

HISTORY OF THE HORSE

FROM earliest ages the horse has been the friend and companion of man. Prized for his beauty, loved for his docility, and valued for his strength, he has ever been regarded as the highest in value and importance of all domesticated animals. In the remotest ages, as far back as authentic history discloses anything of the life and pursuits of man, we find that the horse occupied a prominent position in his service. Painters have pictured on their canvas the majesty and grace of the spirited animal. Poets have celebrated his strength and beauty in their verses, and the inspired writers have introduced amongst their most glowing descriptions the horsemen and chariots which formed a chief feature in the pomp and magnificence of those early days.

In the most ancient hieroglyphics we find him present, and always so represented as to show that, even in the remote antiquity from which they date, he has been brought into complete and serviceable subjection. In the oldest Egyptian paintings the horse is seen only in the war chariot, and in the descriptions of the siege of Troy only the charioteer appears, from which it has been supposed that the first horses used by the Greeks were too small to be conveniently ridden. But in the painting in the palace of Nimrod at Nineveh, disinterred by Layard and supposed to be more than three thousand years old, horsemen are exhibited both in the chase and in war.

But farther back than even those distant times, in the ages where authentic history merges into the shadowy light, amidst which myth and fable mingle with the real, we find this noble animal figuring, but then exalted into a semi-human sphere. The Centaurs, who inhabited the passes of Mount Pelion and Ossa and the great plains of Thessaly in Upper Greece, were probably a race resembling in many respects the Tartars of this age, and are supposed to be the first who brought the horse into subjection