

NATURAL HISTORY.

From a Treatise by J. C. Belamy.
FALCONS.

The society of the hawks, by every lover of this ancient sport, has always been regarded with peculiar interest; nor is this to be wondered at, when once the noble nature of those birds has been experienced. Our ancestors took great pride in having them placed, especially on "high times," or days of festivity, upon their blocks on the smooth sward in front of their halls, or on each side of their door, that they might be seen by their guests, or admired through the windows. This was a true old English fashion, and must have had a beautiful appearance placed in front of some of their stately buildings. Living at hawk, their society is still more amusing: their lively appearance soaring around the house, perching about the doors or windows, following their master over his grounds, now skimming over his head, now alighting upon his fist, &c. render them extremely pleasing. It has already been observed, that in former times, they were often made the travelling companions of both ladies and gentlemen, and as such they became both faithful and affectionate ones. The following notice of a peregrine falcon, favoured me by a neighbouring gentleman, of the highest credibility affords a very decisive proof of the attachment of the hawk to its master:—The bird was permitted to fly at large and range wherever it pleased. The summer being warm, and the sitting room in consequence frequently open, it entered at all times of the day, and was a constant guest at the dinner-table, apparently more for the sake of society than of gratifying its appetite, for, hungry or not, it attended. It evinced great attachment, liked to be taken notice of, and if neglected would get upon his master's shoulder and pinch him gently by the ear. The bird was perfectly harmless, though at times a little merrily waggish. A flock of seventeen turkeys frequented a pasture close by the house, under the guidance of a huge turkey-cook, who had long been the bully of the poultry yard. The hawk circling above the plump of birds would stoop with amazing velocity, and strike within a hair's breadth of the crimson head of their leader; a general panic ensued, the word was given *sauve qui peut*, and the whole array, the old patriarch amongst the first, would fly in disorder to a thick hedge for shelter, with more than usual noise and gabble. Birds smaller than itself it never molested, but hesitated not to play off its pranks upon the largest that came in its way. A brood hen was the only individual of the feathered tribe that ever offered to resent its wagwag. It, however, never attempted to injure the young.

THE MISSOURIAN.—Mr. Albert Koch, an American geologist, who has devoted twelve years of his life and an enormous sacrifice of fortune to the exploration of such portions of the prairie lands on the Missouri as Indian tradition seemed to hint at as the sites of fossil remains, discovered in the level ground, called by the French (from the potato-looking root that is peculiar to the place) the prairie of *Pomme de terre*, on the banks of the Eastern Osage river, near a stream which the Indians call the Big-bone river, a huge fossil nondescript, which he caused to be dragged from the wilderness into the cities of America, has brought to England, and is about to exhibit to the public at the Egyptian Hall.

This monster of the antediluvian world is not merely nondescript, but almost indescribable. Its height is fifteen feet, its length thirty-two feet, the vertebra form a complete arch, and the rib bones are so slight as to prove that the enormous barrel which the body must have formed has been filled with "a heavy lightness." The caudal vertebra resemble those of the beaver, so that this creature appears to have had an apparatus applicable to the directing his course in water, and in lightness of body resembles a boat; another watery qualification is his webbed feet, and requisites for swimming. The osseals of the hind-foot projects, and it appears from this, and the joints of the hind leg, that it was in the habit of rearing itself on its hind legs. The fore arms (for so they are) are formed to strike, and the processes

of the elbow-joint would give the power and character of the feline race; and strange enough, the webbed toes terminate in claws which appear to have been retractile. But all these extraordinary characteristics are commonplace as compared with the head. It is not large in proportion to the creature itself, but it is long and thick, and attached to a long neck. Its skull is thick, and the cellular receptacle of the brain are absolutely monstrous; its lower jaw is armed with teeth, and its tusks are some twenty-two feet in the curve. These and other fossil bones, collected by Mr. Koch, were mixed up with arrow heads and other proofs of human existence! What was this old world of America!

THE WHALE.—The whale is undoubtedly a mammalian animal, and so is the dolphin, the porpoise, the cachalot, &c. They have teats or mammary glands to suckle their young, (hence mammalia.) Every animal is adapted to its habitation. The seal is a quadruped, and is adapted to its marine habitation. The bat is a biped of the same class and order as mankind; even the two nipples on the breast has not been forgotten by nature's type; its wings are mere membranes connecting the upper with the lower extremities.

The whale is of the same class as the various tribes of quadrupeds; though the extremities in the whale tribe are very indistinct, yet they may be found in the skeleton.

There are other points which will enable us to distinguish between the whale and the fish tribe, namely,—the whale tribe are possessed of a heart with two auricles and two ventricles—having warm blood—having lungs with external spiracles to respire air; whereas the fish tribe have a heart with only one auricle and one ventricle—having cold blood—and gills instead of lungs. Fish will live under the surface of the water any length of time, but the whale tribe must be continually rising up to the surface to breathe air.—*Liverpool Mercury.*

SAGACITY IN A DOG.—About eight months ago a gentleman belonging to this city embarked at Port Philip, Australia, for Scotland. In the bustle and confusion of preparing for so long a voyage, a favourite dog disappeared about a couple of days before the vessel in which he returned left Port Philip; and, as all the enquiry he was able to make turned out to be fruitless, he was under the necessity of leaving his four-footed friend behind him. He arrived in Edinburgh about two months ago, and, wonderful to tell, within the last three weeks was surprised by a visit from the animal he had left in Port Philip about eight months before. Upon inquiry it turns out that the dog had got aboard of a ship on the eve of sailing for London; that once aboard, he resolutely refused to be put ashore; and, dint of sheer resolution, obtained a passage. On his arrival in London, it is ascertained that he visited the lodgings formerly occupied by his master, and failing in discovering the object of his search, immediately disappeared, and was not again heard of till his arrival in Edinburgh. This perhaps the most extraordinary example on record. In going aboard of an English ship many thousand miles from home—his refusal to quit it—his visit to the former lodgings of his master on his arrival in London—and the journey from London to Edinburgh—rank the subject of this notice as one of the most wonderful animals of his species. The gentleman to whom he belongs is well known in Edinburgh, and is the son of a gentleman who, within the last twenty years, has filled various offices of civic dignity. *Scotsman.*

The same littleness of soul that makes a man despise inferiors, and trample on them, makes him abjectly envious to superiors.

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