

QUADRUPEDS:

OR,

OUTLINES OF A POPULAR HISTORY

OF

THE CLASS MAMMALIA;

WITH A PARTICULAR NOTICE OF THOSE MENTIONED IN SCRIPTURE.

LONDON:

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY;

Instituted 1799.

SOLD AT THE DEPOSITORY, 56, PATERNOSTER ROW, AND 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD;
AND BY THE BOOKSELLERS.

1840.

87 1272.

come out of its box, and frolic about its cage with surprising activity and address, its turns and evolutions being too rapid for the eye to follow. In the midst of an exhibition of this sort, it would suddenly stop and gaze at the bystander intently with its full black eyes, as if seeking to read the expression of his countenance, and then as suddenly resume its frolics. A favourite practice was to roll itself up in wool, with one eye peeping archly through a little aperture left for that purpose: if food was offered, it unrolled itself, and darted like an arrow towards it; or if a stranger presumed to put his fingers within the wires, it hastened to the attack, biting with its sharp but very small teeth. In their native woods the habits of these animals are chiefly nocturnal, and, like the Squirrel tribe in general, they store up provisions for winter. Their nests are built in trees with great ingenuity, and are capable of containing several individuals.

We shall detain our readers no longer with this interesting tribe, but proceed to select another genus, *Arctomys*, or the Marmots, containing several species, European as well as American; we shall, however, limit our observations to that which abounds in the elevated regions of Switzerland.

The ALPINE, or COMMON MARMOT, (*Arctomys Alpinus*,) is an animal by no means graceful or attractive in its appearance, its proportions being thick and clumsy, its limbs short, and its head large and flattened. Its movements are slow and void of ease, its step being plantigrade. Its disposition is timid and sluggish.

The incisor teeth of the Marmot are so strong, that it easily effects its escape from confinement if the cage be of wood, however stout, unless, indeed, it be lined with iron. Its fur is of a sprinkled grey colour, soft and woolly, with long silky hairs; the upper lip is cleft, the eyes are large, and the lips furnished with long whiskers.

The Marmot inhabits the higher regions of the Alps and Pyrennees, at the edge of the line of perpetual snow, and above the limits of the forest, living in families, which labour in the excavation of a common dwelling, in which they pass the winter in a state of lethargy. Their period of activity, if activity it may be called, is during the summer: at this season, though never wandering far from their subterranean retreats, they issue forth to feed on the mountain herbage, one of their number, it is said, always keeping watch, like a sentinel, against surprise and sudden danger; should suspicious circumstances occur, warning is given, and the whole company seek safety by retreating into their burrows, or, if intercepted, by availing themselves of a temporary refuge amongst the crevices of the rocks.

On the approach of winter, the Marmot betakes itself to its burrow, where it makes a warm bed of dried grass, on which to repose during the season of cold. Unlike the squirrel, it provides no winter's stores; and such a provision would be useless, as the time is passed in that state of profound sleep termed *hibernation*—a condition which the Almighty Maker and Preserver of all things has appointed to many animals as the means of ensuring existence. The experiments of one of

our most philosophic inquirers, Dr. Marshal Hall, have thrown much light on the condition of animals under such circumstances: from them it would appear, that the system, by a wise and beneficent law, undergoes certain modifications essential to the continuance of vitality; the *irritability* of the nervous system increasing in a ratio respective to the decrease of the action of the heart and arteries; the blood passing sluggishly through the lungs, and undergoing but little apparent change in its transit, a change, essential as it is to activity, far from being requisite under existing circumstances.

The chamber in which the Marmot hibernates is at the extremity of a passage six or eight feet long, from which another often branches at an acute angle, so as to form a figure like the letter Y. The entrances are effectually closed against the admission of the cold air of the season with earth, which is procured from the floor of the passages. Having made all secure, the animal reposes on its bed, and awaits in oblivious sleep the return of spring.

So will it be with the Christian's body; the winter of age or bodily decay closes his summer, and shuts the scene; "the night cometh, when no man shall work." Wearied with the toils of his pilgrimage, and benumbed by the chilling frost, which has shed its snows upon his head, frozen the fountain, and locked up the cistern, he retires to his couch of earth, his narrow bed, to wait in sweet repose the dawn of that bright spring, "the glorious morn, the second birth of heaven and earth," when, through the grace of his God and Saviour, his body shall awake, a new prospect shall open upon his eyes, no changes, no wars arise against him, no chilling blasts, no winter close around him, but "one unbounded spring encircle all."

Among the several genera by which the squirrels are linked to the mice, or murine animals, is that of *Myoxus*, comprehending the Dormice, a group of lively, active little creatures, which please us no less by their manners than by their form and colouring. It does not appear that the species of the genus *Myoxus* are well made out; they are peculiar to the older continents, three* decided species being natives of Europe, of which only one occurs in the British Islands. These are the *Myoxus glis*, which has no English name, the Loir of the French; it is the largest of the three: the next is the *Myoxus nitela*, the GREATER DORMOUSE, as it is erroneously called by Ray, the Lerot of the French: the third is the *Myoxus avellanarius*, the COMMON DORMOUSE, or Lesser Dormouse of Ray, the Mascardin of Buffon.

The European Dormice must be numbered amongst our hibernating mammalia; they pass the winter in a state of lethargic sleep, choosing for their dormitory the holes of trees, or the fissures and hollows of garden walls, and similar situations. Here, rolled up like a ball, they sleep out the severities of winter. The hibernating

* Lesson notices a specimen peculiar to Sicily, which we have not seen, and therefore cannot say if it be truly distinct or not. Another species of some authors, the *Myoxus dryas*, is, according to Cuvier, identical with the *Myoxus glis*.