes it to mourn and droop after his death, and never, while it lives, attach itself to another. There are volumes of anecdotes written about the dog, describing his gratitude, perseverance, courage, faithfulness, sagacity, and devoted attachment; all of which are so well known, that I shall confine myself to its history, and the description of the different varieties, which are, or have been, common to England. But, first, I must tell you that the true origin of the dog is unknown; and that all our travellers, and writers of Natural History, cannot discover whence this faithful and domesticated animal first sprung. That there is a close resemblance between the anatomy of the wolf and the dog, is an important point, on which all our greatest naturalists agree; and Hunter came to the conclusion, that the wolf, the jackal, and the dog are all of one species. And there are instances on record, in which the wolf has shown as much attachment to its master, as was ever evinced by the dog, by mourning, and sorrowing, and refusing to eat during his absence; and leaping up, licking his face, running round him, and showing every mark of fondness to express its joy at the master's return, after an absence of three years. And

after having carefully perused a number of works (along with many others), I have arrived at the conclusion, that the whole race of dogs have had their origin from the wolf; the greatest proof of which is, that when dogs have again returned to a wild state, and the young have, in the course of time, as one generation followed another, grown up, they have invariably borne a closer resemblance to the wolf; so, on the other hand, have they, in a domesticated state, and with particular care, merged into a strongly-marked and distinct breed, until we marvel, at seeing such contrasts as there are between the pug and the greyhound, that they have all sprung from the same origin.

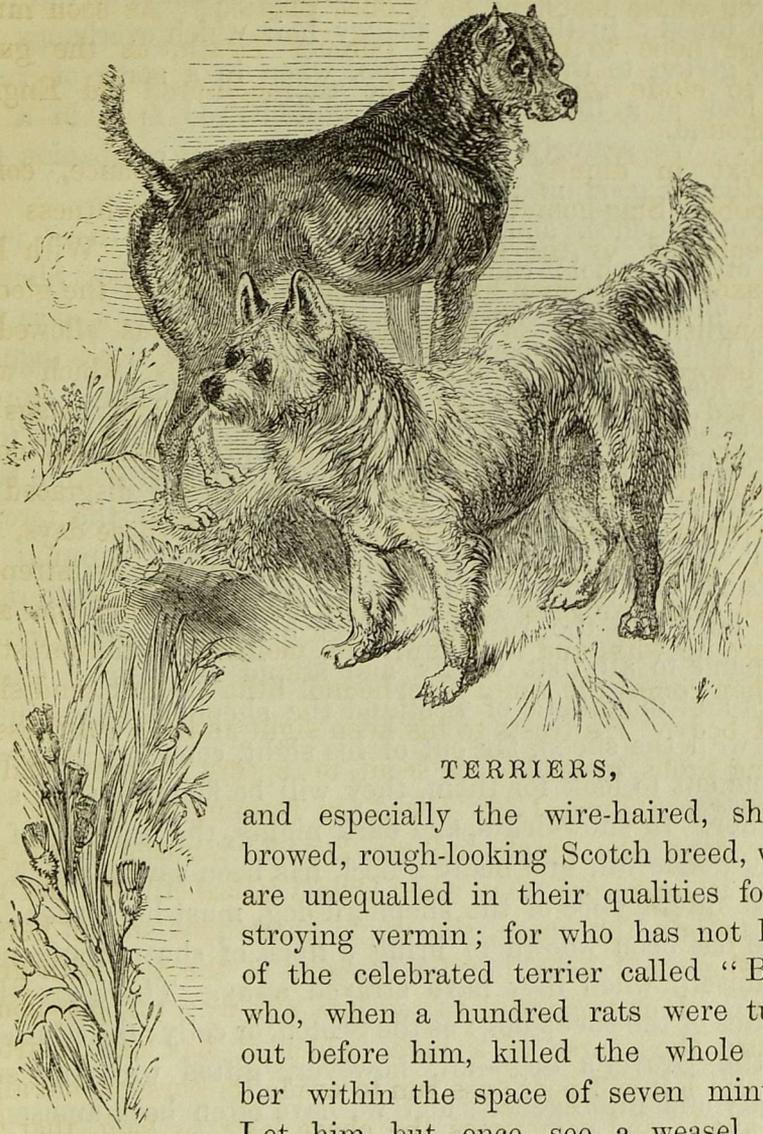
First, I shall tell you about the true old English Bloodhound, which was the dread and horror of murderers, and thieves, in the olden time; for when he once had scented the footsteps of the culprit, night and day would he follow him; no matter how intricate and difficult the path: through the thick and entangling covert of the forest, he went, step by step; in the cavern, and out again, over mountain, and marsh, and morass, to the very spot, by the edge of the river, where he had crossed, and when on the opposite shore, with unerring scent, he again pursued his victim; for no tree was too high, nor cavern too deep, but what he would scent out his way to the foot of the one, or the mouth of the other. He never seemed weary, never in a great hurry, he left not an inch of ground in the "trail" unsearched; if the door was closed, he quitted not the habitation in which the hunted victim was sheltered, but hung about the threshold, until the robber was captured. There is something about the breadth of his mouth, and the low hanging of his upper lip, which gives a sullen expression to his countenance, as if he was ever meditating some deep design, which that broad breast, and those strong, powerful limbs could without difficulty carry into execution, even although he had to trace his prey from the remotest corner of

Scotland, to the Land's End of England! Woe be to the felon on whose footsteps he is once planted! As soon might old age hope to escape the pursuer Death, as the guilty man to elude the track of the thorough-bred old English bloodhound.

Next in dignity and grandeur of appearance, comes the noble Stag-hound, whose strength and swiftness are only equalled by the kindness of his nature. With him the Saxon and Norman kings hunted the deer, in the gloomy old English forests of ancient days. He was allowed to bask before the fire in those grand old halls, which were decorated with armour, and antlers of the mighty stags he had torn down. Even the proud dais, where only the noble and the titled congregated, was not considered disgraced by the presence of the stately stag-hound; for, in those days, the murderous guns were unknown; and it was only by strength of limb, and swiftness of foot, that the stag-hound was able to come up with, and tear down the monarch of the forest.

Then comes the gaunt Greyhound, lithe of limb, and slender of body. He trusts to his keen sight and the swiftness of his long limbs, instead of his scent, to capture his prey; and no racehorse could excel his speed, in running up a hill. In former days, the greyhound was kept for hunting deer; and we find it on record, that when Queen Elizabeth was not disposed to join the chase, she would sometimes station herself where she could behold "the coursing of the deer with greyhounds." It is wonderful to see how nimbly a tall greyhound will turn the course of a hare, which it has once started. Right and left will poor puss run to evade its pursuer, but all is of no avail; and sometimes the chase lasts so long, that the hare will run until it drops down dead before the greyhound has reached it.

But of all our favourites amongst dogs, we must not forget the little



TERRIERS,

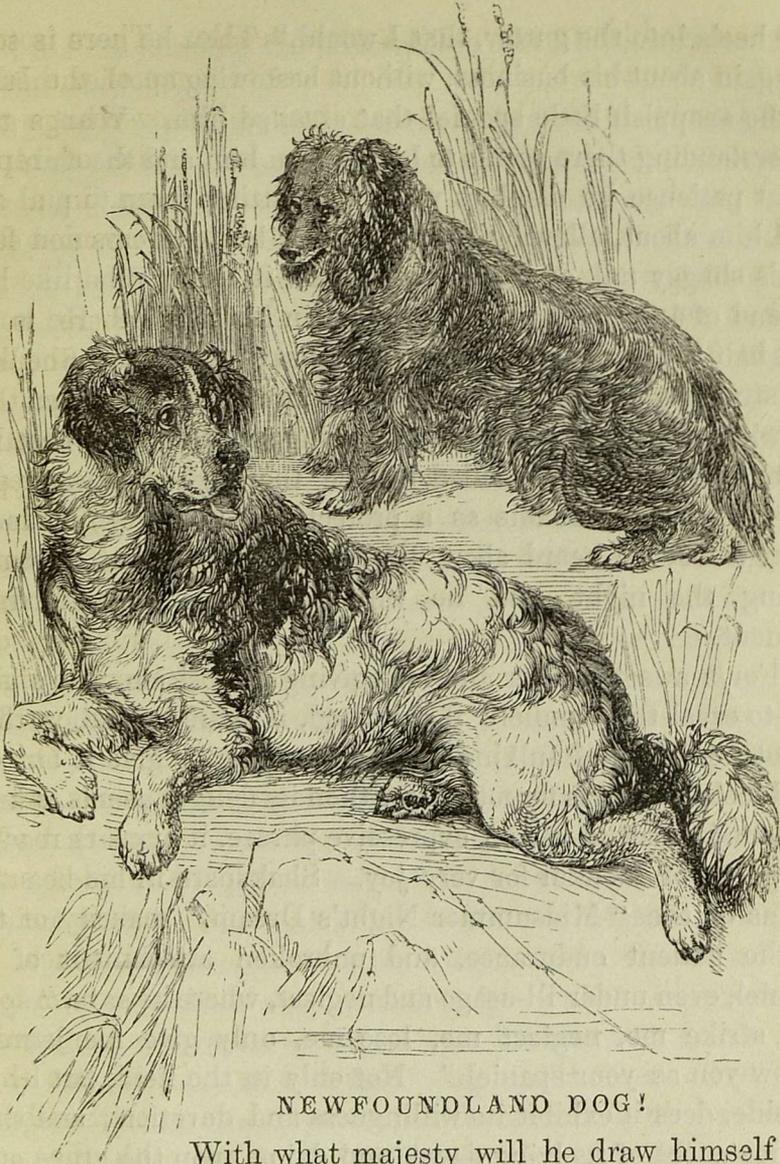
and especially the wire-haired, shaggy-browed, rough-looking Scotch breed, which are unequalled in their qualities for destroying vermin; for who has not heard of the celebrated terrier called "Billy," who, when a hundred rats were turned out before him, killed the whole number within the space of seven minutes? Let him but once see a weasel, or a polecat, and death is its doom in an instant! To ferret his way through thorns and brambles, drive a fox out of its hole, frighten rabbits out of their burrows, the little terrier has not an equal; and, as for his eye, it is almost as bright

as a star, and sharp as the point of a needle. There is something very amusing in the countenances of some of the Isle of Skye breed : in the long, shaggy hair which overhangs their eyes, giving to the countenance, when in a state of repose, the look of a little, droll, old, white-haired man, in a deep study. We scarcely know a more amusing companion for a boy, than a good-natured, thorough-bred terrier.

For patience, endurance, and faithfulness, there is not one of the whole canine race that excels the Shepherd Dog ; on the dry, dusty road, in a hot summer's day, there he is panting, and barking, and keeping the flock together, while his master is perhaps half a mile behind, stopping to refresh himself at the roadside alehouse : faithful to his charge he still pursues his way—a carriage passes, he barks, and drives them on one side ; two or three of the foremost sheep take a wrong turning, he is up and running over the backs of the flock, and in an instant puts them to rights, then falls into the rear again, for his bark is the word of command to all that woolly and stupid regiment. On the moors and mountains of Scotland the shepherd sends out his colly with the sheep, far out of his sight, conscious that when he sets out to look for them, they will be found herded safely together. In snow-drifts, and dark nights, the sagacity of this dog is wonderful, and many a flock has been saved, which, but for the intelligence of the shepherd dog, must have been lost ; for he has been known to bring a flock of sheep many miles by himself, when they have strayed away. There are three varieties of the sheep-dog : as the Scotch, or colly ; the Southern ; and the Drover's dog—all, however, gifted with the same sagacity and intelligence ; and we have often been amused by watching their operations in Smithfield Market, to see how readily they have picked out a stray sheep, which had run into the midst of another flock.

There is something noble about the appearance of the

NEWFOUNDLAND DOG.



NEWFOUNDLAND DOG!

With what majesty will he draw himself up, as he looks with contempt upon the little spaniel which is barking before him, as if he seemed to say to himself: "You contemptible little puppy! if it were not for disgracing myself, I would just lift up my great broad paw, and fetch you such a box on the ear as would send you tumbling head

over heels into the gutter, that I would." Then he goes trotting on again about his business, without bestowing another thought on the snappish little spaniel that assailed him. What a good understanding there seems to be between him and the children! What patience he displays while permitting them to pull and haul him about, allowing them to tug at his long ears and cling to his shaggy tail, as if they would pull it off! Who like him to send of an errand with the basket in his mouth? He would beat half the little boys at carrying a heavy load; and woe be to the stranger who would dare to take any thing from him. As to swimming across a river, or fetching any thing out that will float, he is scarcely excelled by the thorough-bred water-dog. Nor is he less valuable as a protector of property; let but a strange foot be heard about the premises he is set to watch, during the night, and he will fly at the intruder in a moment.

For a sweet temper and a forgiving disposition, there is no dog to excel the Spaniel; if chastised, it bears no malice, there is not a particle of sulkiness about its nature; give it but one kind look, and all is forgotten, for then its delight seems to know no bounds, and, to use an expressive phrase, it appears ready to jump out of its skin for very joy. Shakspeare in his beautiful drama of the "Midsummer Night's Dream," makes mention of the patient endurance, and unbroken attachment of the spaniel, even under ill-usage and neglect, where he says, "spurn me, strike me, neglect me, lose me, only give me leave to follow you as your spaniel." Not only in the field, but by the fireside, does it exhibit its willingness and devotion; and there are instances of its lying down, and dying upon the grave of its master. Hitherto I have refrained from telling you any anecdotes, illustrative of the sagacity and devotion of dogs, as they are so numerous and interesting that it would be difficult to take a selection from them. I must, however, give you one, which was published in "Daniel's Rural Sports" many years

ago, as fully showing the faithfulness and unceasing attachment of the spaniel:—

During the French Revolution, a worthy old magistrate was dragged before the tribunal, under a charge of conspiracy. He had a favourite water-spaniel, which followed him to the gates of the prison, when the poor animal was driven back by the gaoler, who would not permit it to enter. Although the dog went back, and took refuge with a friend of his master's, yet every day at a certain hour did he appear regularly before the gates of the prison, where he remained for some time, until, at last, his perseverance and fidelity won the attention of the gaoler, and he was allowed to enter. The meeting between the dog and his master we cannot describe. Those who have witnessed the lively signs by which the spaniel evinces its attachment, will endeavour to imagine it. The gaoler, fearful that he might get into trouble for admitting the dog, was compelled to carry it out of the prison; but the next day it returned, and on each succeeding day, it was admitted for a short time. On the day of trial, in spite of the close watch of the soldiers, it got into the Hall, and lay crouched between its master's legs. When the guillotine had done its work, and the lifeless and headless body of its master lay stretched upon the scaffold, it was again there—for two nights and a day was the dog missing, and when sought for by the friend with whom it had taken shelter during its owner's imprisonment, the spaniel was found stretched upon its master's grave. For three months did this faithful dog come once a day, every morning, to that friend, to receive its food, and all the rest of the time was passed upon its master's grave. At length, the spaniel refused to eat, and, for several hours before he died, he employed his weakened limbs in scratching up the earth above his master's grave; and so he died!—in his last struggles endeavouring to reach the kind master to whom he was so devotedly attached!

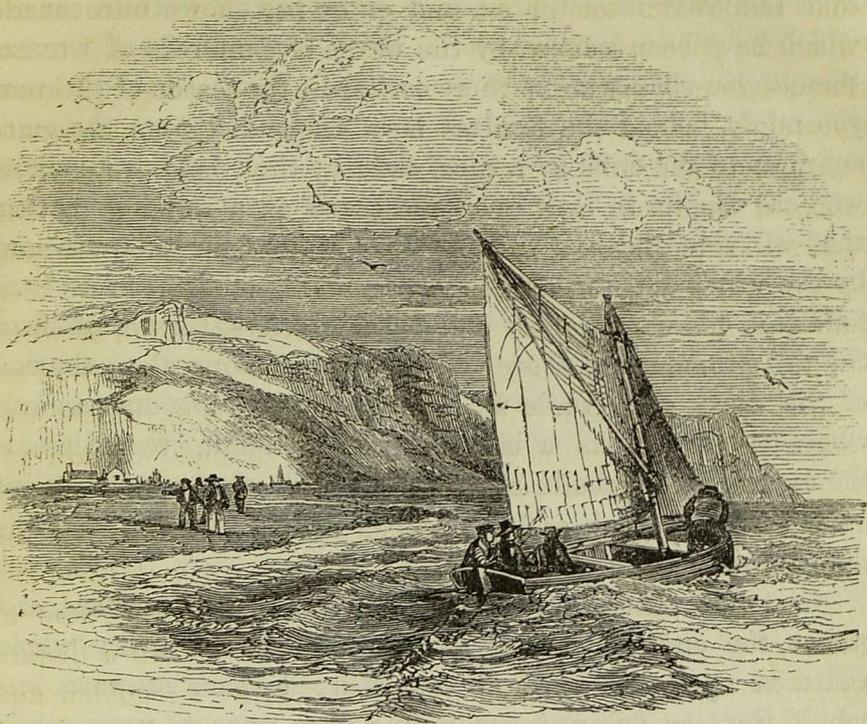
Surely such an anecdote as this proves that, in spite of what Dr. Watts taught us in our infancy, dogs were made for nobler purposes than only to “bark and bite;” and, I trust, after reading it, no boy will ever again ill-use a dog. I know there is one great objection made to keeping these affectionate animals, and that is, a dread of hydrophobia. But a dog, well attended to, rarely goes mad, it is generally through having been bitten by some other dog; and when there are rumours of such being in the neighbourhood, the safest plan is to keep your own dog within doors, or to look narrowly after it when it follows you abroad; but, above all, to keep such as are of an even temper, and that will neither snap nor bite, unless provoked, and such are not at all difficult to find. Again remember, and never be unkind to a dog.

How pleasant it is to wander along the sea-shore, in the early mornings and calm evenings of Autumn; to look upon the wide world of waters, dyed with every hue of heaven; and to see the waves stretching out, like broad fields, in a distant landscape—here purple, there green, further on golden and brown, like lands sleeping in the fallow, or fields covered with the carpet which Summer throws over them, or yellow over with the ripe and nodding ranks of Autumn corn; for such are the changing hues of the ocean, when looked upon in the distance beneath an Autumnal sky, as Byron has beautifully described it in his inimitable poem entitled, “Childe Harold,”—

“ Fill’d with the face of heaven, which, from afar,
Comes down upon its waters; all its hues,
From the rich sunset to the rising star,
Their magical variety diffuse:
And now they change; a paler shadow strews
Its mantle o’er the mountains; parting day
Dies like the dolphin, whom each pang imbues
With a new colour, as it gasps away.

The last still loveliest, till—’tis gone—and all is gray.”

Oh! how refreshing and delightful it is



SAILING ON THE SEA,

at this season of the year: to feel the cool, cheerful breeze, and hear the low murmuring of the waves, as they roll gently upon the sparkling sand of the shore; to see the broad water stretching for miles away, until it seems to touch the sky, and you cannot tell which is the ocean and which the cloud; to watch the dim outlines of huge ships in the distance—now lost in the purple haze, then gliding along, through a broad gateway of gold, which streams for miles over the restless ridges of the molten waves—far, far away, till you might fancy that the ocean was an immense desert, trackless and untrodden, and bounded only by the low rim of the horizon; to watch the slow, measured tread of the waves, and time their regular march, as they step upon the heels of each other, then throw their silver foam upon

the shore ; to walk below the tall white cliffs, on which a thousand tempests have beaten, and enter the snow-white caverns which have been washed by the waves of hundreds of winters. Should you chance to be there earlier in the season of the year, you might behold the fearless boys suspended from the giddy summits of the cliffs by a rope, held by their bold companions, who are taught to look upon the ocean as a nursing mother, that will some day rock them to sleep, while their lullaby is sung by the winds and the waves : or you might see some brave little fellow, in his short jacket and loose trowsers, thrown off from the tall promontory, above your head, and swing along the face of the dizzy cliff, while he searches every hole and cranny, wherever he thinks a bird is likely to build, regardless of the avalanche of chalk, and loosened soil, that comes rattling upon his hard head, as he is hauled up again by his laughing companions.

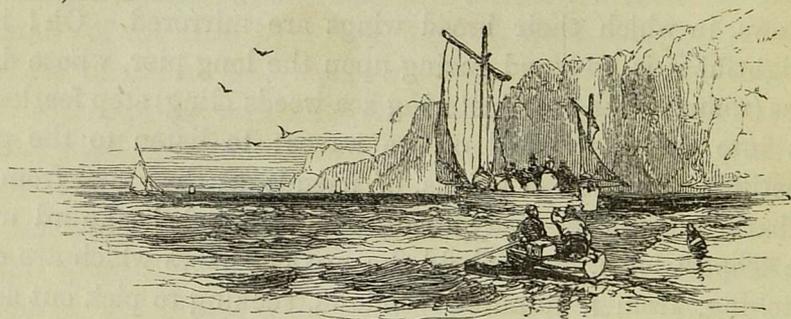
Oh ! how pleasant it is to ramble along the sea-shore, and gather the endless variety of shells which are every where scattered upon the sand at your feet ; to gaze seaward, and behold the tiny fishing-boats, riding from wave to wave, while the drowsy sails flap idly to and fro, looking as if they traversed the ocean in their sleep ; onward to wander, to where the bold, bluff headland has stepped forward from the receding coast into the sea, as if anxious to be foremost in the strife, and to meet the first bursting of the waves.

Beautiful appear those little villages, which every where dot the sea-coast, while the tall spire points heavenward, and the sabbath bell goes sounding far out into the wide and open sea ! Peaceful does the whole scene look in summer-time ! Sweet sounds the murmur of the waters upon the beach ; and pleasant appear the trees, as they sleep in the sunshine upon the steep headland : pleasant, also, are those clean, white cottages, through whose open lattices the sea-breeze brings refreshing airs, that have been wafted from

many a distant and far-off land; while, at their base, the waves ever break, in gushes of purple, and gold, and green—just as they are tinged by the various clouds which stoop over the sea. From these healthy homes, the hardy children watch the white sea-gulls, as they wheel and scream above the glassy billows, in which their broad wings are mirrored. Oh! how delightful it is, to stand gazing upon the long pier, whose dark piles (round which the clustering sea-weeds cling) step fearlessly out into the deep swell of the waves: to listen to the glad greetings, and the low adieus, of friends, as they land from, or embark in, the ever-ready steamboats: to look backward upon the seaport town, and behold the anxious faces which are ever watching, from a hundred windows, seeking to pick out some dear friend, from amongst the numerous passengers, whom they can just perceive on the deck of the vessel, which is far out on the distant sea. Then to think, that in those large ships men can live upon the water for weeks and months together, without ever once setting foot upon dry land: that some sail away hundreds of miles into hot climates, where the heat far exceeds the most sultry summer's day we ever breathed in; while others steer northward into cold, frozen seas, upon whose waves ever float huge mountains of ice. One will soon hear the roar of the lion from the scorching desert—and the other, the growl of the bear in the Polar seas. Oh! how different to the green villages and pastoral homesteads of peaceful England! And yet these happy cottages, that now seem to stand like the abodes of peace, along the sea-shore, will, ere long, be shaken by the stormy winds of winter; and, in the dark nights, the inhabitants will be alarmed by the firing of signal-guns of distress; and, perchance, the beautiful beach, on which we are now walking, may be strewn with the wreck of some goodly vessel, which, at this hour, is proudly sailing on the sea; and lights will be seen glancing to and fro, and the fearless lifeboat rocking upon the high-heaving billows, and pale forms,

with drenched hair, will be borne up that narrow pass between the cliffs, while many, alas! are left to sleep the sleep of death beneath the waves!

Pleasant it is to go out, with some brave old mariner, on the sea, in a



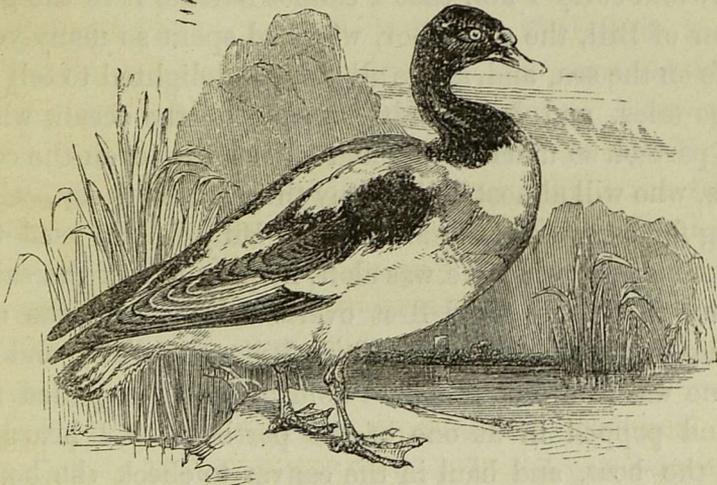
SAILING-BOAT;

to ride along beneath the shadows of the tall cliffs, or past the long, brown, sandy sea-shore, listening to the murmuring of the waves, as they fall, with a sullen roar, upon the shingly beach. Nor ought we to forget those who are exposed to the perils of the great deep;—for to them we are indebted for many of the comforts which we daily and hourly enjoy: for, nightly on the ocean, tens of thousands sink to rest, humbly trusting to that God who protects us on the land, for preserving them while sinking to sleep upon the bosom of the great sea.

Many varieties of birds may be seen in the neighbourhood of the sea. Great grey gulls, that hover above the cliffs, and mingle their shrill scream with the unceasing dash of the waves, as they wheel, with graceful motion, in the air. But there is one which may be new to you; it is called the Shel-drake, or Burrow-duck, and is generally found near salt water; where this curious bird, instead of building a nest, frequently deposits her eggs in some empty rabbit-burrow, or hole in the bank. It shows great affection towards its young, and when they are hatched at any distance from the water,

THE SHELDRAKE.

she will carry them to it in her bill, for they are able to swim when they have only escaped from the shell a few days. It chiefly feeds upon marine insects, sea-weeds, and small shell-fish. The



SHELDRAKE

is beautifully marked. The bill is red; the crown and back of the head a greenish black; the back white; and the breast varied with a beautiful belt of bay colour, narrowing as it passes under the wings, and surrounding the lower part of the neck behind. The wings are black and white, and some of the larger plumes of a glossy green, tinged with the colour of copper. Its motions in the water are very graceful; and there are but few prettier sights, than to sit on a bank and watch the sheldrake, as she sails about, surrounded by her young. If the eggs are taken away, and hatched under a hen, the young ones become tame, and are a great ornament to ponds or lakes. The eggs are white, and about the same size as those of the common duck.

I dare say you have often heard of the yarns which old sailors spin, and how little truth there is in many of them. The one I am about to narrate, has just enough of the "possi-

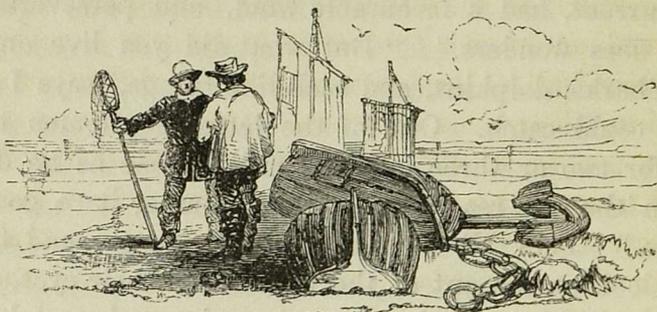
ble" in it, to suppose that such an adventure might befall any one, though for my part I should be very reluctant to avouch for its truth. But I must tell it you as a relief to the long narrations I have given you on woods, and wilds, and green country-places; and sorry I am, that I cannot narrate it in the graphic manner of Bill, the old sailor, who had spent so many years of his life on the sea, and, above all things, delighted to tell us his strange tales, and hairbreadth escapes on the ocean, which at times partook so much of the marvellous, that even the country people, who will almost believe any thing, used to say, "That's too big for us, we can't swallow that, Billy." He used to tell them, that once while he was aloft, helping to reef the sails, he chanced to tumble head first overboard. There was a rope hanging down the side of the ship, Billy would say, and before any one was aware of it, I laid hold of the rope, pulled myself up, and popped in at one of the portholes. I heard them lower the boat, and haul in the canvas to check the head-way of the ship; and then I heard the Captain say, "Poor Billy! he's told his last lie—he's gone." "Has he?" thought I, "we shall see!" and I began to peep about me, and found I'd got into the store-room. I saw a lot of new sails rolled up in a corner, "That'll do for a bed," thought I; there was plenty of beef, biscuits, cheese, barrels of ale, porter, every thing—"I can't be in better quarters," thought I, and then I began to ask myself a few questions. "Billy," said I, "you can't be better off than where you are; the ship will be, at least, a fortnight before she reaches the end of her voyage, and if you come out, Billy, you'll have to work as hard as any other man in the ship; and if you were to fall overboard again, Billy, perhaps you would n't escape so well next time; so I think you can't be better off than where you are." Well, I thought I could n't do better than take the advice I'd given myself. I'd the very best of every thing to eat and drink, a good bed to sleep upon—and what more could I desire? I could hear them scrubbing the decks,

and taking in the sails, and running about overhead; and very comfortable it was I can assure you, to peep out of the port-holes, and look upon the sea, and lead quite a gentleman's life, and never do a hand's-turn of any thing. But the fortnight soon passed over; and one day, I heard the man who had the look-out, cry, "Land a-head!" "Oh! oh!" thought I, "it's time I packed up my traps, and started off, if it's come to this,"—for I knew we were near the end of the voyage. I was a good swimmer, and, as the sea was now calm, I let myself gently down out of the port-hole, and dropped behind the stern of the ship, when I began to holla out as loudly as ever I could, 'Throw me a rope! throw me a rope!' They, thinking it was one of the sailors who had fallen overboard, threw out a rope in an instant—and I was hauled on deck in a twinkling; you should have seen how they stared at me! "Why," said the Captain, "you fell overboard above a thousand miles off, a fortnight ago!" "What of that?" said I, "I got into a good strong current, had a favourable wind, and perseverance and courage does wonders." "But what did you live on?" says he. "Sharks, dolphins, and such like things," says I; "anything I could catch. One of the latter gentlemen took me in tow for two or three hundred miles, same as he did Jack Amphion that we read about—you remember it—a good many years ago." They all thought it very strange, and the crew used to look at me out of the corners of their eyes, as if to say, what a fib! but they knew no more about where I had been to than a marling-spike.

Well, you know, at last we landed, and one evening while the Captain was at supper with the Governor of the Island, he happened to tell him about my falling overboard, being out at sea for a fortnight, and swimming after the ship for a thousand miles. "I've got a black nigger," says the Governor, "that I'll back to swim against him for a hundred pounds." "Done," said the Captain, and he accepted the bet. A pretty way I was

in when he told me; for I'd heard of the black fellow, and I knew I stood no chance with him. "Never mind, Captain," said I, "you shall win"—but how I didn't know. I made up my mind to run away, but the Captain was too deep—he'd set a watch over me—"I must brazen it out," thought I; and so I did. Next morning I went ashore in a boat, and there was the black fellow kicking up his heels on the sand, and saying, "Come along, massa, me beat you—me beat you!" "Stop a bit, blacky," said I, as I began to strip; when ready I asked my messmates to roll me the two large casks out of the boat. They did; and Sambo, rolling up the whites of his eyes, said, "What for massa want casks?" "What for?" said I, "do you think I'm going out to swim for a fortnight without taking a good stock of beef and biscuits with me." "Swim for two week," stammered Sambo, and off he ran somewhere into the island, and was never heard of afterwards. The Captain won.

"Hey! hey! Billy," the



FISHERMEN ON THE BEACH

would exclaim, "the Captain and the crew, too, must have been land-lubbers to have swallowed such a yarn as you spun them. I wonder you did n't meet with a mermaid, and bring her on board with you, one would have been about as likely as the other." But Billy cared not for such remarks as those, and he was a great favourite amongst the fishermen, and the villagers who dwelt beside the sea-shore.

COUNTRY FAIR.

Autumn was always a grand season with us, for it brought with it our great Michaelmas Fair, with all its shows, wild-beasts, horse-riders, waxworks, tumblers, giants, dwarfs, and wild Indians; to see which we had long saved up our money, and often talked about those we should visit, and wondered if such and such caravans would come again, and on what day, and how far we should go out of town to meet them. Oh! a busy time with us boys was that great Michaelmas Fair. First we had to go out and meet the shows, and we believed that each of those large caravans contained all the wild beasts that were painted on the front; and then what a delight it was to hear the great lion roar, every now and then, as they came along, while the tiger made answer! and to talk about what we should do if they broke loose, and to wonder whether or not they would eat us, or a bullock first, if we ran behind one. Then there was the pleasure of seeing them draw up in the great Mart-yard, as the large space was called, in which the shows had stood for many years; to watch them wheel up one against the other, until they formed an immense square; to see the butchers bring huge barrows full of beef, and to listen, as the raw joints were thrown into their dens, and hear them growl, and roar, and gnaw the bones; all the while wondering what this and that was, and trying to peep through some little hole to discover it. But the great marvel of all was the caravan that contained the elephant; oh! such wheels! it always came last they said, and filled up the ruts, and by so doing freed the whole procession of paying toll: then it was drawn by eight or ten horses, and with the caravan weighed—I know not how many tons. Then there was the preparation for opening, digging holes, and setting up poles, as high as trees,—such a hammering, and rearing of ladders, and bringing in bags of sawdust, and hoisting up great rolls of canvas, on which we knew were painted lions, tigers, leopards, zebras, antelopes, hyenas, wolves, bears, crocodiles, elephants, ostriches, pelicans, eagles, vultures, which

we were not allowed to see until the real fair-day came; though some were not rolled up so closely, but we could occasionally make out a part of the name, the top of a palm-tree, or a mountain, and read the gilt title of "The unfortunate Major Monro, who was carried away by the royal striped Bengal tiger," and we believe, eaten up at one meal. Then there were the king's beef-eaters, who went round the town on horseback, in dresses of crimson and gold, with such music as we believed only real royal beef-eaters could play: great trombones that went in and out, and a big green serpent, and bugles, and trumpets full of keys, which only wild-beast men understood—we gazed in astonishment, and wondered however they knew, out of so many, where to place their fingers.

Next came the horse-riders, men who could as easily stand on their heads as their feet, while the horse went round the ring at a brisk canter; who could leap through a hoop, and over a riding-whip, backwards or forwards; and all of whom we believed to be double-jointed. Oh! what tales they used to tell us, about their being kept in hogsheads of oil whilst young, and sleeping in oily sheets as they grew old, to make their joints easy, and soften their bones, until they could, with ease, have coiled themselves up in a bandbox! and we, simpletons that we were, believed almost every thing that the bigger boys told us, from the tale of the man who could dance on the slack rope on his head, to that of the Indian youth, who could hang by the edge of a single tooth on the slack wire: and I know not, now, whether such stories gave the inventors or the listeners the greatest pleasure!

But the front of the tumbling and conjuring booth, was, after all, the place to witness the greatest wonders; where the clown swallowed burning flax, as easily as he would have done a buttered bun, drew ribbons out of his mouth by the yard, and filled a basket with eggs out of an empty bag. Ah! those were wonderful things, until we discovered the secret of how

they were done, and then we only felt sorry that they were so simple and easy. And, oh! the wonderful pony inside, which when asked to find out the greatest rogue present, invariably came to his own master; and when sent round to discover which boy liked his bed better than his book, would, in spite of all the fillips we gave him on the nose when he attempted to stop, pick out some one from amongst us whom he caused to blush to the very ears.

Then came the grand tragedians, the stately kings, and royal queens, who walked about the stage outside, amid men in armour, and the ghost with the white chalked countenance! Ah! it was something like to see those perform; to witness the king seated on his throne; to behold the queen kneeling at his feet; to see him arise, and, as he folded his arms and knit his lamp-black brows, exclaim,—“Away with the traitor to the Tower!” Anon to hear the bell sound, and see the scaffold prepared, and look upon the grim headsman as he stood beside the block, with the axe in his hand; then to see the queen kneel again for the last time, and, when her tears were of no avail, give the crowned tyrant a touch in the side that seemed to kill him; while the knights in armour fought, and the town was set on fire, and the man with the chalked face popped up out of a trap-door in the midst of it, and said something which put them all to rights in no time. Nor was it less wonderful to see the king and queen walking together outside, arm in arm, a few minutes afterwards, just as friendly as ever, and the ghost chatting with them as familiarly as if he had never smelt sulphur, or stood in the midst of that awful mass of sky-blue flame.

Nor must I forget the peep-shows, with the green curtains that covered us in, the views which we saw magnified, battles on land and sea, processions, and shipwrecks, the falls of Niagara, that moved when the old woman turned a handle, and seemed to come rushing down a height of at least six feet. Then the mischievous monkey that was perched outside, and

that ate almost every thing we offered him: and all to be seen for the small charge of one penny; with something else, I forget what, for another penny, worth it all—either a pig-faced lady, or a mermaid, or a wild man of the prairie, just according to the number who paid, and waited whilst her husband changed himself into either the one or the other, for the old impostor personified the whole three. Oh! how they did deceive us boys at times! But, at last, this secret got blown abroad; and taking two or three of our larger comrades with us, we divested the savage Indian of his club, pulled off his horsehair wig and black mask, and found underneath the little man, named plain John Thompson, who owned the wife, and the peep-show, and never more in our town ventured to appear as either the pig-faced lady, or the mermaid. By the aid of a stout uncle, whom we had let into the secret of our suspicion, we hauled him outside on the front of the very little stage, sounded the gong and beat the drum, the monkey jabbering all the while, and the wife abusing us with all her might; and there we compelled the savage Indian to show himself gratis, having divested him of his mask and India-rubber gloves; while, with the palest face in the group, he begged pardon and threatened to prosecute us in the same breath. But instead of a warrant next morning, which he had vowed to take out, John Thompson and his peep-show had vanished, and we never beheld either the pig-faced lady, the wonderful mermaid, nor the savage Indian from the prairie again. Uncle William often laughed, and said, that “there were more difficult things to be done in the world, than to turn a black man white.” A similar impostor was found out at the Egyptian Hall, only a few months ago, who came out under the startling inquiry of, “What is it?”

Then, there were the gingerbread-stalls, stretching away to—I cannot tell you how far, they extended to such a distance. I never see such great gilt King Georges on horseback

now as were made out of gingerbread in those days. The moulds in which they formed the great stage-wagon, with its four horses; the cock, with his richly-gilt tail; the old watchman, whose lantern we always ate last—are all broken up or lost, and there is not an idea left, or a pleasant fancy to be found, in the flat, round, unmeaning gingerbread-nuts which are sold in the present day. The “Only genuine Stalls” have vanished; I miss the great round circle of wooden horses, of all colours, where we could, for a halfpenny, select either a black, bay, gray, or chestnut, all saddled and bridled ready for mounting, with chairs fastened here and there for the lesser children, who were too little to mount those fierce-looking wooden steeds; while we were whirled round, with merry shout and loud laughter, by the poorer boys, who worked inside of the circle, like horses in a mill; and, after having shoved, and turned, and perspired for a given time, they, too, had a ride for their reward. Then, to what a height the boat-swings were sent, in those days! When up, we could see over all the fair, could look down upon the stalls and the crowds of people—on all the hubbub of tin-trumpets, and penny rattles, and shrill whistles, and hollow-sounding drums, and queer nameless things, tied to strings, which, when swung round, made a buzzing noise like to a swarm of bees. Then, amongst the old-fashioned toys, there was Jack-in-the-box, who popped up every time you opened it; and snakes that came out such a length! and funny old women who churned; and ten-bells in a box that turned with a handle, and was sure to get out of tune after it had been in use an hour or two; for what boy could ever leave off, or resist lending it, whilst it made such funny music. And oh! the tables with white cocks and black cocks, and figures which, if the pointed arrow we whirled round stopped over, entitled us to as many nuts as the number below. How often did we try at the hundred, and come only at the one,—yet so near that we were tempted to risk another halfpenny; for the old man

with the wooden leg was so encouraging, and never failed to cry out, "Try again; very near; better luck next time, my boys." What things were to be won, if we could but knock them off the sticks,—and so cheap! six things for a penny—musical pears, and a nice little box; such a handsome pin-cushion! and a knife that, to look at, any boy would have given a shilling for it. Then, the boy that belonged to the man who owned all these treasures would try for nothing, to let us see how easy it was; and down he would knock the knife, and the box, and the musical pear, without one of them dropping into the hole, where, if they fell, they were claimed by the owner. Oh, it looked so easy, that we must try; so we did; and, alas! all the prizes invariably fell into the hole, as we shied away our pence and got nothing, so hurried off again to see the shows. We visited the giant, and the fat boy, and the dwarf, whose arm we had seen hanging out of the little wooden house, as he rang a bell from the upper window. We saw the fat ox, and the wonderful calf with five legs, and the sheep with two heads, and the man who swallowed a sword; all of which were things to be talked about for days and weeks after the fair was over. But the conjurer—the cups and balls—the brick underneath the hat that was changed into a Guinea-pig—the shilling that found its way back into the gentleman's pocket, after he had lent it to the conjurer—ah! these were marvels, and set us wondering for months after, and trying, but in vain, to do them ourselves. Then, there was the merry-andrew, so witty, who cared no more about a horsewhipping than if he had been beaten with a feather; and oh, how we laughed when he sold a simple old country-woman a penny packet of his flea-powder, which he warranted to destroy fleas: when, in answer to her question of how she was to apply it, he bade her first catch the flea, then force a very small portion of the powder down its throat; and when she answered, that it would be the least trouble to kill it at once, without giving the flea the powder, to

hear him say, that there certainly was some reason in what she said. They might tell us that the old woman and he were in league together; that it was all done to get up a laugh: but no, we will not think so; it looked too natural for that. But this was nothing to the trick two cunning rogues played off upon us, and got our pennies to buy drink with. First, they took the green-baize table-covering from out the parlour of the tavern, and hung it up before the stable-door, over which they had written, in chalk, "*To be seen within, that Wonderful Animal the WORSER!*" What could it be? we had never heard such a name before. Where did it come from? The man who took the pennies at the stable-door said, out of the clouds. The stable very soon filled, when a truly drunken, waggish-looking fellow, holding up a dog so poor that we could count every rib in its body, inquired, if it was not a very bad one. There was no denying but that it was. "Then, gentlemen," said he, pulling out the naked skeleton of another dog from under his smock-frock, "this is a WORSER;" and away he ran out at a side door. There was no help for it; we had paid money, and seen a worser—the very name had taken us in; and all we could do was to stand and laugh at each other. One old man said, the joke was worth a penny; but we could hardly see that: however, we were taken in, and laughed at by every body who had not, like us, paid for peeping. Many such tricks are played off in this world, and much may be learned from the "sights" to be seen at a country fair; for, unless we are wary, we shall be cheated by deeper jugglers than we meet with there; for there are those who are ever on the look-out, with their sleight-of-hand tricks, to practise upon the simple and the unwary, and soon convince us how much truth there is in the old, homely proverb, which says, "All is not gold that glitters." Not that I would wish to awaken a feeling of suspicion in your bosoms against every one with whom you may chance to come in contact, or think the worse of

the world because some merry vagabond does now and then cheat you out of your money, and then laugh in your face. Experience must be purchased; and when once we have bought it rather dear, let us be more guarded over the next bargain. A good-natured lad, who is once or twice cleverly taken in, will, without a feeling of anger, join in the laugh which is raised against himself. A trick or two may be overlooked; but a succession of them, played off on the same individual, would lay him open to the suspicion of being rather foolish; and it would not enhance his worldly wisdom, in the estimation of his companions, if he went to see a "WORSER" a second time. Above all things remember that gambling, on ever so small a scale, or however amusing or trifling it may appear, is bad, and has led to the ruin of many a one who little dreamed of its pernicious principles, when he first commenced it, amid the sports and pastimes of a Country Fair.

From the Country Fair to the rivers we must now turn; for during this season there may be heard a low twittering amongst the willows, which announces that the Swallows have begun to assemble together, and are about to set out on their long journey to some sunnier climate. Within the space occupied by only two or three fields, we have seen thousands of these birds collected together. They occupied the same situation for many days, invariably wheeling off every morning early in separate divisions, in search of food, and returning to the same place to roost early in the evening, always bringing with them an additional company. The habits of the swallow tribe are very interesting; and but few birds have attracted the attention of our naturalists so much as they have done. From their first appearance in the Spring, when only one or two were to be seen occasionally skimming over the surface of the river, to the building of their nests, rearing of their young, and up to the period of their migration, their habits have been narrowly watched from year to year; and as I shall have

SWALLOWS.

to draw your attention towards the building, and breeding, of so many birds in that portion of my work which will be dedicated to a description of Spring, I shall take advantage of this almost songless season, to tell you all I think most interesting about the swallows. You have all of you, at one time or another, observed the swallow commencing its nest under the eaves, beside the windows, or at any projecting point of a building which it may have selected. It is an early riser, and commences its work soon after daylight in the morning, seldom building up more than half an inch or so at a time, then spending the rest of the day in flying about and searching for food, so that the work may become thoroughly dry before it is again proceeded with on the following day; for if the nest was formed as rapidly as the bird could build it, the very weight of the moist dirt, which it is compelled to use, would, through becoming top-heavy, fall to the ground, and so the bird would be forced to commence its work afresh. To prevent this, it only erects a small portion each day, thus allowing one layer to become thoroughly dry before another is placed upon it. It is curious to watch them at work, plastering away with their chins, and moving their heads to and fro with a rapid motion, clinging firmly to the brickwork with their claws, and also resting a portion of their weight on their broad outspread tail. Very often, during rainy weather, the cement which forms their nests becomes soft, and they fall to the ground; and, although this may happen when they chance to have young ones, which are all killed by the fall, yet so partial are these birds to one spot, that they will again commence building their nests in the same situation. Sometimes they will begin several nests without finishing any one but the last, which, when once completed, often serves for years. Many people are so partial to the swallow building upon their houses, that they have erected ledges for them, to build their nests upon. Some have let shells into the walls, and found pleasure

in watching the little bird build a buttress, or prop, beneath the shell to strengthen it, before commencing to erect its nest on the shell. Others, again, have rubbed the places, where the swallows were in the habit of building, with oil and soft soap, to prevent their nests from adhering to the eaves and walls. Such, you see, is the difference of taste, which there is no accounting for; though I should have preferred those for my friends and neighbours, could I have had my choice, who encouraged the birds to build about their houses, sooner than those who drove them away.

The swallow has always been one of my favourites amongst birds. When a child, I have watched them for hours while they erected their nests; they were my companions when I strolled along the river-banks to angle. I loved to see their shadows flashing across the water, like a ray of light—to hear their twitter on the eaves, in the early morning, long before I arose—to watch their young ones, perched in a row, and trying their little wings, for the first time, for flight. Then, to see them again gathered together, in Autumn, amongst the willows, beside my native Trent, from Ashcroft up to Lea Marsh, and all round by No-Man's-Friend, and far away to where the old chapel of Burton looked into the river—every bush and bank seemed alive with them, as if all the swallows in England had assembled together, in that spot, to chat together, for a few days, before they took their departure. And I have sometimes fancied that they said, “I wish the winters in England were not so cold; I don't like to leave the country where I have built my home, and reared my young. True the Italian skies are brighter, and the African air warmer; but there are no such sweet rivers there, no fields so pleasant, smelling in summer of sweet hay, and, until within these few weeks, yellow over with golden corn; no nice, comfortable, thatched eaves to build under, such as we find here in the English villages, which are surrounded with trees; no such

beautiful old spires to play round, and chase one another, when the rosy clouds of evening hang all about the sky; no sounds abroad so sweet as the voices of the cottage children in England, singing to please themselves, as we do, whilst they wander along the green lanes, and beside the pleasant hedge-rows, that divide one lovely meadow from another—but let us not complain: a few months will soon roll over; and when we return again, the pastures will be white with daisies; there will be violets and primroses upon the banks, and the cottage-dames will smile when they hear our voices upon the thatched roofs; the villagers will begin to dress up their gardens again; and every body will exclaim, ‘The swallows and Spring have returned once more to our shores.’”

Autumn brought with it the Fifth of November; a busy day to boys in the country, and one for which we had made great preparation. Oh! you should have seen us make the Guy—what planning and contriving was there going on then, what old scarecrows were brought to light, that had vanished a month or two before from the corn-fields nobody could tell how! What stuffing and cramming there was to make him sit upright, to get his arm round, to bend his knees, and make his legs hang down as he sat in the chair, to prop up his head and make him look like the real Guy, who had courage enough to attempt to blow up the Houses of Parliament! I never see such Guys now as we were wont to make. Stephen Grey would lend us his great jack-boots, which he wore when he went out to shoot wild geese and wild ducks in the marshes, on condition that we pulled them off and returned them safe, before we burnt Guy Fawkes in the evening. Then old Rollett, who had been a captain in the volunteers, would lend us his sword, and sash, and feather, as he had many a time done; and out of the three or four hats we had taken from the different scarecrows, we were enabled to make our Guy, a real, tall, steeple crowned one, such as we had seen on his head in the old

engravings in the History of England. As for a lantern, and a mask, and a bunch of matches, these were easily procured; and what with the bits of red and yellow cloth we had cut into stars, and medals, why we made such a grand, military, fierce looking Guy, that as old Dame Pindar once said, "She should not like to meet him walking along the lane that led to her cottage on a dark night, without her Lance was with her." He wanted neither for wig, nor mustaches; and as for his coat, we covered every rent which the wind and the rain had made in the corn-field, with gaudy decorations, made, when nothing better could be had, of richly-coloured paper. Then when we had finished him, and mounted him on the chair, what running there was to and fro, to fetch this and that farmer to look! and proud we were when their wives came, and brought their children, and held them up at arm's length, while we pointed out the stiffness of his white paper collar, and the frill that stood out at the front of his coat, which even the little knock-kneed tailor said was a capital fit, considering we had only straw and hay to make him from. What running in and out of the barn there was with the lantern to show our Guy to every new comer! what talk about the coming morrow! what reluctance to go to bed, and when once there, what difficulty there was to go to sleep! We never dreamed of any body breaking open the barn or granary door, to steal a few quarters of corn; but we had our fears that robbers might come in the night and carry off our Guy, for that we knew would be something worth stealing; and many a time did we get up and look out during the night, and with the first streak of morning light, bound down, too impatient to even unlock the door, but peeping through the crevice, with beating heart, were glad to find that he was still there.

Then the journeys we had to take to the great farmhouses, which were scattered here and there about the fields! the difficulty we had to get him over the stiles! the dignity with which

we bore him into the farmyard! and the jealous watch we kept whilst refreshing ourselves in the huge kitchen, for fear any one should run away with him! Ay! those were something like Guy Fawkes days, for we knew every farmer we visited; and in every house found a warm welcome; and the old grandmother would rise from her wicker-chair, beside the ingle, and take her horn-tipped staff in her hand, and give her spectacles an extra rub as she went out to take a survey; while she told us what Guys she had seen fifty years ago, and what a holiday the Fifth of November was then, when every body, who had any religion at all, went to church in the morning, and helped to burn Guy Fawkes at night; and how the old parish-clerk composed a new psalm for that day, as he thought the old one was not good enough; and that when he got up to give it out, none of them could sing for laughing, as he had made the last line much too short, and to eke it out was compelled to say,—

“’Twas on this day, this very day,
When villains did conspire,
To blow up the House of Parliament,
With gun-de-pow-de-hire.”

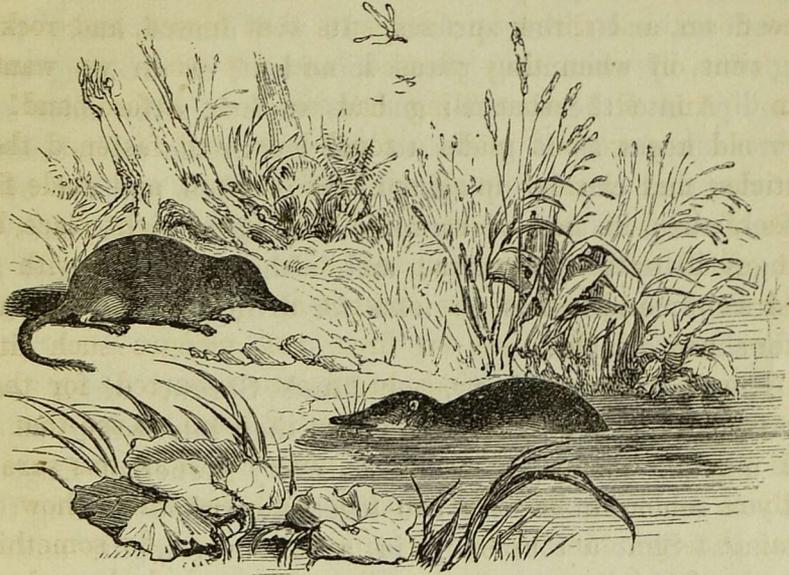
What a glorious night it was! what torches we had made! what grease and tar we had preserved for the occasion! what old rope was lighted, that but for the colour of the tar, looked very much like new! And all round the village-green, the bonfire flashed, dancing in golden rays upon the windows, and lighting up the tall trees, and throwing out many a white-washed wall and thatched outhouse, which on other nights slept in deep shadow; and oh! what secret hoards of fuel were from time to time brought out, which had been hidden for weeks between the hollows of hay-stacks, and in dry barns, and sheds, which stood out in the fields: many a paling that had hung loose beside a garden, and many a stake and post, that had once done service by gate or hedge, were sily shoved under the burning pile, white ones coloured black, and black

white, and so changed and chopped, that even the very owners, who looked on, were unable to recognise them. Then there were the different kinds of crackers to let off—those which we threw down, and threw up; serpents that hissed, and rockets that went off when they pleased, and not when we wanted them. And oh! what filing had we done before-hand! in every old key we had made a touch-hole, and fastened them on sticks; and cleaned up all our brass cannon, and made fireworks of our own, that never would light at the right place, but went off all over at once, causing us to jump again with astonishment; and sometimes one got an eyebrow singed, and another had his hair set on fire; yet, maugre such little accidents as these, no serious harm ever occurred, for there were generally a few older heads near at hand, to see that we did not go far wrong. Poor old Sammy Sprintall was sure to be there smoking his pipe, and I well remember how we managed to get him to lay his pipe down, and do something at the bonfire for us; we took up his pipe, and placing tobacco at the bottom, and a small portion of gunpowder in the middle, over which tobacco was again crammed, how we watched him light it, and beheld him smoking away, until the ash burnt down to the powder, when bang it went, splitting the pipe-head into shivers, and fortunately doing him no harm; nor have I forgotten the thrashing the boy received who did it, and how grave we all looked, when told that it might have burst in old Sammy's face, and either cut or blinded him for ever. But we had never thought of this, and it was only afterwards that we saw how wrong we had acted. Such was our Guy Fawkes day in the country, nearly a quarter of a century ago; but a great change has taken place of late, and bonfires are now forbidden; and, perhaps, in another century or two, the cry will no longer be heard of,

“Please to remember,
The fifth of November.”

THE WATER SHREW.

If we keep a sharp look out, whilst wandering beside some large pond, we may chance to see the



LAND AND WATER SHREW;

the latter of which is a most beautiful little animal, with its back as black and glossy as velvet, while underneath, it is a clean, clear white. Look at its sharp snout, and long whiskers, and broad feet, so admirably adapted for swimming! You should see its back sometimes in the water, looking as if it was covered all over with transparent pearls; then, in an instant, as smooth and dry as if it had never wetted a single hair. Its motions are very graceful whilst diving and swimming, appearing at the top one moment, and seeming to oar itself along by its hinder feet, the tail extending out like a rudder, and turning every way as it turns, now here, now there; snatching at one moment some little insect from a floating leaf, then plunging under water and seeking its prey amongst the aquatic weeds at the bottom. When danger is at hand, it either runs into the hole

in the bank, and enters its little nest; or dives to the bottom for safety, where it cannot, however, remain long: and, by watching narrowly, you are sure to see its sharp snout appear again on the surface. It will amuse itself, for a long time, by swimming round some leaf, or drooping spray, that dips into the stream; and its smooth, silky sides seem to broaden out as it glides to and fro in the most beautiful attitudes that can be imagined. It is often pursued by the weasel, when, instead of running into its nest for safety, it plunges beneath the water; and, although the weasel is a good swimmer, he has no taste for diving, and so the little water-shrew escapes.

The Common Shrew, or Land Shrew, which every country-boy is familiar with, is another interesting object; and may be met with in almost every corner of England; and you seldom meet with two together, without finding them fighting. Shut a couple up in a box over night, and you will invariably discover, next morning, that one has killed and nearly eaten up the other. It is a great destroyer of insects and worms; and, if you look at its sharp-pointed nose, you will see how well it is adapted for rooting up the earth in search of its prey. Pretty and clean as it looks, and really is, it has, in spite of its pleasing appearance, a most disagreeable smell, strong and rank, and such as no one would like to have a house perfumed with; the very mustiest of all objectionable musks; so bad, indeed, that, although cats will kill them readily enough, they will not eat them. Some naturalists believe that the common shrew is eagerly devoured by the mole, and that wherever a colony of moles pitch their encampment, if the neighbourhood has before been infested by the shrew-mouse, one is seldom to be seen after the moles have burrowed there. This poor harmless animal was looked upon with great horror by our forefathers: they believed that if a little shrew-mouse only ran over their feet, it produced lame-

ness; and Gilbert White, in his "History of Selbourne," says:—"At the south corner of the playground, near the church, there stood, about twenty years ago (seventy now), a very old ash-tree, which had been pollard, that is, the top branches had been chopped off; and this tree was called the Shrew-ash." Now a Shrew-ash is a tree whose twigs, or branches, when applied to cattle, was believed to give ease to the pains any animal might suffer from the shrew-mouse having run over the parts supposed to have been infected; for our forefathers were so foolish that they believed if the poor harmless shrew ran over the leg of a horse, cow, or sheep, the animal so run over, would lose the use of the leg the poor mouse had been so unfortunate as to run over. Well, to prevent, or cure, this dreaded complaint, they bored a large hole into the ash tree, beside the playground, and into this hole they put a little shrew-mouse alive!!! then plugged up the hole again, leaving the poor harmless thing to die in the dark hole they had bored and plugged up in the ash. Was not this a cruel deed and a foolish act? to think that poor little shrew-mouse could impart any virtue, or charm, or healing power, to the twigs of that old ash; or that such a small creature could do any more harm to a horse, or a cow, or a man, by running over their legs, than a fly would had it settled down on the same place! Fancy our silly old great-great-grandfathers, with their spectacles on, gathered round a great tree, to see a poor little inoffensive mouse shoved into a hole, and buried alive there, and they foolishly believing that the twigs would afterwards cure cramp, lameness, and almost "all the ills that flesh is heir to!" One can almost fancy that these simpletons chanted some such rhyme as the following:—

ON BURYING A SHREW-MOUSE ALIVE.

Poor little shrew, we confess it's very cruel,
To put thee in a hole so cold, and dark, and damp;
It will save us, dear mouse, from taking so much gruel:
Our lameness it will cure, and take away the cramp.

AUTUMN.

CHORUS.

Dear shrew-mouse ! save us from lumbago,
From hot fever, and the chilling ague ;
We look up to thee, buried in the tree,
To deliver us from all the diseases that there be.

GRAND CHORUS.

Twiddle-dum, twiddle-dee, we look up to thee,
Whom we bury alive in the gray old ash-tree.

In the early Autumn mornings, when we go out a shearing,
We shall very often wonder if thou art within hearing ;
And if we cannot see thee we shall still make our bow,
And consign to thy keeping each horse, sheep, and cow.

CHORUS.

The geese upon the common, the fowls around the house,
We leave to thy care, dear little shrew-mouse ;
Should gaffer or gammer be struck with cold or damp, }
We look up to thee to take away the cramp.

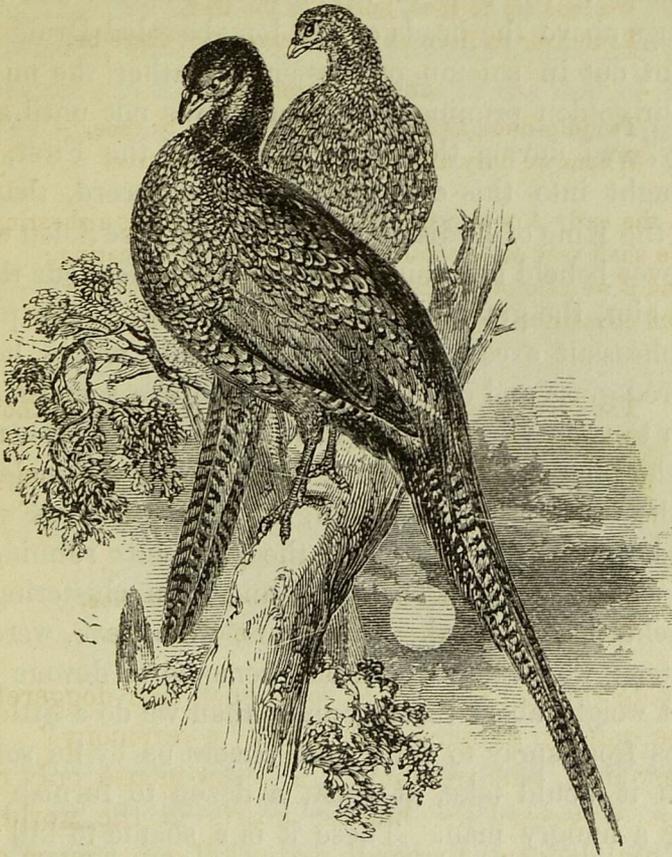
GRAND CHORUS.

Tweedle-dum, tweedle-dee, we look up to thee,
Whom we bury alive in the gray old ash-tree.

Now do you not think that some such like doggerel rhyme would be quite in keeping with so silly a ceremony ? And yet these very men, who trembled if a shrew-mouse only ran over their legs, possessed the bravest hearts in the world, in the midst of real dangers ; though they shook if only a raven croaked, yet they would march up to the point of a spear ; and cared no more for a drawn sword than they did for a straw. Such were among the superstitions of a by-gone age, when there were but few books ; when not one in a hundred could either read or write ; for many of you will remember that several of the great Barons who signed Magna Charta had to make a cross, so, **X**, because they could not write their names ; and yet these men were the owners of castles, which were surrounded with parks and forests, and filled with herds of deer.

THE PHEASANT.

There are but few birds, that frequent our old English woods, more beautiful than the



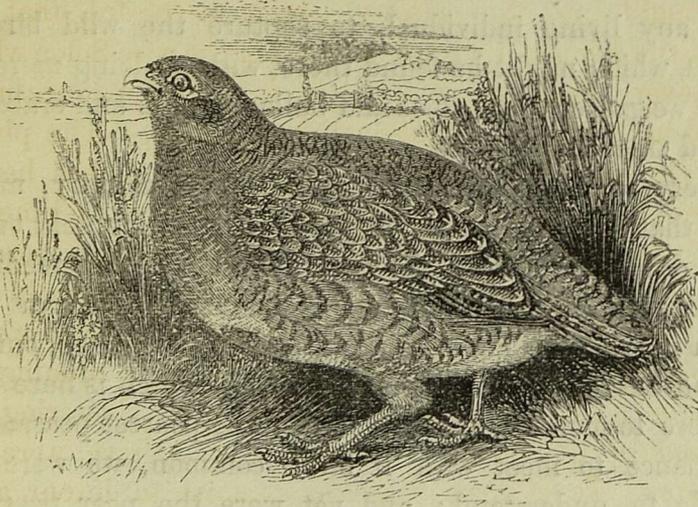
PHEASANT,

which, when full grown, is nearly a yard in length. It is almost impossible to describe the rich colours of its plumage, for we see there crimson, and gold, and green, and blue, and violet, all crossed, and barred, and flecked with brown and black, so beautifully blended together, that in some parts it is almost impossible to distinguish one hue from another. There is a look of majesty about this splendid bird as it is seen perched upon some bough, mingling its rich plumage with the variegated

foliage of Autumn. The pheasant is not a native of our old English forests, like the hawks and owls, that preyed and hooted there in the time of the ancient Britons, and flapped their wings above the heads of the long-bearded Druids, when they went out in solemn procession to gather the mistletoe, with their golden pruning-forks; for it was not until a much later day, and during the reign of Edward the First, that it was brought into this country. It is on record, that when Croesus, the King of Lydia, demanded of the wise Solon whether he had ever beheld any thing equal to the splendour that surrounded him, the grave philosopher answered, "The plumage of the pheasant excels it all." The female makes her nest of withered grass and dry leaves, in which she sometimes lays from ten to twenty eggs. We have frequently discovered the nest of the pheasant through the loud crowing the male makes during the breeding season; and, in many preserves we have wandered through, we have seen the pheasants running about as thick as poultry in a farmyard, and even clustering about the gamekeeper to be fed. Pheasants, we believe, were made to be eaten: we sit down with less remorse to devour a great bird that weighs about three pounds, than we do a little thing, that hops from spray to spray, and cheers us by its song, and of which it would take, at least, a dozen to furnish a good meal for a hungry man. These it is a shame to kill; but a fine, plump pheasant, a goose, a duck, a turkey, or a fowl, we would sit down to without any more scruple of conscience than we would to a sweet little sucking-pig; consoling ourselves, like the inimitable Charles Lamb, while eating it, by thinking that it could never grow up and become a large, dirty hog, and go grunting and rooting about in every corner it could find. Many well-meaning people think it a sin to kill or eat any living thing—we belong not to that number—for we have the authority of Holy Writ to prove that these creatures were sent for the use of man.

THE PARTRIDGE.

The Partridge is another plump, beautiful, little bird, that helps itself to all within reach, and gets fat as fast as it can, by devouring the corn in harvest-time, as if it had a kind of intuitive knowledge, that its fate would at last be to feed man, so saw no reason why it should not partake of the best of the corn, as well as he did. Wherever cultivation spreads, there the



PARTRIDGE

is to be found; for, like the farmyard poultry, it seems to know that its habitation is near the abode of man, for it is neither adapted for prey nor flight, but by its gregarious habits, and half-domesticated manner, seems marked out as the food and property of man. Cruelty we abominate, as much as we do that maudlin mercy, which marks down a butcher as the chief of sinners, and considers it a crime to take away the life of either beast, bird, or fish. Lovers, as we are, of every thing beautiful in creation, we have none of those milk and water sympathies, which cause us to feel remorse after dining off a stuffed pheasant, or devouring a plump, well-fed partridge at a meal. Neither do we consider those laws just, which make these birds the property of the

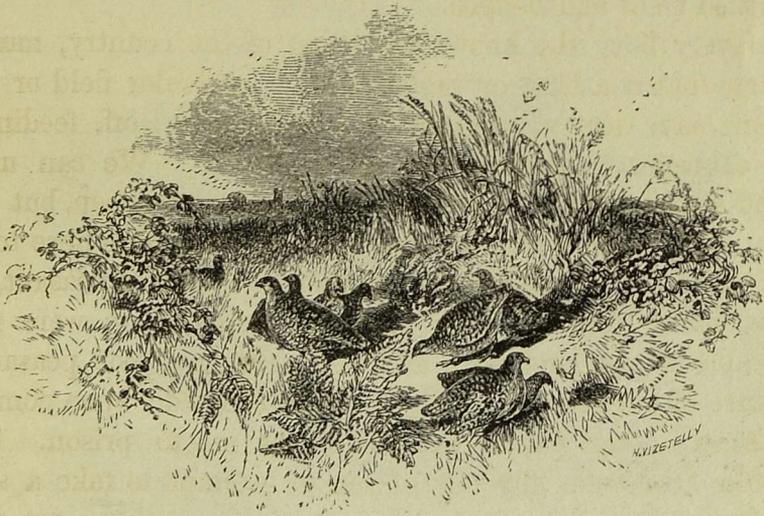
rich alone—not that we think any man has a right to trespass upon private preserves, any more than he has to enter a garden or an orchard, and help himself to the fruit; but wherever these birds are to be met with, on the open heath, or the wide common, in fields through which ancient footways go winding along—the old free pathways which our forefathers have for ages trod—surely it would neither be robbing nor impoverishing any living individual, to capture the wild birds, or animals, which might be found there, without doing more harm than if we gathered the sloes and bullaces, nuts and crabs, from the wild trees and hedges.

Every boy, who knows any thing of the country, must be aware, that if a hare or rabbit is in a particular field or wood on one day, it may by night be a mile or two off, feeding on the cabbages in some poor man's garden. We can understand a man laying claim to a pig, an ox, or a sheep, but what right he has to a wild animal, or a bird, which is here to-day, and there to-morrow, any more than the poorest peasant, who may chance to meet with it on a common, we were never yet able to understand; and yet were the poor peasant to capture either the one or the other on the wide, open common, he must either pay a heavy fine, or go to prison. Sorry should I be were any one of you to attempt to take a single head of game; for, as the law now stands, such an act would bring you into trouble, and unjust as I consider the game law, whilst it exists it must be obeyed. My object is to show you, that beautiful as are our English laws, they are still capable of amendment; and that, although compiled by wise and learned men, like all other human institutions, they yet remain imperfect.

But I was telling you before I entered into this long digression, about the partridge, which is a very cunning bird, and will frequently squat so close, that it will trust to your passing its covert before it arises, although you are within a foot or two

YOUNG PARTRIDGES.

of its hiding place. The female makes but a slovenly nest, in which she lays from twelve to twenty eggs, which are of a light brown colour; and so close does the old bird sit on the eggs while she is hatching, that one gentleman records an incident, to which he was an eye-witness, where he saw the partridge taken, with her nest and eggs, and carried in a hat to some distance, without attempting to make her escape; and that even when the nest was put in a safe place, she still continued to sit, and there brought up her young. There are few prettier sights than a

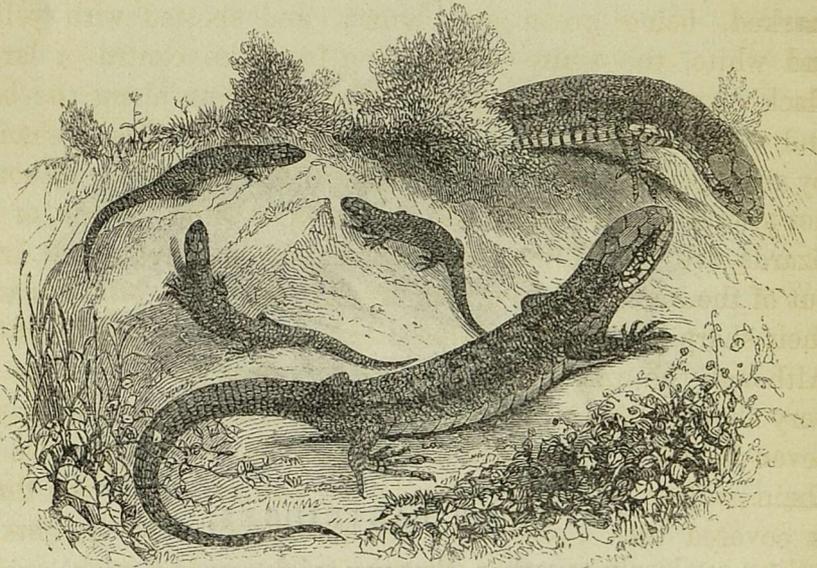


COVEY OF PARTRIDGES,

nestling so closely together, that you might cover them all with a handkerchief; and you never heard such a “whirring” and rushing sound as they make, when they all rise together on the wing. The favourite food of the young partridges is ants’ eggs; and the old ones lead them to the ant-hills as soon as they are able to peck. The plumage is subject to great change, and will, at times, vary from brown to a deep cream-colour, and this change is most visible about the breeding season. The young birds can run as soon as they are hatched, and

have frequently been seen with part of the shell sticking to them. Some sportsmen say that when the female is started from her nest, she will hop away as if she were wounded, or her wings broken, so that she may draw off the attention of the enemy from her brood, by leading him to suppose how easily she may be captured. The same cunning is also attributed to the peewit.

Having told you a deal about frogs and toads in my description of Summer, so shall I now endeavour to make you acquainted with another class of English reptiles, beginning with the



LIZARDS,

or the land crocodiles, as they are called by boys in the country. The Common Lizard is a beautiful creature, and may often be found on heaths and sunny banks, turning its little head round the instant it sees an insect, which it springs upon in a moment; and, when once it is between its sharp teeth, it may bid good-bye to the sunshine, for it is soon swallowed by the lizard. You would be astonished to see how quick

THE LIZARD.

it can run along a smooth, level footpath; and you will think it strange when I tell you, that the female lays her eggs in a hole, which she makes in the sand, and, covering them up again, leaves them to be hatched by the heat of the sun. But this, I must tell you, is only the case with the sand-lizard; for there are other species which bring forth their young alive; and, sometimes, you may see several together, for the old one is frequently followed by five or six of her young ones, which, like the peewits I before spoke of, are able to run about almost as soon as they are brought to life. Many of the lizards are very beautifully marked, being green and brown, and spotted with yellow and white, the white often rising from the centre of larger black spots, which run in a continuous line along the back and sides: and, what is very singular, if the lizard chances by any accident, to lose its tail, it grows again, although not always to the length which it was at first. Some of the lizards are very tame, and may be made to eat and drink out of the hand; while others, again, will try to bite you with their sharp teeth, and will speedily die if they are not liberated. Although the lizard can run along at a good pace, its legs are very short: the whole length of the lizard varies from five to seven inches. The under part of a lizard much resembles the chain armour which was worn by the barons of old: the throat is covered with scales, like the gorget worn by knights in battle; the under part of the forefeet is marked with smaller scales, such as we see on the armour of the arms; while all along, up to the hind feet, bears no bad resemblance to the hauberk, or shirt of mail, which covered the body: and who can tell but what some cunning armourer, of the olden time, may have made many improvements on the linked mail, through having narrowly observed the plated and scaly body of the lizard? You may often see them basking on a sunny bank, fast asleep; but, on the least alarm, they are off in an instant;

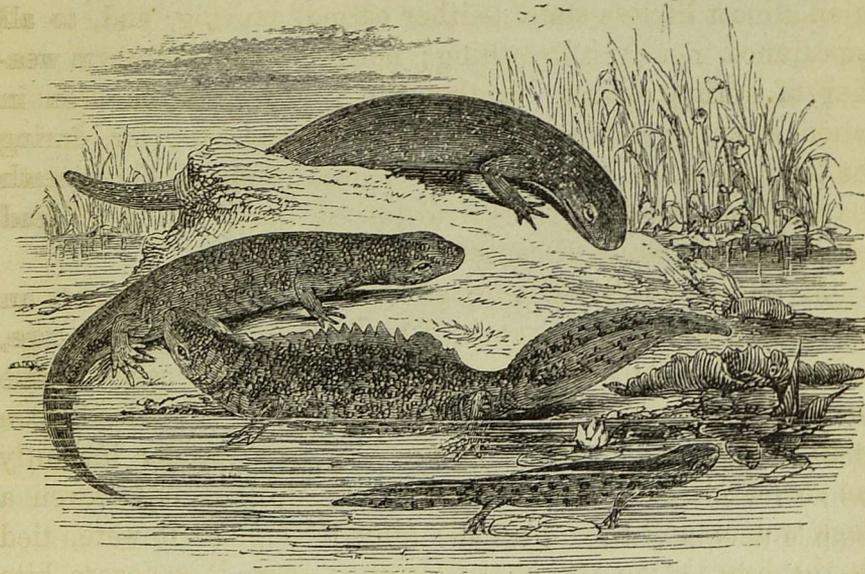
and, unless the spot where you discover them should chance to be open, you may hunt in vain for hours, without being able to find out their hiding-place. The blood of the lizard, like that of other reptiles, is cold; and it passes the whole of the winter in an almost lifeless state, neither eating, moving, and, to all appearance, not even breathing; nor is it until the warm weather of spring approaches that the lizard is again seen in action, seeming then as if restored to a new life: for, during the long winter, it has never once moved from its hole beneath the bank or under the tree, or disturbed the covering of dead leaves beneath which it concealed itself.

Mr. Bell, in his "History of British Reptiles," relates an interesting anecdote of a green lizard which he kept in a cage, and fed with flies and other insects. Into this cage he one day placed a large garden spider, which the lizard darted upon in an instant, and seized it by the leg. The spider instantly ran round and round the lizard's mouth, until it had woven a thick web around both its jaws: after having, as it were, tied up the lizard's mouth, the spider then gave it a severe bite upon the lip; as if to say, "There, take that for meddling with my leg." The spider was removed, and the web taken off; and, in a few days after, the lizard died, although, up to the time that the spider bit it, it had appeared in a perfectly healthy state.

Another class of reptiles, not much unlike the lizard in appearance, are Water-newts, or, as called by the country people, Efts, and which, like the frogs, are mostly found in the water, or running about amongst the shrubs and plants which grow in the banks, or beside moist and damp places. The newt lives upon water-insects and worms; and hundreds of young frogs and toads are devoured by these reptiles in the tadpole state, which I have before given you a description of; and, when there is nothing else to be had, the largest species of newt eat up the smaller ones, especially the warty newt, which

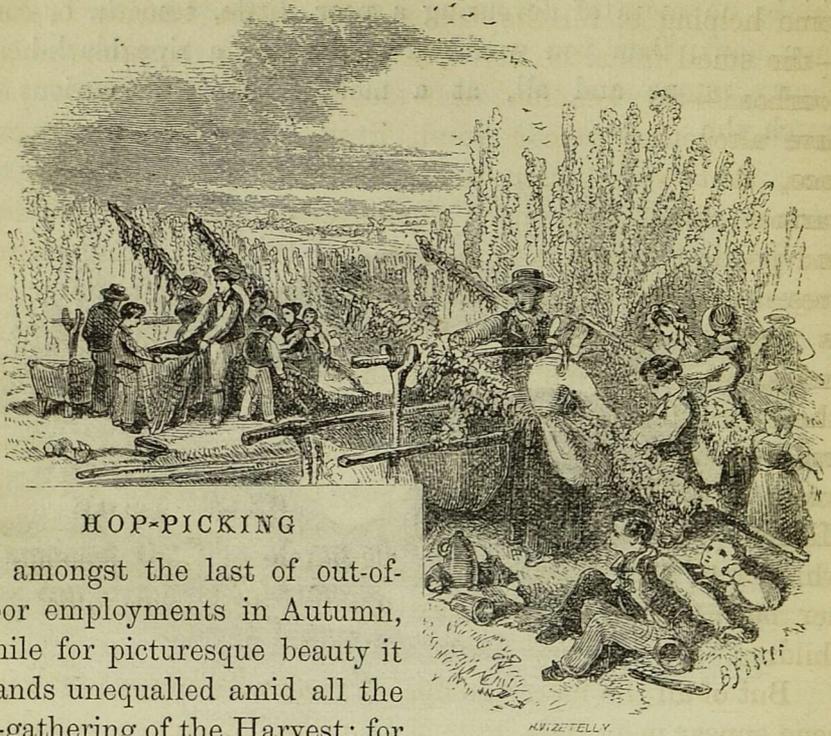
NEWTS.

thinks no more of devouring a poor, little, smooth, or common newt, than you would of swallowing a ripe black-heart cherry, stone and all, at a mouthful. It is curious to watch the



NEWTS

swimming about in the water, steering wherever they please by the aid of their tail, while their legs are turned backward, just as a good swimmer turns his hands while throwing the water behind him. Nor is this all: they can just as well walk at the bottom of the water as either you or I can on dry land. The newts lay their eggs on the leaf of some water-plant, which they first fold together by the means of their hinder feet; and to this leaf the egg is as securely fastened as if a joiner had stuck it on with some of his strongest glue. The newt is much smaller than the lizard; for the smooth kind, which abound in almost every pond or ditch, are seldom found to be much more than three inches in length, and they nearly attain their full growth during the first year. The young newt is able to swim as soon as it issues from the egg.



HOP-PICKING

is amongst the last of out-of-door employments in Autumn, while for picturesque beauty it stands unequalled amid all the in-gathering of the Harvest; for there are but few scenes more pleasant to look upon than a hop-plantation, with its tall poles covered with broad, vine-shaped leaves, and hung every way with the graceful bunches of pale, gold-coloured cones, from which arise such a delightful aroma, that it is like sniffing the air in some green old forest on a sunshiny day in Spring, where every tree is throwing out its gummy odours. Yet how different to any forest is that spacious hop-ground: there is no tangling underwood beneath the embowering leaves, neither trailing bramble, nor armed gorse; but all below is clear as a garden walk, and all above green, and golden, and beautiful; where tendril leaf and bunch, curl, and spread, and droop, in a thousand pleasing and fanciful forms. Then to see the hop-pickers sitting or standing in picturesque groups: some stripping the bine, others laden with the poles, which are garlanded all over with leaves and bunches,

HOP-PICKING.

some helping to fill the hop-pockets, others bearing baskets—the smell from the drying-kiln perfuming the whole neighbourhood—the laughter, the singing, and the merry jest, have altogether such a rural, lively, and cheerful appearance, that we question if the far-famed grape-gathering in warmer climes, and under sunnier skies, has a more pleasing and poetical appearance, than an English hop-picking picture presents! What a gipsy-like look there is about the scene, as they collect together into little groups to prepare their meals, while the pot is suspended from three stout poles, where it simmers and sings, as if keeping time to the crackling of the blazing wood-fire, and the clatter of the merry voices, which are seldom silent; then the eye agreeably alights upon patches of white in the back ground of the scene, which tell, that some poor fond mother, in the midst of all her business, has found time to wash a few things for her children.

But of all the merry groups we meet with on the highways, none appear more light-hearted than the hop-pickers returning home: every little knot would make a picture, and there an artist would find every variety of costume, saving the last fashion. Men, women, and children pass along the road, clothed in old, weather-stained garments, which look as if they had stood the wear and tear of many a hop-gathering: one carries a kettle, another an iron-pot, a third a bundle; and we have even seen the little crib for the baby borne along on the head of one of the larger children; for it would not be left at home, nor would the mother have been comfortable without it, nor have sung so cheerfully, in spite of all her poverty, while at work in the hop-grounds. And often would she leave her work, and run to peep at that little face in the cradle, upon which the shadows of the leaves flickered as they waved to and fro in the autumnal sunshine. Even from London do children accompany their parents in

these hop excursions; and you marvel however those little legs can carry them there and back again, all the way from Maidstone, or Canterbury, to the borough of Southwark. Yet they will reach there somehow, pots, pans, kettles, bundles and all; for it is wonderful what a space of ground they get over by night, although their pace scarcely exceeds two miles an hour; and there is always some comfortable lodging-house which can accommodate them for one night, should those who have children not be able to accomplish the whole distance in a long, long day.

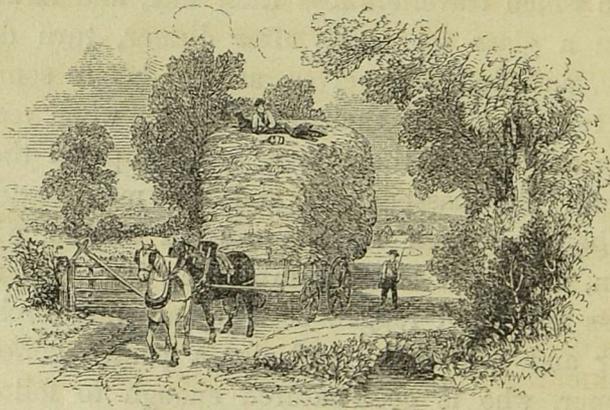
If you wish to inhale the true odour of the hop, rub a bunch of the cones through your hands. Oh, what a flavour you will inhale! and even your fingers will be stained with the yellow hue of the bines. Hops are supposed to have been used in brewing as early as the time of Henry VII., and probably much earlier, although they were not brought into general use until the reign of Henry VIII., or Elizabeth; not that I should imagine England was ever without the hop, as it is still found wild in a variety of places. In former days the young shoots of the wild hop used to be sold in the markets, and boiled and eaten with meat, like other vegetables.

Ale, you must remember, was the favourite beverage in those days, amongst all classes, who could either afford to brew or purchase it, for neither tea, coffee, nor chocolate were then known in England. Even the ladies at Court looked as regularly for their broiled beef-steak and flagon of ale at breakfast, as we do now for our bread-and-butter, or tea and coffee: and Tusser, an old verse-maker, recommends the thrifty housewife to boil her meat overnight, that her servants might have the broth next morning to breakfast. They used to kill the cattle in autumn, in those days, and salt them for the winter's provision. They did this in order to save the food which the cattle would have required to keep them throughout the dead season of the year. Salt fish was also laid

up in pea-straw for winter's consumption; and, when it was very hard or dry, they used to beat it with a mallet, or a rolling-pin, before the fish was broiled; and I have no doubt but that many of you have heard the old saying of "beaten like a stockfish."

Our next step will conduct us into the land of Winter, for the naked trees, and the old nests, which we see amid the branches, the absence of the flowers, and the shortness of the days, all warn us that the season of storm, and sleet, and frost, and snow is at hand. We hear the busy flail in the barn, as the thrasher pursues his heavy task, from morning to night, surrounded by the whole family of fowls, who are busy rummaging amongst the straw, and sometimes approach so near the thrasher's flail, that we marvel they are not knocked on the head. In the farmyard we see the cattle standing knee-deep in straw, as if wondering where all the sweet, green grass, and summer flowers, had gone; and seeming to tell each other by their expressive looks, that they do not like the choking, chopped-straw, and dry hay, at all, and care not how soon they are once more hoof-deep in the rich clover pastures. We have now rainy days, and foggy nights, that come so thick, and so suddenly over the landscape, we can scarcely see our hand before us: fogs that spread over the fields like a great sea, and in which travellers lose their way, and farmers, who have taken a glass too much after dinner, turn down the wrong lane, and find themselves, at last, before some house, a mile or two away from their own homes; when vessels run foul of one another in the rivers, and lamps in the streets only bewilder the passengers; and old men cough dreadfully, as they pass each other, while old women, with their heads down, bob their bonnets into one's face, and then say, "Lor, bless me!" and ragged boys buy a penny torch, dipped well in tar and turpentine, and, for a penny, suffocate any foot-passenger, who is good-natured enough to follow them.

But the greatest wonder of Autumn, is the number of birds that both leave, and return, to our country: we miss many a sweet songster, that used to warble in our summer walks, and, in place of these, we behold many a strange bird, perched upon the naked boughs: the snipe, and the fieldfare, and the woodcock; and in the marshes, and beside the rivers, we meet with every variety of waterfowl, which have come many a weary mile to winter with us, from the northern climates, as our summer birds do from the south in spring, to build and rear their young in our green woods, and pleasant hedgerows. Such cattle as remain in the fields huddle together for warmth, turning their backs to the wind and rain, and hanging their heads down as if they did not at all like such a change; but wishing that it were either colder or warmer, so that they might either be comfortably housed in their stalls, or be again nibbling at the summer-grass—any thing rather than starving upon this neutral ground of the year. The holly and ivy appear to have a greener look now, and as they attract our attention in the woods and hedgerows, we begin to think that merry Christmas is drawing near, with all its holidays, sports, and pastimes, and our next book will find us in the midst of them all.



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