

**ZOOLOGICAL SKETCHES:  
A CONTRIBUTION TO  
THE OUT-DOOR STUDY  
OF NATURAL HISTORY**

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Zoological sketches: a contribution to the out-door study of natural history by Felix L. Oswald

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**FELIX L. OSWALD**

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1857 710

CIMARRON DOGS.

[See page 77.]

# ZOOLOGICAL SKETCHES

A CONTRIBUTION

TO THE

OUT-DOOR STUDY OF NATURAL HISTORY.

BY

FELIX L. OSWALD,

AUTHOR OF

"SUMMERLAND SKETCHES OF MEXICO AND CENTRAL AMERICA."

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"The Book of Nature is ever new, though never self-conflicting."—LESSING.

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WITH THIRTY-SIX ILLUSTRATIONS

BY HERMANN FABER.

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LONDON:

W. H. ALLEN & CO. 13 WATERLOO PLACE.

1883.

## PREFACE.

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THE tendencies of our realistic civilization make it evident that the study of natural science is destined to supersede the mystic scholasticism of the Middle Ages, and I believe that the standards of entertaining literature will undergo a corresponding change. The Spirit of Naturalism has awakened from its long slumber.

A year after the birth of the Emperor Tiberius, says Plutarch, a Grecian trading-vessel sailed along the coast of Aitolia in the Gulf of Patras, and when the sun went down the crew assembled at the helm to while away the night with songs and stories. The night was calm, and some of the sailors had already fallen asleep, when they heard from the coast a loud voice calling the name of their steersman, Thamus. They were all struck dumb with amazement, but at the third call Thamus manned himself and answered with a loud mariner's shout.

"O Thamus," the voice called again, "when you reach the heights of Palodes announce that the great Pan is dead!"

Four hours later, when the moonlit hills of Palodes

hove in sight, Thamus complied with the strange request, and a minute after, the coast resounded with indescribable shrieks and lamentations that continued for a long time, till they finally died away in the heights of the Acarnanian Mountains.

The tradition bears the mark of that suggestiveness which distinguishes a philosophical allegory from a priest-legend. Pan was the God of Nature. Can Plutarch have divined the significance of the impending change? Whatever is natural is wrong, was the keystone dogma of the mediæval schoolmen. The naturalism of antiquity was crushed by supernatural and antinatural dogmas. The worship of joy yielded to a worship of sorrow, the study of living nature to the study of dead languages and barren sophisms. Literature became a farrago of ghost-stories, monks' legends, witchcraft- and miracle-traditions, and astrological vagaries. The poison of antinaturalism tainted every science and every art and perverted the very instincts of the human mind. Painters vied in the representation of revolting tortures. The exiles of Mount Parnassus assembled on Mount Golgotha. The moralists that had suppressed the Olympic festivals compensated the public with autos-da-fé. The whole history of the Middle Ages is, indeed, the history of a long war against nature.

But nature has at last prevailed. Delusions are clouds, and the storm of the 'Thirty Years' War has



cleared our sky. The real secret of the astounding success of modern science and industry is a general *renaissance* of naturalism, and the same revival begins to manifest its influence in the tendencies of modern literature. Ghost-stories are going out of fashion. Like scrofula and other bequests of the Middle Ages, the sickly pessimism of the sentimental school is yielding to the influence of a revived taste for the pleasures of out-door life. Books of travel, of sports and adventure, historical, zoological, and even biological and cosmological studies, are fast superseding the historical romances of the last generation. Even the Pariahs of our reading-rooms have advanced from ghost-hunts to scalp-hunts, from impossibilities to improbabilities. And, moreover, the progress of natural science tends to supersede fiction by making it superfluous—even for romantic purposes. There is more romance in the travels of Humboldt, more magic in the idyls of Thoreau and the revelations of Darwin and Haeckel, than in all the fancies of the mediæval miracle-mongers. The wonders of nature begin to eclipse the wonders of supernaturalism. A Zoological Garden attracts more sight-seers than the best Passion-play. Pan has revived.

The plan of the present volume is modest enough: its theories are mere suggestions; its limits have often obliged me to reduce a chapter of zoological adventures to a page of zoological anecdotes. But in offering it as a contribution to the entertaining literature of the English

language, my diffidence arises from a distrust in my own abilities rather than from the deficient interest of the subject itself, for the history of that literature has repeatedly proved that natural science can be made more attractive than the products of fiction or mysticism—by just as much as the resources of nature exceed the resources of her rivals.

FELIX L. OSWALD.

CINCINNATI, *March*, 1882.

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