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NATURAL HISTORY.

THE HORSE.

The spirited picture of the war-horse in the book of Job, (59 chap. 19 to 25 verse) is worthy of the pen of inspiration; but to appreciate its correctness, we must not look at him in the pasture or the stable, merely, to which he is consigned by man, but in those wild and extensive plains, where he has been originally produced, where he ranges without control, and riots in all the variety of luxurious nature—and also in the field of battle, where his native fire and energy are called forth, and excited into action, by the clang of arms, and the blasts of trumpets.

The horse is universally allowed to be the most beautiful of all the quadruped animals; the noble largeness of his form, the glossy smoothness of his skin, the graceful ease of his motions and the exact symmetry of his shape, have taught us to regard him as the first, and as the most perfectly formed; and yet what is extraordinary enough, if we examine him internally, his structure, will be found the most different from that of man of all other quadrupeds whatsoever. As the ape approaches us nearest in internal conformation, so the horse is the most remote;—a striking proof that there may be oppositions of beauty, and that all grace is not to be referred to one standard.

It is not possible to determine the country from which the horse originally came: that it was from the East, however, seems highly probable, since the colder climates do not so well agree with his constitution, and also

because the most beautiful, generous, swift, and persevering of all horses in the world, are found in Arabia and Persia.

The swiftness of these animals is incredible, and has given occasion to some very spirited figures in the sacred writing. Thus, Isaiah, describing the terrible devastation which the sand of Judea was doomed to suffer by the Assyrian armies, whose horses were probably of the Persian breed, expresses the amazingly rapid movements of their chariots with much beauty and force: 'Their wheels shall be like a whirlwind,' (ch. v. 28); as does Jeremiah, also: 'Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind; his horses are swifter than eagles,' ch. iv. 13. The prophet Habakkuk, in describing the same quality of the horse, uses a different figure, but one equally striking: 'Their horses are swifter than the leopards, and more fierce than the evening wolves; and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat,' ch. i. 8.

At a very early period of its history, Egypt was famous for its breed of horses, as we learn from Exod. xiv. 9; and such appears to have been the excellency of the Egyptian horses in subsequent times, that the prophet Isaiah declares to the Israelites, who were disposed to put their confidence in the time of danger on the resources of Egypt, that 'the Egyptians were men, and not God, and their horses flesh, and not spirit,' chap. xxxi. 3.

In the time of the Judges, there were horses and war chariots among the Canaanites, but the Israelites were without them; and hence they were generally too timid to venture down into the plains, confining their conquests to the mountainous parts of the country. In the reign of Saul, horse breeding does not appear to have been introduced into Arabia, for in a war with some of the Arabian nations, the Israelites sold plunder, in camels, sheep, and asses, but still no horses. Solomon

was the first among the Hebrews who established a cavalry force, and compared to what is now usual, it was one of very considerable extent, 1 Kings, x. 26. He also carried on a trade in Egyptian horses for the benefit of the crown, 2 Chr. ix. 28.

It is evident from Judges, v. 22; Isa. v. 28! and Amos, vi. 12, that it was not the practice among the ancients to shoe the horse, as is now done. For this reason, the strength and firmness, and solidity of its hoof were of much greater importance with them than with us, and were esteemed one of the first praises of a fine horse. The latter of the above cited passages may receive illustration from the following remark: 'The Arabs signify the soundness of the feet of grey horses, by an Arabian adage, which indicates that if a cavalcade be passing through a stony country, the grey horses will break the stones with their feet; this opinion appears founded on experience, for in the Atlas mountain, in some parts of Suse, and in all harsh stony districts, we find a much greater proportion of grey horses than of any other color; their feet are so hardy, that I have known them to travel two days' journey through the stony desiles of Atlas, *without shoes*, over roads full of loose broken stones, and basaltic rocks.'

BIOGRAPHY.

ALFRED THE GREAT.

Alfred the Great, the youngest son of Ethelwolf, king of the West Saxons, was born at Wantage, in Berkshire, in 849. At the age of 22 he found himself in possession of a distracted kingdom. After several actions with the Danes, finding himself unable to make head against the invaders, he laid aside the ensigns of royalty, and concealed himself in the cottage of one of his herdsmen. One day as he sat by the fire trimming his bow and arrows, his hostess left in his care some cakes, which were placed on the hearth to be baked. Alfred, however, being intent upon his employment, suffered the cakes to burn; and when the woman returned she scolded him heartily.