

A DAY ON A NEW CIRCUIT.

At length, after giving up all hope of seeing any one, I mounted my horse and rode away. But what certain direction to take, I knew not. I was a perfect stranger there, and I did not know the residence of a single member. I had depended on seeing some of them at the meeting-house, and also upon getting from them my route to the next preaching place, with all necessary information.—My horse proved a very slow beast, and stumbled frequently. Turning his head in the direction opposite to that from which I had come, I rode on in a state of uncertainty and despondency. The way was through dense woods, the tall forest trees, some at least a century old, throwing a dark shadow over all below. Sometimes, after descending a long hill, I would get a glance of a wide extent of country, all as thickly wooded as that in which I was wandering. I knew not whither. Then the road would dive down into a deep sombre valley, and wind along for some miles before it afforded anything like an extended prospect to the eye. For full three hours, I kept steadily onward, but not a human face nor a human habitation met my view. At length I came to a place where the road forked. Which should I take? There was no finger-post; and if there had been its indications would, doubtless, have been unintelligible to me. In my dilemma I looked up for direction. Then taking a piece of money from my pocket, I threw it up into the air, naming one side of it the left hand, and the other the right hand way. The lot was in favour of the right hand road, and so I took that. I had not gone far along this, before I perceived that it bent off until it took a course almost at right angle with the road I had been travelling, and was, if possible, more lonely and dark than that. But I passed onward, as fast as the weary animal under me could be made to go. Once, far away to the right, I saw, as I ascended a rising ground, a thin wreath or smoke curling up lazily from what appeared to be a break or clearing in the forest. But I did not attempt to gain it, for I dared not trust myself in the pathless wilderness that intervened. At last the sun declined low towards the horizon. A deer, frightened by the sound of my horse's feet, started off near me, and went bounding fleetly away, and was soon lost to my view amid the tangled underwood. The sight of the animal suggested to my mind a thought that made the blood grow cold about my heart. Night was coming on, and I might yet be miles and miles away from any human habitation. There were bears and wolves among these mountains! Just as this fear began to oppress me, I heard a rustling in the bushes close by the road, and, turning quickly, perceived a movement among them. My breath was instantly suspended, and my heart ceased to beat. The head of some animal immediately after protruded through an opening, and its large bright eyes became fixed upon me. In the next moment a fawn went leaping away less frightened, perhaps, than myself. The perspiration, as I caught my breaths and the pulsations of my trembling heart were renewed, stood upon my forehead in large drops. For half-an-hour afterwards, every bird that fluttered among the bushes, every timid rabbit that rustled the dry leaves as it suddenly sprang away from the road side, every dry stick that cracked beneath my horse's feet, caused an instant suspension of my breath, many a quick throb of my coward heart. Onward I rode, weary, hungry, and in alarm lest I should be compelled to pass the night in the woods, exposed to imminent danger from wild beasts. At last the sun went down, and the dusky shadows of evening began to render fourfold more gloomy and dark my lonely way, which, the farther I progressed, showed less and less indication of having been much or lately travelled. The thought of return, whenever it arose, was instantly dispelled—I had ridden since noon without having seen a human habitation, and now it was sun down. To press onward was my only hope. And onward I urged my poor beast, who held out far better than I at first dreamed he would, from the poor promise of the first few hours' ride. Darkness at length came down—darkness rendered deep and almost impenetrable from the dense foliage of the heavy forest-trees that overhung the road, through the openings of which I could now and then get glimpses of the stars, and sometimes the principal members of a constellation, as here the "bands of Orion," and there the Pleiades,—Sirius, bright

and smiling as the evening star—and ruddy Aldebaran, the crow of the Hyades. I had ridden on for nearly an hour after the night had closed in, when suddenly their arose, seemingly but a few hundred yards from me, upon the still air, a clear wailing cry like that of a distressed child. The blood fairly curdled in my veins. I reined up my horse suddenly. But every thing was as silent as death. I sat motionless for several minutes in my saddle and listened. But the cry was not repeated. Touching the loose rein with my hand, I urged my old horse onward. Just as he had taken a step or two, clear, and distinct, as it seemed, nearer, rose that strange cry again, thrilling every nerve in my body. Was it a child lost in the dreary wilderness? Was it some wild animal of which I had never heard? Or was it something supernatural? This thought, quickened by the repetition of the cry so strangely human, made the blood trickle through my veins, and the hair rise upon my head.—And yet I am not a superstitious man. I am no believer in supernatural appearance. But, under all the peculiarities of my situation, I could not control my feelings, nor overcome the impression this last suggestion of my fears made. Without pausing again, I hurried onwards, that wailing cry coming after me every now and then most appealing, yet growing fainter as I kept on my way. The feebler the sound became as it continued to reach my ear, the more severely did my heart reproach me for inhumanity, in thus disregarding the agonizing cries of what might be a poor child lost in the woods. At length such thoughts became so active, and nature began to plead so loudly for the little wanderer, if such indeed it was, that as the faint, distant cry swelled upon the air again, I turned my horse's head quickly, determined to retrace my steps and recover the child. At that moment, my ear caught the distant barking of a dog. So cheering a sound I think I never heard. My old horse distinguished it at the same moment, and turned his head resolutely in the direction from which it came. I laid the reins upon his shoulder, and praying for guidance and protection to the God of Jeshurun. The animal moved off at a quick pace, directly into the woods, and soon emerged into a clear space. A light shone cheerfully from what I soon saw to be a log-house standing in a portion of this clearing. A loud call brought an answering hullo from the lodge in the wilderness. It was the voice of a man! Blessed sound! How it thrilled me with joy! In a few minutes I was at the door. As I dismounted, amid a group of two men, a woman, and what seemed a maidservant, three or four children and as many dogs, who all crowded around me, the woman who held a candle high above our head, ejaculated—"Bless me! 'This must be our new preacher!" "And so I am, sister!" I returned with a leaping heart, reaching out and grasping her hand—"God be thanked that I have got among friends and brethren!" "Yes, thank God!" said the man, extending his hand and shaking mine heartily, "that you have reached our little clearing safely. A panther has been crying about all the evening—Ha! There! Don't you hear him?" At that moment, far off, but clear and distinct, arose the cry I had taken for that of a lost child. "It is a panther," the man added, "and he is not far from the road. If he had dropped down upon you, nothing could have saved you." "Is that the cry of a panther?" I said, trembling at the thought of the danger I had escaped. "Why, I thought it was the cry of a lost child, and had just turned my horse's head to go in search of it, when my ear caught the barking of one of your dogs." A warm and affectionate welcome, a good supper, and provender for my poor tired horse, whose faithful service upon this our first acquaintance had already warmed my heart towards him, compensated in a good degree for the disappointments, fears, and fatigues of the day. It appeared, that, after riding from about twelve o'clock until nine at night, I was still only eight miles, direct course, from the preaching place.—I had come one day too soon—the regular appointment was fixed. A good bed, and a good night's sleep, restored my wasted powers both of mind and body. Next morning we all started, soon after breakfast, on horseback, for the meeting-house, which had been built by several denominations residing within a circle of ten miles, and was used by all in turn. We plunged immediately into the woods, and pursued our course

along a bridle path, which was so narrow, most of the way, that we had to ride in single file.—In about two hours we reached the meeting-house. A number of horses hitched around gave indication that many of the brethren had already arrived.—We found them standing about the door in groups, waiting for the preacher. They were no little surprised at seeing me come from the direction I did, and in company with the family of brother N. This was briefly explained, and I received a good deal of sympathy. I found them all plain, rough farmers, but there was an honest kindness about them that pleased me very much. I preached from the text "Take no thought for the morrow." They listened with deep attention. After preaching, I led the class; it was, to my soul, a refreshing season.—*The Methodist Preacher.*

NATURAL HISTORY.

AFFECTIONS OF ANIMALS.

Concluded.

There are few things more disarming than this anxious fondness of a humble animal for her offspring. It is therefore to be considered as strictly in accordance with the more generous feelings of human nature, that the Israelites were enjoined to respect female animals, as the doe and the ewe, while taking their young. It is painful to think that the spirit of this command is often broken by men from cupidity or wantonness. A striking instance is related in Phipps's Voyage to the North Pole. An old she-bear was attracted with her cubs by the smell of a seal-horse which had been killed several days before, and the flesh of which she carefully divided between her young ones, reserving but a small portion for herself.—As she was fetching away the last piece the sailors levelled their muskets at the cubs and shot them both dead; and in her retreat they wounded the dam, but not mortally. It would have drawn tears of pity from any but unfeeling minds to have marked the affectionate concern expressed by this poor beast during the last moments of her expiring young. Though she was herself dreadfully wounded, and could but just crawl to the place where they lay, she carried the lump of flesh she had fetched away, as she had done others before, tore it in pieces, and laid it before them; and when she saw they refused to eat, she laid her paws first upon one, and then upon the other, and endeavoured to raise them up; all this while it was pitiful to hear her moan. When she found she could not stir them she went off, and when she got some distance, looked back and moaned; and that not availing her to entice them away, she returned, and smelling around them, began to lick their wounds. She went off a second time as before, and having crawled a few paces, looked again behind her, and for some time stood moaning. But still her cubs not rising to follow her, she returned to them again, and with signs of inexpressible fondness, went round, pawing them and moaning. Finding, at last, that they were cold and lifeless, she raised her head towards the ship and uttered a growl of despair, which the murderers returned with a volley of musket balls. She fell between her cubs and died licking their wounds.

Nor does the parental feeling of animals always rest content with merely protecting and cherishing the young. There are some which take pains to give their offspring something of the nature of education. 'Some of the eagles,' says Mr. Swainson, 'take out their young before they are full grown, on purpose to teach them the arts necessary for securing their prey. The female lark conducts hers to exercise their powers to fight, herself fluttering over their heads, directing their motions, and preserving them from danger. The butcher-bird, or common woodchat shrike, continues her regard for her offspring even after they have attained maturity, while the latter reward her care by assisting her in providing for the support of all, until the following spring.' The monkeys, too, which are surpassed by no animals in the philoprogenitive feeling, are observed to go through something like a process of education with their young. They keep them under proper obedience and restraint, much after the fashion of human mothers. A set of female monkeys have been observed to suckle, caress, and cleanse their young ones, and then sit down to see them play with each other. If, in the course of their sports, any