

**THE JOURNAL OF  
LLEWELLIN PENROSE,  
A SEAMAN. IN FOUR  
VOLUMES. VOL. III**

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THE  
JOURNAL OF PENROSE.

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CHAP. XXI.

ONE day as I was passing into our dwelling, I took notice of a white circle on the under side of the archway of the cavern; as I had not observed it before, I was not a little curious to find out the cause. On viewing it with some attention, I observed now and then a kind of brown wasp come in with a bit of the same matter and fix it to the circle, by this means enlarging its dimensions; so that from about three inches

diameter, in the course of a few days it was the size of a large punch bowl. They now began to narrow it again, giving it somewhat the form of a bottle with a projecting neck, still working downwards, so that by the time it was finished it was near a foot in length, leaving only a small hole sufficient for one to enter at a time. The women wanted to knock it down, lest they might sting the children; but I forbade them.

When some time after I found all the wasps had forsaken it, I bid Harry cut it down carefully with a knife; and when I came to examine the internal structure, nothing could be more curious. The cells were ranged circularly, one within the other, so that it formed one complete spiral line; in substance it resembled our coarse white paper, but much stronger, and did not weigh above an ounce or two at most.

There is a sort of insect here of a very odd form, being in length about four inches, yet so very slim in one part that it is not much thicker than a small thread; it has eight very long legs, and two horns six inches in length, tapering to such a small point, that it is as fine as the lines of a cobweb to appearance. The whole insect, wings and all, is the colour of the fine steel of the watch spring; but what is more singular is its smell, no rose can have a finer scent. It has the power of folding up these horns in joints, or can at pleasure lay them both flat at length backwards in a direct line.

There is another sort which resembles a wasp, but three times its size, and in colour like amber, with a yellow head. I never could see above one of them at a time. Its manner of life differs from that of other insects of the same class; it burrows in any dry and sandy place, to the



depth of a foot or more ; to this kind of cell he brings all his prey, being very voracious after all sorts of flies, which he catches either on the wing or by stratagem, when they are on a leaf. Having two legs longer than the rest, he carries his prey between his feet, and, by a movement in the joints of those two long legs, he poises the load if it proves rather heavy. When he brings home his prey and has descended below, you shall hear a kind of noise the whole time, like a person drawing the bow of a fiddle over the smaller strings ; when this stops, you may expect his return. On his coming up he proceeds to work with his two long feet backward, and in a short time covers the entrance so curiously that the place is not to be observed ; and should you make any alteration so as to deceive him, yet has he the sagacity soon to find it out. I have opened several of these repositories, and have found at the bottom

several small cells, in each of which were found insects of different kinds.

Now we are on the subject of insects, I will mention another sort with which we were sometimes amused. It was a kind of large beetle, of a black colour. This insect, whenever it finds the dung of any animal, or other kind of pulpy offal, it there takes up its residence until the whole be consumed; but as the manner of providing for itself is somewhat curious, I shall give it to the reader. It always flies by night, or late in the evening, and has a wonderful instinct in finding out the above-mentioned substances; and if the surface of the earth be not too hard, it begins to work down through the centre of the mass to a considerable depth, bringing up the loose earth; this it lays all on one side till it has completed the work; then it begins to gather it up, as one would do hay or straw. When it has as much as it can grasp, it

walks backward with it to the edge of the hole, throws itself backward, load and all, and thus tumbles to the bottom of its cell; it then returns again and acts in the same manner till it has industriously collected the whole. If you dig down some time after, you shall find the whole mass curiously made up into a round ball, and very closely packed together. When you break this ball, in the centre is to be seen its young embryo, and as that comes to maturity, its food is already provided, and it begins to eat the internal part, the old one does the same by the external, so that by the time they have eaten up the whole, the young one is become capable of providing for itself. But if the quantity should prove too small, the old one goes in search of more, and flies home with it to the cell, continually, till the young has acquired sufficient strength to go abroad. It then carries the young black bantling in its arms, as I may