

THE DOG

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The dog by William Youatt

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WILLIAM YOUATT

THE DOG

UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE
DIFFUSION OF USEFUL KNOWLEDGE

THE DOG

BY WILLIAM YOUATT



HEAD OF BLOODHOUND

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THE DOG.

CHAPTER I.

THE EARLY HISTORY AND ZOOLOGICAL CLASSIFICATION OF THE DOG.

THE Dog, next to the human being, ranks highest in the scale of intelligence, and was evidently designed to be the companion and the friend of man. We exact the services of other animals, and, the task being performed, we dismiss them to their accustomed food and rest: but several of the varieties of the dog follow us to our home; they are connected with many of our pleasures and wants, and guard our sleeping hours.

The first animal of the domestication of which we have any account was the sheep. "Abel was a keeper of sheep."* It is difficult to believe that any long time would pass before the dog—who now in every country of the world is the companion of the shepherd, and the director or guardian of the sheep—would be enlisted in the service of man.

From the earliest known history he was the protector of the habitation of the human being. At the feet of the *lares*, those household deities who were supposed to protect the abodes of men, the figure of a barking dog was often placed. In every age, and almost in every part of the globe, he has played a principal part in the labours, the dangers, and the pleasures of the chase.

In process of time man began to surround himself with many servants from among the lower animals, but among them all he had only one friend—the dog; one animal only whose service was voluntary, and who was susceptible of disinterested affection and gratitude. In every country, and in every time, there has existed between man and the dog a connexion different from that which is observed between him and any other animal. The ox and the sheep submit to our control, but their affections are principally, if not solely, confined to themselves. They submit to us, but they can rarely be said to love, or even to recognise us, except as connected with the supply of their wants.

The horse will share some of our pleasures. He enjoys the chase as much as does his rider; and, when contending for victory on the course, he feels the full influence of emulation. Remembering the pleasure he has experienced with his master, or the daily supply of food from the hand of the groom, he often exhibits evident tokens of recognition; but that is founded on a selfish principle—he neighs that he may be fed, and his affections are easily transferred.

* Gen. iv. 2.

The dog is the only animal that is capable of disinterested affection. He is the only one that regards the human being as his companion, and follows him as his friend; the only one that seems to possess a natural desire to be useful to him, or from a spontaneous impulse attaches himself to man. We take the bridle from the mouth of the horse, and turn him free into the pasture, and he testifies his joy in his partially recovered liberty. We exact from the dog the service that is required of him, and he still follows us. He solicits to be continued as our companion and our friend. Many an expressive action tells us how much he is pleased and thankful. He shares in our abundance, and he is content with the scantiest and most humble fare. He loves us while living, and has been known to pine away on the grave of his master.

As an animal of draught the dog is highly useful in some countries. What would become of the inhabitants of the northern regions, if the dog were not harnessed to the sledge, and the Laplander, and the Greenlander, and the Kamtchatkan drawn, and not unfrequently at the rate of nearly a hundred miles a day, over the snowy wastes? In Newfoundland, the timber, one of the most important articles of commerce, is drawn to the water-side by the docile but ill-used dog: and we need only to cross the British Channel in order to see how useful, and, generally speaking, how happy, a beast of draught the dog can be.

Though, in our country, and to its great disgrace, this employment of the dog has been accompanied by such wanton and shameful cruelty, that the Legislature—somewhat hastily confounding the abuse of a thing with its legitimate purpose—forbade the appearance of the dog-cart in the metropolitan districts, and were inclined to extend this prohibition through the whole kingdom, it is much to be desired that a kindlier and better feeling may gradually prevail, and that this animal, humanely treated, may return to the discharge of the services of which nature has rendered him capable, and which prove the greatest source of happiness to him while discharging them to the best of his power.

In another and very important particular, as the preserver of human life, the history of the dog will be most interesting. The writer of this work has seen a Newfoundland dog who, on five distinct occasions, preserved the life of a human being; and it is said of the noble quadruped whose remains constitute one of the most interesting specimens in the museum of Berne, that forty persons were rescued by him from impending destruction.

When this friend and servant of man dies, he does not or may not cease to be useful; for in many countries, and to a far greater extent than is generally imagined, his skin is useful for gloves, or leggings, or mats, or hammercloths; and, while even the Romans occasionally fattened him for the table, and esteemed his flesh a dainty, many thousands of people in Asia, Africa, and America, now breed him expressly for food.

If the publication of the present work should throw some additional light on the good qualities of this noble animal; if it should enable us to derive more advantage from the services that he can render—to train him more expeditiously and fully for the discharge of those services—to protect him from the abuses to which he is exposed, and to mitigate or remove some of the diseases which his connection with man has entailed upon him; if any of these purposes be accomplished, we shall derive considerable "useful knowledge" as well as pleasure from the perusal of the present volume.

Some controversy has arisen with regard to the origin of the dog. Professor Thomas Bell, to whom we are indebted for a truly valuable history of the British quadrupeds, traces him to the wolf. He says, and it is perfectly true, that the osteology of the wolf does not differ materially from that of the dog more than that of the different kinds of dogs differs; that the cranium is similar, and they agree in nearly all the other essential points; that the dog and wolf will readily breed with each other, and that their progeny, thus obtained, will again mingle with the dog. There is one circumstance, however, which seems to mark a decided difference between the two animals: the eye of the dog of every country and species has a circular pupil, but the position or form of the pupil is oblique in the wolf. Professor Bell gives an ingenious but not admissible reason for this. He attributes the forward direction of the eyes in the dog to the constant habit, "for many successive generations, of looking towards their master, and obeying his voice:" but no habit of this kind could by possibility produce any such effect. It should also be remembered that, in every part of the globe in which the wolf is found, this form of the pupil, and a peculiar setting on of the curve of the tail, and a singularity in the voice, cannot fail of being observed; to which may be added, that the dog exists in every latitude and in every climate, while the habitation of the wolf is confined to certain parts of the globe.

There is also a marked difference in the temper and habits of the two. The dog is, generally speaking, easily manageable, but nothing will, in the majority of cases, render the wolf moderately tractable. There are, however, exceptions to this. The author remembers a bitch wolf at the Zoological Gardens that would always come to the front bars of her den to be caressed as soon as any one that she knew approached. She had puppies while there, and she brought her little ones in her mouth to be noticed by the spectators; so eager, indeed, was she that they should share with her in the notice of her friends, that she killed them all in succession against the bars of her den as she brought them forcibly forward to be fondled.

M. F. Cuvier gives an account of a young wolf who followed his master everywhere, and showed a degree of affection and submission scarcely inferior to the domesticated dog. His master being unavoidably absent, he was sent to the menagerie, where he pined for his loss, and would scarcely take any food for a considerable time. At length, however, he attached himself to his keepers, and appeared to have forgotten his former associate. At the expiration of eighteen months his master returned, and, the moment his voice was heard, the wolf recognised him, and lavished on his old friend the most affectionate caresses. A second separation followed, which lasted three years, and again the long-remembered voice was recognised, and replied to with impatient cries; after which, rushing on his master, he licked his face with every mark of joy, menacing his keepers, towards whom he had just before been exhibiting fondness. A third separation occurred, and he became gloomy and melancholy. He suffered the caresses of none but his keepers, and towards them he often manifested the original ferocity of his species.

These stories, however, go only a little way to prove that the dog and the wolf have one common origin.

It may appear singular that in both the Old Testament and the New the dog was spoken of almost with abhorrence. He ranked among the