

## THE SQUIRREL.\*

THE squirrel is a little neat animal, and may be considered as in a state between savage and domestic. The gentleness, docility, and inoffensiveness of his manners, entitle him to regard and protection. Though he sometimes seizes birds, he is neither carnivorous nor destructive. Fruits, almonds, nuts, beech mast, and acorns, are his common food. He is handsome, lively, alert, and extremely vigilant and industrious. He has eyes full of fire, a fine countenance, a nervous body, and very nimble limbs. The beauty of his figure is heightened by a tail

\* The common squirrel has two cutting teeth in each jaw; four toes before, and five behind; a long tail, clothed with long hair; the ears terminated in long tufts of hair; the eyes are large, lively, and black; the head, body, legs, and tail, are of a bright reddish brown; the breast and belly are white; and the hair on each side of the tail lies flat; Pennant's *Synops. of Quad.* p. 279.

In Greek and Latin, *Sciurus*; in Italian, *Scirivolo*, *Chirivolo*, *Schirate*, *Schirato*; in Spanish, *Harde-squillo*; in German, *Eichhorn*, *Eichhornlein*; in Swedish, *Ikborn*; in Polish, *Wojewojka*; in French, *L'Ecorceuil*.

*Sciurus*; *Gesner. Hist. of Quad.* p. 245.

*Sciurus vulgaris*; *Ray, Synops. Quad.* p. 214.

*Sciurus vulgaris*, auriculis apice barbatis, palmis tetradactylis, plantis pentadactylis; *Lien. Syst.* p. 104.

*Sciurus vulgaris rubicundus*; *Klein. Quad.* p. 53.

*Sciurus rufus* quandoque griseo admixto; *Brissot. Regn. Anim.* p. 150.

resembling

resembling a plume of feathers, which he raises the length of his head, and under which he shades himself from the sun and weather. The under part of his body is furnished with an apparatus equally remarkable, and which indicates strong generative powers. The squirrel partakes less of the nature of quadrupeds than most others of that tribe. He generally rests almost on end, and uses his fore-feet like hands, in carrying his food to his mouth. Instead of concealing himself under the earth, he is perpetually in the air. He approaches the birds by his lightness; and, like the feathered tribes, he dwells on the tops of trees, and traverses the forests by leaping from one tree to another. He likewise builds his nest in the trees, gathers grains and seeds, drinks the dews, and descends not to the earth but when the trees are agitated by storms. He is never found in the open fields, nor in the plains. He approaches not the habitations of men, and never remains among brushwood; but delights in the lofty trees of the forest. Of water he is still more afraid than of the earth; and we are assured, that, when he wants to pass a river or lake, he employs the bark of a tree for a ship, and uses his tail for the rudder and sails\*.

He

\* *Rei veritate nititur quod Gesnerus ex Vicentio Belandensi et Otto Magno refert, sciuros, quando aquam transire cupiunt, lignum levissimum aquae imponere; eique insidentes, et cauda, non tamen ut vult, erecta, sed continuo mota, vellicantes neque stante vento, sed tranquillo aequore transire, quod*

He sleeps not, like the dormouse, during the winter, but is at all seasons awake and lively; and, if the foot of the tree where he reposes be touched, he instantly leaves his little nest, and flies to another tree, or shelters himself under a branch. He collects nuts during summer, hides them in the trunks or hollows of old trees, and has recourse to them for his winter food: He likewise searches for them in the snow, and scratches off the surface of it with his feet. His voice is shrill, and still more piercing than that of the martin. When irritated, he makes a murmuring or grumbling noise. He is too light for walking; his movements consist of little leaps; and sometimes he makes considerable bounds. His claws are so sharp, and his motions so quick, that he instantaneously climbs beech trees, though their bark be exceedingly smooth.

During the fine summer nights, the squirrels are heard crying, when pursuing each other among the trees. They seem to dread the heat of the sun; for, during the day, they remain in their nests, from which they issue, in the night, to eat, to frolic, and to make love. Their habitation is clean, warm, impenetrable to rain, and generally situated in the cleft of a tree. They begin the work by carrying small sticks,

quod sibi dignus, Adasque meus emissarius ad insulas Goth-landix, plus simplice vice observavit, et cum spoliis in litteris ibidem collectis redire mirabundus mihi retulit; *Dissert. de Scienc. volantis. Phil. Transf. No. 97. pag. 38. Klein. de Quad. p. 53.*

which

which they mix and interlace with moss; They then press and stamp it, to give it firmness and capacity for holding themselves and their young. A small strait aperture only is left near the top, which is hardly sufficient to allow them to pass. Above this aperture is a conical cover which shelters the whole, and makes the rain run off the sides. They generally produce three or four at a litter: The females come in season in the spring, and bring forth in May, or the beginning of June. They cast their hair in winter, and the new fur is redder than the former. They comb and dress themselves with their hands and teeth, are very cleanly, and have no bad smell. Their flesh makes pretty good eating. The hair of their tail is used for pencils; but their skin is only an indifferent fur.

Several species of quadrupeds border upon that of the squirrel; but there are few varieties in the species itself. Some are of an ash-colour; but the greatest number are reddish. The small gray kind is a different species, and continues always gray: And, without mentioning the flying squirrels, the white squirrel of Cambaia \*, which is very small, that of Madagascar †, called *istisibi*, which is gray, and neither beautiful nor easily tamed, the white squirrel of Siam ‡, the gray spotted squirrel of Bengal §, the striped

\* Les Voyages de Pietro della Valle, tom. vi. p. 368.

† Le Voyage de Flacourt, p. 164.

‡ Le second Voyage du P. Tachard, p. 249.

§ Voyages de la Comp. des Indes de Hollande, tom. vii.

squirrel

squirrel of Canada \*, the black squirrel †, the large gray squirrel of Virginia ‡, the squirrel of New Spain, with white stripes §, the white squirrel of Siberia ||, the variegated squirrel, or *mus ponticus*, the small American squirrel, that of Brasil, that of Barbary, the palm-rat, &c. form so many distinct and independent species of quadrupeds.

## S U P P L E M E N T.

SQUIRRELS should be considered rather as natives of northern regions, than of temperate climates; for they abound so much in Siberia, that immense numbers of their skins are annually sold in that country. The Siberians, says M. Gmelin, take the squirrels in traps, made nearly in the form of a fourth figure, which are suspended on the trees, and baited with a piece of dried fish ¶.

It was formerly remarked, that there are black squirrels in America. M. Aubry, curate of Saint Louis, has, in his cabinet, a squirrel, sent him from Martinico, which is totally black. It is also

\* Le Voyage de Sagard Theodat, p. 305.

† L'Hist. Nat. de la Caroline, par Catesby, tom. ii. p. 73.

‡ Ibid. tom. ii. p. 76.

§ Albert Seba, vol. i. p. 76.

|| Brisson. Regn. Anim. p. 151.

¶ Voyage de M. Gmelin in Siberie, tom. ii. p. 232.

distin-

distinguished from other squirrels by having no hair, or at least a very small quantity, on its ears.

M. de la Borde, King's physician at Cayenne, remarks, that, in Guiana, there is only one species of squirrel, which lives in the woods; that its hair is reddish; that it exceeds not the size of an European rat; that it feeds on the grain of the *Maripa*, *Aoura*, *Comana*, &c.; that it brings forth its young, to the number of two, in the holes of trees; that it bites like a rat; that it is easily tamed; that it makes a kind of low whistling cry; and that it is always seen alone, leaping from branch to branch.

I am not certain that this animal, mentioned by M. de la Borde, is a real squirrel; for these animals, in general, are not found in very warm climates, such as that of Guiana. The species, on the contrary, is very numerous in the cold and temperate regions of both Continents.

'We find,' says M. Kalm, 'several species of 'squirrels in Pennsylvania, where the small kind, 'called the *ground-squirrel*, is preferred; because, though difficult to tame, it is most handsome. The large squirrels do much mischief 'to the plantations of maize. They cut the 'stems in order to eat the pith. They sometimes come in hundreds into a field, and often 'devour the whole wheat in a single night. In 'order to destroy them, a price is put upon their 'heads. The inhabitants eat the flesh of the 'squirrels,

' Squirrels, but put little value on their skins \*.  
 ' The gray squirrels are common in Pennsylvania,  
 ' and in several other parts of North America.  
 ' In figure they resemble those of Sweden; but,  
 ' both in summer and winter, they preserve their  
 ' gray colour, and are likewise somewhat larger.  
 ' They build their nests with moss and straw in  
 ' the hollows of trees. They feed upon the  
 ' fruits of the woods, but prefer the maize. They  
 ' lay up provisions for winter, and remain in  
 ' their magazines during the great colds. These  
 ' animals not only do much injury to the maize,  
 ' but likewise to the oaks, the flowers of which  
 ' they devour, so that the trees produce few  
 ' acorns. . . . It is alledged, that they are  
 ' now more numerous in Pennsylvania than for-  
 ' merly, and that they have multiplied in pro-  
 ' portion to the increase of the plantations of  
 ' maize, which is their principal food.'

\* Voyage de Kalm, tom. II. p. 245.

Plate LXXXIII.



SQUIRREL.