

ANIMAL PLAYFULNESS.

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ANIMALS, as well as men, seem to act thoroughly on the motto that "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." Even the animals which are most burdened with the fear of enemies are no exception to the rule. Whoever has once seen the gambols of

foxes with their young ones in the moonlight will acknowledge that Mr. and Mrs. Fox are very fond of a bout of fun. Nothing prettier in movement and gay manners could be witnessed. The old ones pretend to be hunted of their young, and double and tumble head over heels, and pretend to be caught by them in the most funny way. Many have been surprised to observe lions in confinement playing with their young cubs precisely like dogs or cats with their puppies or kittens. Surgeon-General Cowen has told of a pet tiger he had once, which was whimsically full of fun, and would play with its master for hours. Elephants are essentially playful, though occasionally clumsy in their ways; and tame bears are in this respect delightful. Whales and seals—grave mammals both, the seal especially, with its pathetic eyes, as though it felt itself cribbed, cabined, and confined, in

that footless, flappery condition—are buoyantly playful at certain times; and they say that to see the seals disporting with their young ones in the sea, just after they have first conveyed them there, is something not to be forgotten. Porpoises have definite games, and roll and tumble in the most diverting manner.

And the small creatures, in this respect, certainly do not let the big ones have the running all to themselves. If you have a lot of sticklebacks in your aquarium, and have a mind to watch them well, you will see playfulness and fun combined with business in such a manner as you could hardly elsewhere find. We have lain and watched the pretty little long-snouted, whiskered water-shrews at play for hours on the margin of the ponds where they live—chasing each other, tumbling over each other, and, when they were tired of the earth, carrying their game into the water, where they would pursue the chase, dive down after each other, and indulge in a thousand pretty gambols.

Miss Kingsley declares that the games of the little prairie dogs of America are so quaint and pretty that she never saw anything to beat them anywhere; and of the tricks and revels of monkeys everybody knows.

Many birds have dancing parties or balls, and, what is more, prepare bowers to have them in. Every one who has seen the American grouse, or prairie-fowl, at play, not to speak of the Australian bower-birds, declares that it is one of the queerest sights on earth. Whether or not the dancing is connected with the mating, there can be no doubt that it is "playful"—highly playful—and that, to parody the poet Wordsworth, "they enjoy the air they breathe,



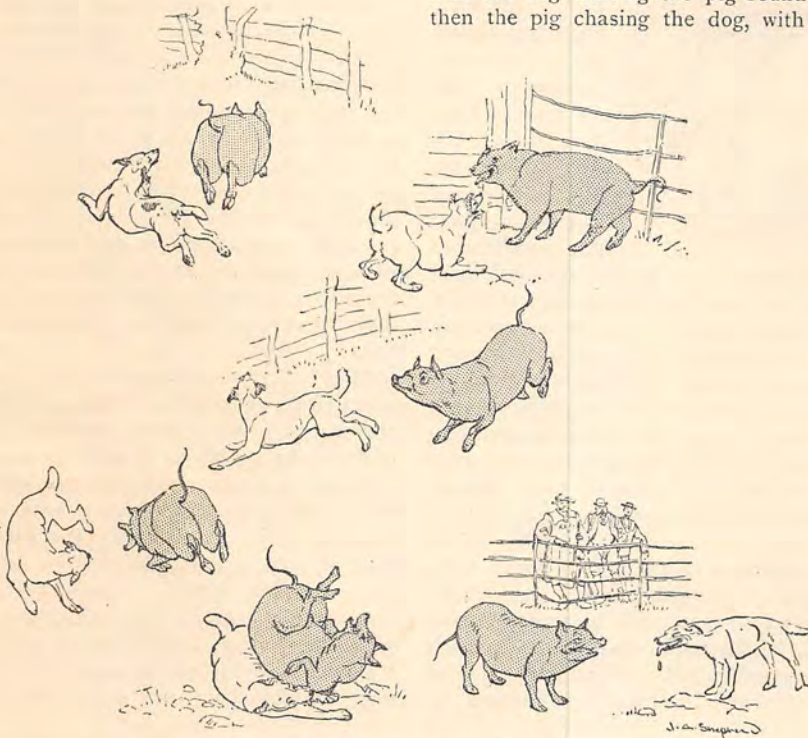
FOXES AT PLAY.

and every motion they go through brings a thrill of pleasure."

But our domestic animals afford plenty of room for observation, and will provide wealth of fun to those who are fond of them and like to study them.

"Shortly after I began housekeeping," says a friend, "we had a cat who used to come up, wake us every morning regularly, and then get to bed. At that time he was a kitten. We called him 'Thomas

invariable tendency thus to indulge in games of romps with each other. A friend of mine has told me over and over again of the amusement he derived for a whole season from the affection which a young pig had formed for a terrier dog. The pig would follow the dog everywhere it was allowed to do so, and was much distressed when it was driven back and the master would not have its company any farther. The dog and pig were wont to play the nicest games of "touch" in a meadow close by the farm-house; first the dog chasing the pig round and round, and then the pig chasing the dog, with a mixed chorus



A GAME OF "TOUCH."

Henry,' and he was a darling. At that time I also possessed a very pretty tortoise called 'Mary Ann.' Thomas Henry was devoted to her. They used to drink milk out of the same saucer, and when they had finished Thomas Henry would lick the milk off Mary Ann's head and neck, and tidy her up generally. She was so used to the process that she only blinked her eyes, and did not even trouble herself to draw in her head. When evening came, and Mary Ann was too sleepy to toddle about with him, he used to have a game of his own invention. He used to pick up Mary Ann in his arms, and see how far he could run on his hind-legs before letting her fall. I have often seen him run six or seven yards before letting her down. This absurd game always went on in a passage with an oilcloth floor, so that the quick scurrying footsteps could be heard at some distance, and every tumble made a great bang!"

The oddly assorted friendships and companionships of animals gain much in effect from their almost

of squeals and barks, when sometimes one or other would be tripped up in mid-chase, and the two go rolling over each other. The farmer was wont to let the two loose in the meadow that his friends from the windows of the house might enjoy the laughable entertainment, accounts of which I have frequently heard from them as well as from him.

It is a commonplace now with the poets to speak of "silly sheep." But the wild sheep is by no means "silly" in any sense of the word. The sheep which has been under the domain of man from time immemorial has lost all "go" and fun in the process of putting on fat for the good of man; and when we think of this we always recall the theory of the old goatherd that a goat was a sheep of genius that had set up a family on his own account; the ministry of man in many cases is destructive of the native genius of the creature domesticated, for purposes of utility, at all events, and perhaps in no case more so than in this. But the wild sheep are



"BY TWOS AND FOURS THEY ADVANCE" (p. 832).

hard-headed and crafty, and bad to hunt. Lord Dunraven says if you want to stalk them, you must ascend above, and not attempt it from below—they are too cute for you. And they are full of fun and playfulness. His lordship, in his account of hunting the wild sheep on the mountains, was very much struck by the fact that they mixed up business with sport and playfulness in a very noticeable manner. "Finding," he says, "that they generally came down about eight or nine o'clock in the morning, I used to get there about seven, and sit down and patiently wait for them. I have seen them over and over again descend the mountain, skylarking among themselves, galloping down a few hundred yards, and then stopping and looking out carefully over the whole country. Finally, with a deal of playful curvetting, they would descend to the pond, and, after some hesitation and a great deal of caution, would walk boldly out on the plain and begin to lick the alkali and browse a little on the grass. They would stop down sometimes an hour or two if undisturbed, and I

Many of the wild animals when tamed develop a more remarkable vein of playfulness and *naïveté* than even the long domesticated animals.

The Rev. J. G. Wood, for example, tells of a coati-mondi (*nasua narica*), a kind of racoon, which had been given to the children of a correspondent as a present by a Swedish captain. It used to play the oddest tricks, and enjoy them. Some of the friends of the family had a horror of Kiko. This he well knew, and used to take advantage of it. He would run, dashing at them furiously, making extraordinary noises, with his mouth wide open, showing his tremendous teeth. They used to rush away from him, of course, or get up on chairs and call for help. Kiko then would actually double up with fun, and chuckle with delight. A favourite trick of Kiko's was to lie in wait on the top of the garden wall, leap on the back of anyone who was passing underneath, and cling round their necks. This, we are assured, was done for pure playfulness and mischief, as he never treated any of his friends in this fashion.

The coati's tricks were almost matched by those of Jemmy, the Suricate, of which Frank Buckland so delightfully tells in one of his volumes.

Mr. Saville Kent, in an article in *Nature*, vol. VIII., p. 229, on "Intellect of Porpoises," tells how curious and playful these creatures are, describing how when a few dog-fish (*Acanthias* and *Mustelus*), three or four feet long, were introduced to the tank, they fell victims, the porpoises seizing them by their tails, and swimming off with and shaking them in a most laughable manner; reminding the spectator of a large dog worrying a rat.

Among birds playfulness is a very marked feature. Not to speak of parrots, starlings, jackdaws, and magpies, it may be seen in crows and pigeons, and many others. The tappings of the woodpecker on the old elm-tree, according to later observations, in which the Duke of Argyll led the way, are not gone through at all in the process of search for insects, as has been so long believed; in that business it does not want to warn the insects of its proximity to them by any such



KIKO.

have often watched them scamper off again, butting each other with their heads in sport, and at last they would clamber up the mountain sides and disappear."

noises. Scientific ornithologists say that in this exercise he combines playfulness with the business of courtship, as so many of his betters do; but, at all events, we may now say with certainty that Mr. Woodpecker is not engaged in his most *serious* calling when he is tapping the old elm-tree.

But to see playfulness reduced to system, just as human playfulness is reduced to system in outdoor games or in dancing-balls, we must turn to the American grouse, prairie fowl, and the bower-birds of Australia. In *Scribner's Magazine* for August, 1877, we find a description of the bowers of the American grouse, which are prepared by much beating of wings and stamping of feet. The prairie grass is thus stamped out. The hall is surrounded by rustling grass and golden asters.

Morning and evening a party assembles here, and pirouettes and curtseys. By twos and fours they advance, bowing their heads and dropping their wings; then they recede and advance again, and turn on their toes, swelling their feathers and clucking with gentle hilarity. Many cocks, we learn, join in the dance, but there is no attempt at unseemly battle.

The same habit is found in the prairie fowl. The only difference between this amusement of the two birds seems to be that the prairie fowl runs over a larger area, and usually selects some bare knoll covered with scant, short grass.

Mr. Lord, in his "Naturalist in British Colum-

bia," gives an excellent account of a dance he witnessed, at which there were present eighteen or twenty birds. Though he found it difficult to distinguish the males from the females—the plumage being so nearly alike—he concluded that the females were the passive ones. The four birds nearest to him, he says, were head to head like gamecocks in fighting attitude, the neck-feathers ruffled up, the little sharp tail elevated, the wings dropped close to the ground, but keeping up by a rapid vibration a continuous throbbing or drumming sound.

They circled round and round each other in slow waltzing time, he goes on to say, always maintaining the same attitude, but never striking at or grappling with each other; then the pace increased, and one hotly pursued the other until he faced about, and, *tête-à-tête*, went waltzing round again. Then they did a sort of "Cure" performance, jumping about two feet into the air until they were winded. Then they strutted about and "struck an attitude," like an acrobat after a successful tumble. There were others marching about, with their tails and heads as high as they could stick them up. We are further told that the music to this eccentric dance was the loud "chuck-chuck," continuously repeated, and the strange throbbing sound produced by the vibrating wings.

Signor Beccarri has given an account of a newer species of bower bird in New Guinea, which seems to be quite as playful as its earlier discovered congeners.

A RANK SWINDLE.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

"SARAH, love, see what scope a twenty-five-mile radius will afford," I said, placing one point of the compasses on the map at Charing Cross and describing a circle. "Why, the area includes fifty towns, all more or less suitable."

"But, Edwin, when we were married you promised me we should live in the country."

"Yes, love; but for many reasons we must be near a town. I shall have to be in London every day—barring Sunday—which necessitates proximity to a railway

station. You would mope to death at being left alone in an isolated country house. There is the question of post and telegraph: we must have two deliveries of letters daily, and telegrams free of portage. As we shall not, at any rate for a time, keep a carriage, you would have to do your shopping and marketing on foot. Then it is essential that tradespeople should call for orders. Besides, domestic servants will not put up with—"

"You practical old darling!" cried Sarah, sealing my lips with a kiss. "I picture it all—our first home. Oh, Edwin, we shall be so, so happy!"

Before we closed our eyes that night we had made up our minds to advertise, and advertise we accordingly did.

The answers were legion, and it seemed as if we had but to pick and choose. A closer acquaintance with facts, however, undeceived us, and after weeks of incessant travel, worry, and disappointment, we were apparently as far from the attainment of our goal as when we began. There was nothing for it, therefore, but to continue in lodgings, in the vague hope that something might turn up.

We were not left long in suspense.

One evening in March, on returning from the City,

