

THE
RAMBLE IN THE WOODS;
OR, A DIALOGUE ON
MAN AND ANIMALS.



NEW HAVEN—S. BABCOCK.

Sidney's Press.

1829.



Children with marbles should not play for fair,
Lest they become gamblers before they're aware.

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CAMEL LEOPARD.

THE RAMBLE.

As Mr. F. and his children were walking out one morning, they were conducted by a small path to a forest, which was highly beautified by the reflected rays of the rising sun.—Swarms of merry gnats danced in the open spaces of the wood; birds of every note sang, in uninterrupted gladness, amid its deep recesses. The nimble squirrel was observed, occasionally leaping from bough to bough; and the timid eye of the wild rabbit was seen peeping from behind the trees; and then, disappearing, she swiftly escaped to her inaccessible borough. How happy are young people whose tastes are elevated to the enjoyment of these simple pleasures, and who find their parents intelligent friends, capable of cultivating these tastes, of inspiring and guiding their love of knowledge, and of giving a right direction to both!

Joseph.—I think papa, if I were going to be changed into any thing else, I should like best to be a rabbit and live here in the woods, they seem so comfortable and happy!

Father.—Can you tell me, Joseph, what is the greatest difference between you and a rabbit?

Joseph.—Why, papa, we are as different as can be. Rabbits have got long ears, and four legs, and are covered all over with soft hair.

Father.—So far, then, the rabbit seems to have the advantage of you, for it can run faster with four legs than you can with only two; and its long ears enable it to hear plainer; and it has a warm dress, ready made, without any trouble or expence; now can you think of any thing in which you are better off than the rabbit?

Joseph was such a very little boy that he could not think of any thing, but his brother Edward answered for him, Why, we are better off than

rabbits in almost every thing; we can talk, laugh, and read, and write, and learn latin!

Father.—It is true, the rabbit cannot do these things; but then she is quite independent of them, for she can satisfy all her wants without their assistance. Richard, can you give us a more particular account of the difference between Man and Animals?

Richard.—I suppose, papa, the chief difference is, our having reason and they only instinct.

Father.—But in order then to understand what we mean by the terms ‘reason’ and ‘instinct,’ I think three things may be mentioned, in which the difference very distinctly appears.

Richard.—What are they, papa?

Father.—Let us first, in order to bring the parties as nearly on a level as possible, consider man in a savage state, wholly occupied like the beasts of the field, in providing



for his animal nature ; and here the first distinction, that appears between him and the creatures around him, is, *the use of implements.*

Richard.—Ah, I should never have thought of that.

Father.—When a savage provides himself with a hut, or a crawl, or a wigwam, for a shelter, or that he may store up his provision, he does no more than the rabbit, the beaver, the bee, and birds of every species. But man cannot make progress in his work without something like tools, however rude and simple in their form: he must provide himself with an axe even before he can lop down a tree for its timber; whereas these animals form their burrows, their cells, or their nests, with the greatest nicety, with no other tools than those with which nature has provided them. In cultivating the ground, also, man can do nothing without a spade or a plough; nor can he reap what he has



THE SLOTH.

sown, until he has shaped an instrument, with which to cut down his harvests. But the animals provide for themselves and their young without any of these things.

Edward.—Then, here again, the animals are the best off.

Father.—That's not our present enquiry. Now for the second distinction:—Man, in all his operations, *makes mistakes*—animals make none.

Edward.—Do animals never make mistakes?

Father.—Why Edward, did you ever see or hear of such a thing as a little bird, sitting disconsolate on a twig, lamenting over her half finished nest, and puzzling her little pate to know how to complete it? Did you ever see the cells of bee-hives in clumsy irregular shapes, or observe any thing like a discussion in the little community, as if there was a difference of opinion among the architects?

The boys laughed, and said they had never heard of such a thing.

Father.—Animals are even better physicians than we are; for when they are ill they will, many of them, seek out some particular herb, which they do not use as food, and which possesses a medicinal quality exactly suited to the complaint. Whereas, the whole College of Physicians will dispute for a whole century, and not at last agree, upon the virtues of a single drug. Man undertakes nothing in which he is not more or less puzzled: he must try numberless experiments before he can bring his undertakings to any thing like perfection; and these experiments imply a succession of *mistakes*. Even the simplest operations of domestic life are not well performed without some *experience*; and the term of man's life is half wasted before he has done with his mistakes and begins to profit by his lessons.



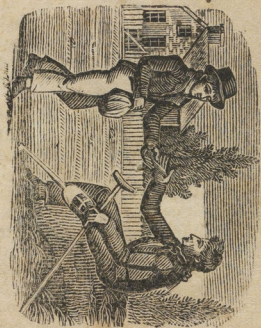
Edward.—Then, papa, how is it? for after all we *are* better than animals?

Father.—Observe, then, our third distinction, which is, that animals make no *improvements*; while the knowledge, and the skill, and the success of man is perpetually on the increase. The inventions and discoveries of one generation, are, through the medium of literature, handed down to succeeding ones; so that the accumulated experience of all former ages and nations is ready for our use, before we begin to think and act for ourselves. The result of which is, that the most learned and ingenious of the ancient philosophers, Aristotle or Archimedes, might learn in an hour of a modern school boy, more than the laborious study of their lives could enable them to discover.

Richard.—Well, I am glad we have thought of something at last, to prove that men are wiser than rabbits!

Father.—Herein appears the difference between what we call ‘instinct’ and ‘reason.’ Animals in all their operations, follow the first impulse of nature, or that invariable law which God has implanted in them. In all they do undertake, therefore, their works are more perfect than those of men. But man, having been endowed with the faculty of thinking or reasoning about what he does, although this liberty exposes him to mistake, and is perpetually leading him into error, yet by patience, perseverance, and industry, and long experience, he at last achieves what angels may, perhaps, behold with admiration. A bird’s nest is indeed a perfect and beautiful structure; yet, the nest of a swallow of the nineteenth century, is not at all more commodious, or elegant, than those which were built amid the rafters of Noah’s Ark. But if we compare, (I will not say Adam’s

bower, for that was doubtless in the finest style of nature's own architecture;) but if we compare the wigwam of the North American Indian, with the Temples and Palaces of ancient Greece and Rome, we then shall see to what man's *mistakes*, rectified and improved upon, conduct him. Animals can provide for their wants and those of their offspring, with the utmost adroitness; and just so, and no more, did their ancestors. While man, after having provided for his first necessities, emerging gradually from the savage state, begins to cultivate poetry and music—proceeds to the knowledge of arts and sciences—unknown and unthought of by his rude forefathers, till, (in humble imitation of the works of God himself,) he gives exquisite construction to the rudest materials, which nature has left for his use; supplying those artificial wants and wishes, for which it was beneath her dignity to provide;



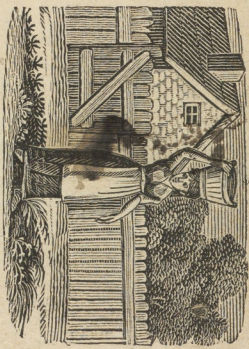
and while his hand thus executes all that is ingenious and beautiful, his thoughts glance at all that is magnificent and sublime.

Philip.—Papa, the sun is now fast setting, shall we not return home, we may get lost in these woods?—but who is that, sitting upon yonder rock? he looks faint and hungry.

Edward.—It is a cripple. Part of our dinner is still in the basket: shall I not give it to him, papa? I think he will be very glad to receive it?

Father.—Yes, my son, you may. I am glad to see you disposed to relieve those in distress. Benevolence is a noble feeling. As oft as you meet with objects of charity, I wish you to relieve them, though your means may be small—and thus you will be likely to gain the esteem, not only of all good boys, but of Him who has made us to differ from the animals around us, and who has told us that it is ‘more blessed to give than to receive.’

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A Rattle.



Adoration.