of their poetry and their chronicles. In course of time, this excellence was rumoured abroad, and the skalds, or bards of Iceland, were invited to foreign courts. The princes of England, Ireland, Sweden, Denmark and Norway, after entertaining them most honourably, dismissed them with wealth. "Thus," says Dr. Holland, "literature became with the Icelanders a species of commerce, in which the fruit of their mental endowment was exchanged for those foreign luxuries or comforts which nature had denied to them from their own soil *." As fishermen, the Icelanders were bold sailors; seamen were necessary to carry the skalds to the distant courts, and in this service their nautical skill was enlarged. Soon after, traders went in the train of the poets, and thus obtained for the island the advantages of an increased and increasing foreign commerce.

In the year 1000, these interesting people were converted to Christianity. About fifty years after, their first bishop founded their first school or college, and then the Roman alphabet was substituted for the rude and defective Runic characters. Three other schools soon followed, and the monasteries, which were now first erected, were so many places of education. During the latter half of the eleventh and the whole of the twelfth century, the Latin classics were diligently taught in these seminaries; and some of the poor, remote Icelanders even studied Greek. The mechanical sciences, mathematics, and astronomy, of which they felt the want in proportion as they extended their maritime adventures, were also cultivated with assiduity.

In the middle of the thirteenth century, numerous jealousies and dissensions having broken out among the chief aristocratic families, the island was, by agreement, transferred to the Norwegian Kings. In 1380, Norway itself ceased to be an independent kingdom: it was annexed to Denmark, and Iceland went with it. Both these transfers seem to have been effected without any violent shock, and to have produced few and very slight changes in the laws and government of the country. It was owing to circumstances entirely foreign to these political changes that Iceland lost her literary supremacy, which had been almost a monopoly in the north of Europe. The fact was simply this,—other countries had awakened from their sleep of barbarism, and begun to cultivate letters and sciences.

In 1402, a dreadful plague carried off two-thirds of the inhabitants of Iceland; this calamity was followed by a winter so severe, that not one-tenth part of their cattle survived it, and this loss again was followed by the depredations of certain barbarous English pirates. There was a consequent depression both in the moral and physical state of these unfortunate islanders, but neither then nor at any other period did they relapse into indolence and ignorance.

They struggled manfully with the evils that beset them, persevering in an enlightened system of internal policy, in liberal methods of education, and in a quiet, steady line of moral, blameless conduct.

The Icelanders received their first printing press in 1530, and the reformation of their religion soon followed its introduction. Their types were at first made of wood, and very rudely formed. In 1574, one of their bishops made great improvements in the printing establishment, providing new presses and types, some of which he made with his own hands. Before the conclusion of the sixteenth century, many valuable books, well printed, were published and sold through the country.

The rough, unpromising coasts of the island continued to be visited by pirates. As late as 1616 they suffered much from certain English and French freebooters, who must indeed have been monsters to plunder a people at once so poor and so inoffensive. A still heavier calamity befell them in 1627, when some Algerines found their way to this remote island, and landing on the southern coast, committed the greatest atrocities. This is one of the saddest pages in the history of the simple, yet enlightened Icelanders. Forty or fifty of them were butchered, and nearly four hundred of both sexes were carried off to the Mediterranean and sold as slaves. Nine years after, when the King of Denmark obtained their liberty by ransom, only thirty-seven of the four hundred were found alive, and of these thirty-seven only thirteen ever reached their native land.

In Iceland the eighteenth century was ushered in by a dreadful mortality from small-pox, and about fifty years later, above ten thousand deaths were occasioned by a famine. In 1783, volcanic eruptions, more terrific than had ever been seen, burst out in every direction. Deep rivers were filled up by lava; the cattle and the pastures were every where destroyed, and for more than a year a dense cloud of smoke and volcanic ashes covered the whole of the island. Even the sea was contaminated; the fisheries were destroyed, nor have they yet entirely recovered from the effects of those mighty convulsions. Famine and the small-pox following in the track of this desolation, destroyed a fourth part of the population. The island had scarcely begun to breathe from these calamities, when, as a dependence of Denmark, it found itself involved in the miseries of the last war, and saw its commerce, now indeed limited, but absolutely necessary to the existence of its inhabitants, interrupted by the powerful navy of Great Britain.

To the honour of our government, they sent instructions to our cruizers to respect, and in no ways molest, the inhabitants of the Ferro Islands, who were in a situation even worse and more helpless than that of the Icelanders; at a later period they even granted licenses to ships to trade with Iceland.

Few countries have ever been visited by such a series of misfortunes as this, and yet between 1650 and 1810, Iceland produced from two to three hundred respectable authors.

[To be concluded in the next Number.]

* Inserted in Sir George Steuart Mackenzie's 'Travels in Iceland.'

THE MOCKING-BIRD.

(*Abridged from Wilson's 'American Ornithology.'*)

This celebrated and very extraordinary bird, which, in extent and variety of vocal powers, stands unrivalled by the whole feathered songsters of America or perhaps any other country, is peculiar to the New World; and inhabits a very considerable extent of both North and South America, having been traced from the States of New England to Brazil, and also among many of the adjacent islands. They are, however, much more numerous in those States south than those north of the river Delaware; being generally migratory in the latter, and resident (at least many of them) in the former. A warm climate, and low country not far from the sea, seems most congenial to their nature; the species are accordingly found to be less numerous to the west than east of the great range of Alleghany, in the same parallels of latitude. In these regions the berries of the red cedar, myrtle, holly, many species of smilax, together with gum berries, gall berries, and a profuse variety of others, abound, and furnish them with a perpetual feast. Winged insects also, of which they are very fond and very expert in catching, are there plentiful even in the winter season.

The precise time at which the mocking-bird begins to build his nest varies according to the latitude in which he resides, from the beginning of April to the middle of May. There are particular situations to which he gives the preference. A solitary thorn-bush, an almost

impenetrable thicket, an orange-tree, cedar, or holly-bush, are favourite spots and frequently selected. It is no great objection to the bird that a farm or mansion-house happens to be near; always ready to defend, but never over-anxious to conceal, his nest, he very often builds within a small distance of the house, and not unfrequently in a pear or apple-tree, rarely at a greater height than six or seven feet from the ground. The nest varies a little according to the conveniency of collecting suitable materials. Generally it is composed of, first, a quantity of dry twigs and sticks, then withered tops of weeds of the preceding year, intermixed with fine straw, hay, pieces of wool and tow; and, lastly, a thick layer of fine fibrous roots, of a light brown colour, lines the whole. The female sits fourteen days, and generally produces two broods in the season, unless robbed of her eggs, in which case she will even build and lay the third time. She is, however, very jealous of her nest, and very apt to forsake it if much disturbed.

During the period of incubation, neither cat, dog, animal nor man can approach the nest without being attacked. The cats, in particular, are persecuted whenever they make their appearance, till obliged to retreat. But his whole vengeance is more particularly directed against that mortal enemy of his eggs and young, the black snake. Whenever the insidious approaches of this reptile are discovered, the male darts upon it with the rapidity of an arrow, dexterously eluding its bite and striking it violently and incessantly about the head, where it is very vulnerable. The snake soon becomes sensible of its danger, and seeks to escape; but the intrepid defender of his young redoubles his exertions, and, unless his antagonist be of great magnitude, often succeeds in destroying him. All his pretended powers of fascination avail it nothing against the vengeance of this noble bird. As the snake's strength begins to flag, the mocking-bird seizes and lifts it up partly from the ground, beating it with its wings, and when the business is completed, he returns to the nest of his young, mounts the summit of the bush, and pours forth a torrent of song in token of victory.

The mocking-bird is 9½ inches long and 13 across when its wings are spread. Some individuals are, however, larger and some smaller, those of the first hatch being uniformly the largest. The upper parts of the head, neck, and back, are a dark brownish ash, and when new moulted, a fine light grey; the wings and tail are nearly black, the first and second rows of coverts tipped with white; the primary, in some males, are wholly white, in others tinged with brown. The three first primaries are white from their roots as far as their coverts; the white on the next six extends from an inch to one and three-fourths farther down, descending equally on each side the feather; the tail is cuneiform; the two exterior feathers wholly white, the rest, except the middle ones, tipped with white; the chin is white; sides of the neck, breast, belly, and vent, a brownish-white, much purer in wild birds than in those that have been domesticated; iris of the eye, yellowish-cream coloured, inclining to golden; bill black; the base of the lower mandible whitish; legs and feet black and strong. The female much resembles the male, and is only distinguishable by the white of her wings being less pure and broad, and her black feathers having a more rusty hue.

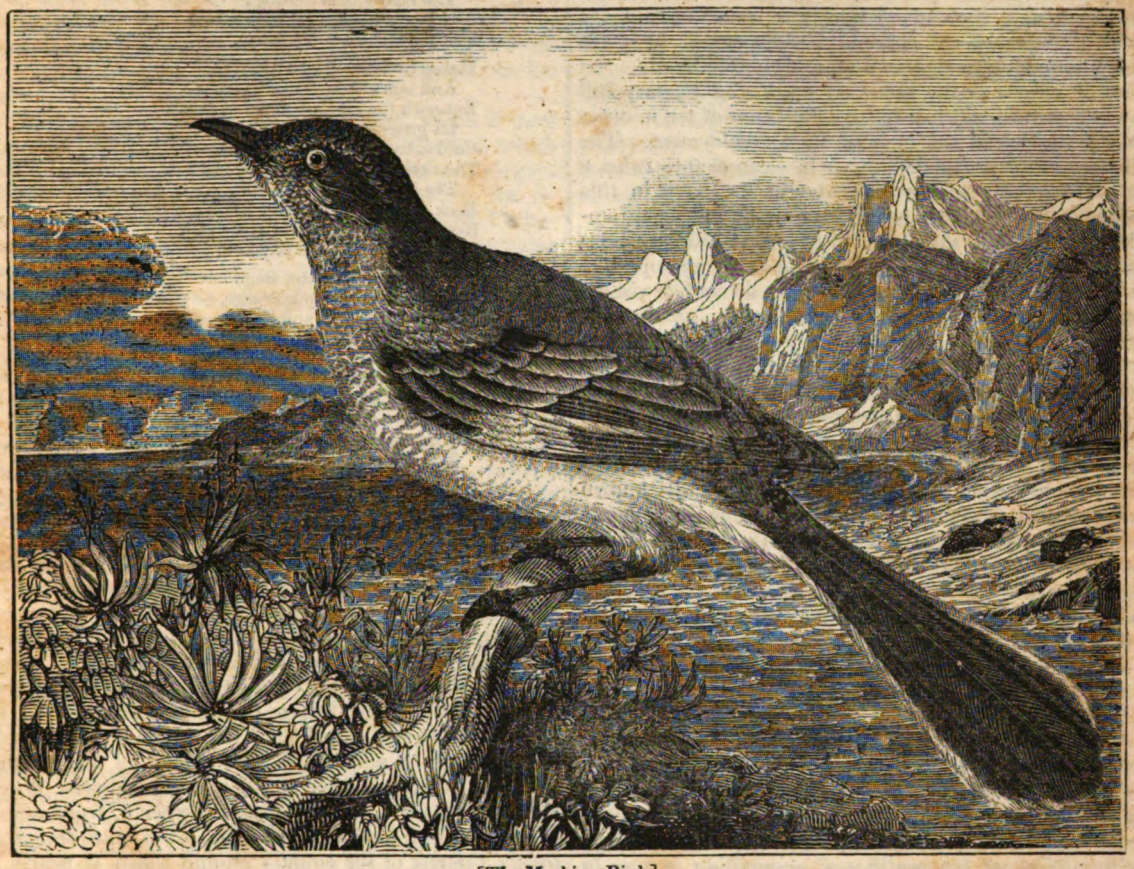
It will be seen from this description, that though the plumage of the mocking bird is none of the homeliest, it has nothing gaudy or brilliant in it; and, had he nothing else to recommend him, would scarcely entitle him to notice. But his figure is well proportioned and even handsome. The ease, elegance, and rapidity of his movements, the animation of his eye, and the intelligence he displays in listening and laying up lessons, from almost every species of the feathered creation within his hearing, are really surprising, and mark the peculiarity of his genius. To these qualities may be added that of a voice full, strong, and musical, and capable of almost every modulation, from the clear, mellow tones of the wood-thrush to the savage scream of the bald eagle. In measure and accent he faithfully follows his originals; in force and sweetness of expression he greatly improves upon them. In his native groves, mounted on the top of a tall bush or half-grown tree, in the dawn of the morning, while the woods are already vocal with a multitude of warblers, his admirable song rises pre-eminent over every competitor. The ear can listen to his music alone, to which that of all the others seems a mere accompaniment. Neither is his strain altogether imitative. His own native notes are bold and full, and varied seemingly beyond all limits. They consist of short expressions of two, three, or, at the most, five or six syllables, generally interspersed with imitations, and all of them uttered with great emphasis and rapidity, and continued with undiminished ardour for half an hour or an hour at a time. His expanded wings and tail, glistening with white, and the buoyant gaiety of his action, arresting the eye as his song most irresistibly does the ear, he sweeps round with enthusiastic ecstasy, and mounts and descends as his song swells or dies away. While thus exerting himself, a bystander, destitute of sight, would suppose that the whole feathered tribes had assembled together on a trial of skill, each striving to produce his utmost effect. He often deceives the sportsman, and sends him in search of birds that are not, perhaps, within miles of him, but whose notes he exactly imitates: even birds themselves are frequently imposed upon by this admirable mimic, and are decoyed by the fancied calls of their mates, or dive with precipitation into the depth of thickets at the scream of what they suppose to be the sparrow-hawk.

The mocking-bird loses little of the power and energy of his song by confinement. In his domesticated state, when he commences his career of song, it is impossible to stand by uninterested. He whistles for the dog; Cæsar starts up, wags his tail, and runs to meet his master. He squeaks out like a hurt chicken, and the hen hurries about with hanging wings and bristled feathers, chuckling to protect its injured brood. The barking of the dog, the mewing of the cat, the creaking of a passing wheelbarrow, follow with great truth and rapidity. He repeats the tune taught him by his master, though of considerable length, fully and faithfully;—he runs over the quaverings of the canary, and the clear whistlings of the Virginia nightingale, or red-bird, with such superior execution and effect that the mortified songsters feel their own inferiority, and become altogether silent, while he seems to triumph in their defeat by redoubling his exertions.

This excessive fondness for variety, however, in the opinion of some injures his song. His elevated imitations of the brown thrush are frequently interrupted by the crowing of cocks; and the warblings of the blue-bird, which he exquisitely manages, are mingled with the screaming of swallows or the cackling of hens. Amidst the simple melody of the robin one is suddenly surprised by the shrill reiterations of the whip-poor-will, while the notes of the kildeer, blue-jay, martin, baltimore, and twenty others, succeed, with such imposing reality, that the auditors look round for the originals, and with astonishment discover that the sole performer in this singular concert is the admirable bird now before us. During this exhibition of his powers, he spreads his wings, expands his tail, and throws himself around the cage in all the ecstasy of enthusiasm, seeming not only to sing but to dance, keeping time to the measure of his own music. Both in his native and domesticated state, during the stillness of the night, as soon as the moon

rises, he begins his delightful solo, making the whole neighbourhood resound with his inimitable medley.

The mocking-bird is frequently taken in trap-cages, and, by proper management, may be made sufficiently tame to sing. The usual price of a singing-bird is from seven to fifteen, and even twenty dollars. Mr. Wilson has known fifty dollars paid for a remarkably fine singer; and one instance where one hundred dollars were refused for a still more extraordinary one. Attempts have been made to induce these charming birds to pair, and rear their young in a state of confinement, and the result has been such as to prove it, by proper management, perfectly practicable.



[The Mocking-Bird.]

A WELL-CONDUCTED FACTORY.

(*From a Correspondent.*)

The general tenour of the evidence given before the Factory Commissioners goes to show that, although there may be great abuses in many establishments in which children are employed, extensive factories may, and do, exist where the light spirits of youth are still buoyant and unbroken by undue labour and restraint, and where the industry of the young not only contributes to the increase of our national wealth, but also to their own advantage. In many factories they are not only usefully employed, but, at the same time, are trained up in those habits of morality and good feeling which are most likely to ensure their own lasting happiness and to make them valuable members of society.

We have recently returned from visiting many such factories, and, among the rest, that of Mr. John Wood, jun., a stuff manufacturer of Bradford, in Yorkshire. We think it may do some good, in two ways, if we give a very slight sketch of what we there saw. Such an outline may serve to correct some of the prejudices which exist on the subject of factories generally, amongst those who have never visited the seats of our great manufactures; while those masters (we hope they are but few) who look only to the accumulation of money by the employment of children, may take shame to themselves when they find that the same object may be attained without injury to their health or morals.

In the manufactory of Mr. Wood about six hundred persons, principally girls, are employed. When we arrived it was the hour allotted to dinner and recreation; and the young people were joyously sporting in the open yard of the factory, like children out of school. After witnessing for some time this scene of unrestrained freedom from toil, the period for renewed industry arrived, and we were ushered into the mill. This we found as clean, as light, and as comfortable as a drawing-room, or rather as a series of drawing-rooms, for there are several floors filled with machinery. The children, in resuming their work, had not lost their cheerful look, but set about their tasks in a manner which proved that these were any thing but irksome to them. Seats are provided for the accommodation of the young folks when they are not actually employed, which state of leisure, from the nature of their occupation, very frequently occurs. The little work-people seemed quite delighted to see their employer; their faces brightened up, and their eyes sparkled as he came near and spoke to them; indeed he appeared to be more like a father among them, and an affectionate one too, than like a master; patting them on the head, chucking them under the chin, and addressing them according to their ages.

There is always a surplus number of children in the mill, in order that they may be sent by instalments to a school-room on the premises, where they learn to knit and to sew, as well as to read and to write. The reason given by their benevolent employer for having them taught knitting and needle-work shows how mindful he is of their future welfare. He had found that when girls, who had been employed from an early age in a mill,