

NATURAL HISTORY.

ANECDOTE OF CATLIN AND HIS HORSE "CHARLEY."

The "Westminster Review" for January, in a review of Mr. Catlin's recent work on "The Manners, Habits, Customs, etc. of the American Indians," quotes the interesting anecdote subjoined.—

On this journey, while he and I were twenty-five days alone, we had much time, and the best of circumstances, under which to learn what we had as yet overlooked in each other's characters, as well as to draw great pleasure and real benefit from what we already had learned of each other in our former travels.

I generally halted on the bank of some little stream, at half an hour of sunset, where feed was good for Charley, and where I could get wood to kindle my fire, and boil water for my coffee. The first thing was to undress 'Charley,' and drive down his picket, to which he was fastened, to graze over a circle that he could inscribe at the end of his lasso. In this wise he easily fed himself until nightfall; and after my coffee was made and drank, I uniformly moved him up, with his picket by my hand, so that I could lay my hand upon his lasso in an instant, in case of any alarm that was liable to drive him from me. On one of these evenings when he was grazing as usual, he slipped the lasso over his head, and deliberately took his supper at his pleasure, wherever he chose to prefer it, as he was strolling around. When night approached, I took the lasso in hand and endeavoured to catch him, but I soon saw he was determined to enjoy a little freedom; and he continually evaded me until dark, when I abandoned the pursuit, making up my mind that I should inevitably lose him, and be obliged to perform the rest of my journey on foot. He had led me a chase of half a mile or more, when I left him busily grazing, and returned to my little solitary bivouac, and laid myself on my bear skin and went to sleep.

In the middle of the night I waked, whilst I was lying on my back, and on half opening my eyes, I was instantly shocked to the soul, by the huge figure (as I thought) of an Indian standing over me. The chill of horror that paralyzed me for the first moment, held me still till I saw that there was no need of my moving—that my faithful horse Charley had 'played shy' till he had eaten enough; and had then moved up, from feelings of pure affection, or from instinctive fear, or possibly from a due share of both, and had taken his position with his fore feet at the edge of my bed, with his head directly over me, while he was standing fast asleep!

My nerves which had been most violently shocked, were soon quieted, and fell asleep, and so continued until sunrise in the morning, when I waked and beheld my faithful servant at some considerable distance, busily at work picking up his breakfast amongst the cane brake, along the banks of the creek. I went as busily at work preparing my own, which was eaten; and after it I had another half hour of fruitless endeavors to catch Charley, whilst he seemed mindful of success on the evening before, and continually tantalised me by turning around and around, and keeping out of my reach. I recollected the conclusive evidence of his attachment and dependance which he had voluntarily given in the night, and I thought I would try them in another way; so I packed up my things and slung the saddle on my back, trailing my gun in my hand, I started on my route. After I had advanced a quarter of a mile, I

looked back, and saw him standing with his head and tail very high, looking alternately at me and at the spot where I had been encamped, and left a little fire burning. In this condition he stood and surveyed the prairies around for a while, as I continued on. He at length walked with a hurried step to the spot, and seeing every thing gone, began to neigh very violently, and at last started off at the fullest speed and overtook me, passing within a few paces of me, and wheeling about at a few rods distance in front of me, trembling like an aspen leaf.

I called him by his familiar name, and walked up to him with the bridle in my hand, which I put over his head, as he held it down for me, and the saddle on his back, as he actually stooped to receive it. I was soon arranged, and on his back, when he started off upon his course as if he was well contented and pleased, like his rider, with the manoeuvre which had brought us together again, and afforded us mutual relief from our awkward positions. Though this alarming break of Charley's passed off and terminated so satisfactorily, yet I thought such rather dangerous ones to play, and I took good care after that night to keep him under my strict authority; resolving to avoid further tricks and experiments till we got to the land of cultivated fields and steady habits.

A CURIOUS FACT ON FOOD AND MANURE.—It has been before stated that every part of a plant contains nitrogen as well as carbon; but as an invariable rule, the seed of all plants contains a much larger quantity of nitrogen than the leaves and stalks, and a lesser quantity of carbon, and inversely, the leaves and stalks contain a much larger quantity of carbon, and a lesser quantity of nitrogen. Now when a horse is fed on grass, his food consists almost entirely of carbon; and the result is, that when he has a sufficient supply he gets fat—that is, that particles of oily, fatty matter are deposited on the muscles under the skin; but, as it is well known, a horse in this condition is quite unequal to any work, and the least exertion reduces his bulk. But when the same horse, under other circumstances, is fed on corn, his food consist principally of nitrogen; and although he may never, under this keep, get as fat as under the other, still the increase he does acquire will be pure muscle, or, as it is technically called, sound flesh; and on this keep he can perform much more work with less fatigue than on food containing no nitrogen.

A more complete instance could not be adduced to show that animals as well as plants can only assimilate that food which is presented them; in the first case, carbonaceous matters being the food of the horse, carbon is deposited in the shape of fat; in the latter, when more nitrogen enters into the composition of his food, the deposit of muscle preponderates. So it is with wheat. With a manure containing nitrogen, gluten is formed; both cases being completely analogous, and affording unerring proof of one simple and uniform law.

The dog may be considered the confidential servant of man;—the cat appears to aim at being his companion, refusing absolute servitude.

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