

*Recorded instances of children having been nourished
by Wolves and Birds of Prey.*

(Read before the Bombay Natural History Society on 7th May 1889.)

The wolf is, as its very name shows, a ferocious and blood-thirsty animal. The word is the same as the Sanscrit Vrika (Av. Vehrka, Pahl. and Pers. gúrg and *Lat.* Vulpes, Germ. wolf) and comes from an old Aryan root, varek, (वरेक), to tear off. Though by nature a ferocious animal, as implied by the root of the word, it is susceptible of entertaining towards mankind parental or human feelings. This paper is intended to describe a case of this tender feeling as recorded in India, and to state a few similar cases, as narrated in old classical literature, of wolves and birds of prey.

I was travelling in Northern India in the early part of 1887, and when I was at Agra at the end of March, I was attracted to a place known as Secundra, which contained a tomb of Mariam, a Christian wife of the great Akbar, who had, in accordance with his views of tolerating different religions, taken to his harem, wives of different nationalities. I went there to see, if there was anything specially Christian in the tomb of that queen, as there was something specially Hindu in the royal chambers of his Hindu wife at Fatehpur Sikri. Though I saw nothing there specially Christian, I was pleased with my visit to that place, as I saw there a man who was generally known as the wolf-boy. A boy of the Secundra Church Mission Orphanage, which is located there, drew my attention to this man, whose history reminded me of what I had read in classical literature of ferocious and blood-thirsty animals turning at times tender and kind-hearted. I will describe the history of this boy in the words of Rev. Mr. Lewis, who published a short history of the Secundra Orphanage in 1885. He says of this boy:—
“On February 4th, 1867, he was sent to the Superintendent of the Orphanage by the Magistrate of Bulandshahr, with the statement that he had been taken out of a wolf's hole or den. Some natives, it turned out on further enquiry, had been travelling by some unfrequented part of the jungle in the Bulandshahr district and had been surprised to see a small boy, of five or six years of age, walking about on his hands and feet. On drawing near to see this strange sight, they were amazed to see the boy disappear quickly within the interior of a large hole, which, on close inspection, turned out to be the dwelling place of some wild beast. Finding that all efforts to unearth the boy were fruitless, and

fearing to venture in after him, they set off to report the unusual occurrence to the Magistrate Saheb of Bulandshahr. This gentleman on hearing the story despatched messengers to the spot, with instructions to light a fire at the mouth of the cave, so as to force out the occupant of the hole by means of the smoke. This was done, and on the blinding and choking fumes making their way into the furthest corner of the hole, a fine snarling she-wolf sprang forth with a bound, and after scattering the bystanders in considerable terror, rushed away for safety and dear life. A moment later the boy too came forth, when he fell an easy prey to those intent on securing him. On conveying him to the Magistrate, the boy was found to be speechless, imbecile, and as near an approach to an animal as a human creature can possibly be. Vegetable food was offered to him ; but this he refused. And it was only when meat was placed before him that he would eat. Finding it impossible to ever make the boy rational and useful, the Magistrate forwarded him to Secundra, with the request that he might be allowed an asylum there."

This is the short history of the boy as given in the book referred to above. Though wanting in the most ordinary intelligence, he seemed to be sensible of many things. He is reported, in the book in question, to be sociable and unselfish, and "always willing to share his numerous gifts with any one caring to have them." Owing to the lateness of age at which he was brought to the Orphanage he could not be taught to speak, though the attempts of the authorities of the Orphanage in other respects have been successful. At the time, when I saw him, he was asked by a boy of the Orphanage, by means of signs, to walk like a wolf. He did so on his hands and feet. Then he made me some signs which were interpreted to me as a desire to have some money for smoking cheroots, of which, I was told, he was very fond. At the time when he was first brought to the Orphanage he walked like an animal on his hands and feet, but he was soon taught to walk erect. At first he did not allow clothes to be put on him. He tore and threw them away ; however, he was soon brought round to the use of these. His desire for raw meat only as food was gradually subdued for that of vegetables and ordinary cooked food. He is very ugly in appearance. It is supposed that the boy must have come across the path of a she-wolf, and that she, having lost her young ones, treated him with motherly kindness and care in place of her little ones ; or that she must have stolen the boy from the side of his mother, as is very frequently the case in the poor cottages of many villages in the North-Western Provinces, and then instead of devouring him, must have entertained some attachment for him.

The Rev. Mr. Lewis says that Secundra Orphanage has been the home of two other wolf-boys and one wolf-girl. My attention was kindly drawn by a friend to the proceedings of 1875 of the Bengal Asiatic Society, before whom a paper was read on a similar subject by the geologist, Mr. V. Ball. This paper contains a short account of one of the two boys referred to, supplied to Mr. Ball by the Rev. Mr. Erhardt, the then Superintendent of the Secundra Orphanage. The account says of one of the boys that "he was brought to us on March 5th, 1872. He was found by Hindus who had gone hunting wolves in the neighbourhood of Mynpuri, had been burnt out of the den, and was brought here with the scars and wounds still on him. In his habits he was a perfect wild animal in every point of view. He drank like a dog, and liked a bone and raw meat better than anything else. He would never remain with the other boys, but hide away in any dark corner. Clothes he never would wear, but tore them up into fine shreds. He was only a few months among us, as he got fever and gave up eating. We kept him for a time by artificial means, but eventually he died."

Mr. Erhardt says further on : "Neither of the above are new cases however. At the Lucknow mad-house there was an elderly fellow only four years ago, and may be there now, who had been dug out of a wolves' den by a European doctor, when I forget, but it must be a good number of years ago."

Ancient classical literature holds before us several cases of such miraculous escapes of children at the hands of ferocious animals and birds, like the wolf and the eagle.

(1) The case of Romulus and Remus is well known to many of us. Amulius, a king of Alba Longa, who had deprived his elder brother, Numitor, of his rightful claim to the throne, being fearful lest the heirs of Numitor might rise against him, caused his son to be murdered and his daughter Silvia to be made a Vestal virgin. Silvia being violated by Mars gave birth to two sons, Romulus and Remus, who together with their mother were ordered to be drowned in a stream of the Tiber, whence they were carried by a she-wolf, who had come there to satiate her thirst, and who feeling an attachment for them, suckled and nourished them. Their discovery at the wolf-den by Faustulus, the king's shepherd, led to their ultimate return to their grandfather Numitor and to the foundation of Rome.

(2) Tradition has attributed to Zoroaster a miraculous protection at the hand of she-wolves. When a child he was stolen from his house by some-evil minded persons, who predicted a great blow to their evil cause at the hand of the child, when it came to age. They took the

child to a den of wolves at a time when the ferocious beasts were absent from their home, killed their young ones, and placed the child there, with a view that the wolves on their return, finding their young ones thus killed, might wreak their vengeance upon the child. The wolves on their return seeing what had taken place, at first, grew furious, but soon after took the deserted child under their protection, until it was discovered and taken home by the mother, who was wandering in search of the child.

Old classical literature gives us other instances where young children were nourished and brought up, not by wolves, but ferocious birds.

(3) Firdousi, the great Homer of the East, in his well-known Persian epic, the Shah-nameh, says of the father of Rustam, the great national hero of Iran, the Hercules of Persia, that he was brought up by a ferocious bird, called Simorg, which, according to the great Persian historian, Sir John Malcolm, is the same as the bird Rokh, and which according to some authors is the same as the Griffin, and according to others the same as the Phoenix. It was called Simorg (*i.e.*, 30 birds), because it was thought to be as strong singly as 30 other large birds combined. According to Firdousi, in the time of king Minocheher, the wife of Sâ'm, the Persian General, gave birth to a son, whose body was all covered with gray hairs like that of an old man. Just as William II was surnamed Rufus, from the redness of his hair, just as Pyrrhus was so called from the yellowness of his curls, and just as the family of Julius Cæsar derived its surname of Cæsar from the fact of its founder having a thick curl of hair (*Lat.* caes-ar-ies, *Sans.* केश, kesa), so this child of Sâ'm was called Zâl-i-zar, *i.e.*, golden-haired old man. The great Persian General Sâ'm disliked this ugly-looking child, and thought that it brought shame and disgrace upon the family, so he sent the child away to the Caucasus to be exposed on Mount Elburz. While there the bird Simorg came to prey upon it, but instead of devouring the child, it had compassion on it, and took it to its own abode and nourished it with drops of blood from other young animals that it killed. The child was nourished by the bird till it grew up to be a boy, and was taken away by the father, who was always labouring under the stings of conscience for his cruelty towards the child.

Firdousi thus describes the interview between the child and the ferocious bird :—

“ Chû Simorg râ bachê shud gursnê,
 Beparvâz bar shud buland az bané
 Bebordash damân tâ be Elbourz kûh
 Ke bûdash dar ânjà kanâm-i-garûh
 Suyê bachegân bord tâ beshkarand

Bedân nâle-i-zâr-i-û benegrad
 Bebakhshûd Yazdân-i-niki dehash
 Yaki bûdani dâst andar bavesh
 Khodâvand meheri be simorg dâd
 Nekard û bekhurdan as ân bache yâd
 Negeh kard Sîmorg bâ bachegan
 Bar ân khûrd khun az dû dideh chegân
 Shegaft ân kê bar-u fekandand meher
 Bemândand khireh badân khûbcheher
 Shekari ke nâzuktarân bar guzid
 Ke bîshîr mehmân hami khun mazîd,"

i.e., "When the young ones of the Sîmorg got hungry, the bird went flying from its nest into the air. It carried it (*i.e.*, the child) rapidly to the Elbourz mountain, where there was the nest of its family. It carried it to its young ones, so that they may devour it, and see the excessive weeping of the child. God the bestower of goodness favoured the child because there was a long life in store for it. God gave tenderness of heart to the Sîmorg and therefore it did not think of devouring the child. Sîmorg and its young ones looked to the child which was shedding tears from both its eyes. It was marvellous that they showed kindness to the child, and were struck with astonishment at the good-featured child. It (Sîmorg) selected for the child delicate and young animals so that the guest (*i.e.*, the child) may taste their blood instead of milk."

(4) Again, Greek writers also speak of a Persian prince Achæmines being nourished by an eagle.

(5) So was Zanymedes, a beautiful boy of Phrygia, nourished by an eagle.

(6) Semiramis, the founder of the Assyrian empire of Ninevah, was miraculously preserved and fed by doves. Her mother, Derceto, of Ascalon, in Syria, being ashamed of her frailty with a Syrian youth, exposed this infant child in an open place, where she was preserved and nourished by doves till she was discovered by some wandering shepherds, who took her to Simmas, the chief shepherd of the royal herds. It was from this Simmas that she derived her name of Semiramis. Her surpassing beauty first made her the wife of Onnes, one of the king's generals, and then that of the king himself.