

# The Rockwood Review.

## ANIMALS.

BY CHARLES M. SKINNER.

Meaning some with four feet and some with feathers, no less than men. It is well to have them about us. We can go to them now and then for lessons—lessons in calm, in content, in the art of living in the present, in simplicity, in truth, in health, in strength, most of all in modesty—for we cannot see, without admiring, their many economies and shifts, their skill and ingenuity, their self-sufficing gifts, and, seeing these, we ought to understand that we have not yet come to the high top of power or mind or morals. Then these humbler creatures have so many of our tricks that it is enlightening to watch them. They prove in a hundred ways their cousinship, and convince us that we have not evolved vastly beyond their state, if we have not fallen below their splendid physical condition. Had we the strength of a bear, the speed of a horse, the faithfulness and courage of a dog, the craft of a snake, the liberty of an eagle, the endurance of a camel, the complacency of a cat, the patience of an ant, the beauty of an oriole, the joyousness of a bobolink, the wisdom that an owl ought to have, what a race were ours! Every wide-minded man probably feels, at some time in his life, that he has suffered a deprivation in not knowing the brutes better than he does. We try to make up for this ignorance by keeping a dog and a cat, though neither is of much use to us, and, whether we will or no, we harbor a thousand minor peoples—birds, mice, weasels, squirrels, moths, flies, spiders, worms—to whom we still may turn for useful hints and comfortable companionship.

While I like to see the assimilation of human traits and even the copying of some human capers by these little brothers, it is a painful thing to find them marching to the crack of a whip, standing on their heads with violent misgivings in their legs, riding a-horseback with

imploring in their faces, cringing at the firing of pistols, and heavily dancing to music that means nothing to them. Trained animals show remarkably what men can make them do, but artifice is seldom so interesting as nature, and it is in their true characters, rather than as clumsy imitators of other species, that they deserve our notice best. After we get acquainted we find their personal traits to be as well marked as our own, and shown more frankly, for animals never put on a society gloss, unless they fear injuries from us, if they fail to appreciate or reverence our worship. I do not want a frightened or furtive animal about me. I prefer him affectionate. If he is that, he will be moderately obedient, whereas if he "minds" through fear, he will be immoderately untrue to himself.

Our two cats are twins, but they are as different from each other as the Indian is different from the white man. Slubberly Tumults takes after his father, and is aristocratic. He lacks only one or two points of being a prize cat. His fur is like velvet, beautifully striped like a tiger's; his eyes have spectacle markings, which show high breeding; he is finely formed, large, healthy, spry, and the worst crank that goes on legs. Taggs, his brother, lacks only one point of being an "ornery" back-fence cat, and that is his good nature. There is just one being with whom Tumults will endure on kindly terms, and that is Taggs. He is everybody else's enemy, except for three or four minutes in the morning, when he meets us for the first time in the day and expects his breakfast; but though he and Taggs will cuff each other in play, no people were ever kinder to each other than these two. In their box before the kitchen fire on a cold winter night with their arms about each other they are as pretty a sight as a couple of children, who would surely have gone to sleep kicking rather than hugging. If they are awakened, they fall to licking each other. At meal-times