

HAIR SNAKES—SINGULAR PHENOMENA.

A correspondent of the *Michigan Farmer* lately made enquiry, through that journal, concerning the nature and origin of "hair snakes found in his milk pans." Another correspondent,—Mr. Justus Gage, of Cass County, Mich.,—gives some interesting facts on the subject. He says:—

"In relation to an enquiry of M. Bull, of Franklin, in the September number of the *Farmer*, concerning hair snakes which he found in a pan of milk, you say the circumstances 'would seem to indicate that they came there by some accident or freak of nature, which, at this distance, it would be impossible to explain.' Is it not equally difficult to account for the origin of such as 'are found in water during the summer months?'"

"There are certain classes of animals, the manner of whose origin, modes of existence, &c., science has not yet satisfactorily ascertained. Hair snakes belong, as yet, to such classes. The *Encyclopedia Britannica*, in an article on hair snakes, does not attempt to unravel the mystery in which the origin of these animals is involved; but contents itself by saying that they abound in pools of water, especially in the north of Europe; that they sometimes infest the bodies of other animals, &c. But what kind of animals they infest, or how they infest them, is not stated.

"In regard to the hair snakes seen by M. Bull, the probability is that they were deposited in the pan of milk by the smaller kind of black crickets, which happened to crawl into the cellar, and accidentally got into the milk. Crickets of both kinds are in the habit of depositing such snakes in brooks and pools of water during the month of August, especially after showers of rain. Any one can satisfy himself in relation to this matter, by throwing crickets into water at a proper season of the year. Whether they are produced by the cricket, or only happen to infest its body for the time being, I have not been able to determine.

"My attention was first called to this matter by Jonathan Carr, Esq., of Springport, Cayuga County, New York, by whom the discovery had been accidentally made. Seeing that my credulity was severely tasked in regard to his statement, he proposed that we should try the experiment, by throwing crickets into water, for the purpose of a full demonstration. After repeated trials, we succeeded in obtaining two snakes of about four inches in length. The next morning, on entering my room, a black cricket of the largest size crawled up the side of the water pail, jumped into the water, lay quiet for a moment, produced a snake of nearly seven inches in length, and then nimbly made its escape over the edge of the pail. My curiosity was greatly excited by what I had seen. The snake was lively and active. I put it into a basin of water for the purpose of further investigation, and then commenced hunting crickets, determined to pursue the investigation until not a shadow of doubt, or any possibility of mistake, could exist concerning this very curious phenomenon. I threw several crickets into water, but without any satisfactory result, and began to despair of further development, when, on turning over a flat stone, I discovered one of the small kinds of cricket lying on its back, dead, and partially decayed, with a hair snake, three inches in length, coiled up in the cavity of its abdomen. This I took on the point of my knife and put it into the water, when it soon began to show signs of life; but it was too much dried up to be able to uncoil itself.

"On returning to my room, I found a number of children collected, who had discovered my snake, held a consultation over it, and, like a set of little savages as they were, had buried it in the yard. The next day I succeeded in obtaining two snakes, of about six inches in length, which I kept in a basin of water for six weeks; but without making any further discovery as to the nature of the animal. At the close of the day they would coil themselves up together, appearing like a snarl of black thread; but on being placed where the sun could shine upon them next morning, they would wriggle themselves out of the kinks, and swim playfully around the basin. After a time they became less active, and on the approach of cold weather became nearly torpid, and I threw them aside. I have since discovered that these snakes will live a long time in moist earth; and I have found them in the ground, of a greyish color, and sometimes of great length and perfectly white, appearing like a white fibrous root of some vegetable. These, on being placed in tepid water, will soon show signs of life, uncoil themselves