

DARWIN'S JOURNAL OF A VOYAGE ROUND THE WORLD.
Part I. Murray's Colonial Library.

Mr Darwin's journal is an account of his researches into the natural history and geology of the countries visited during the voyage of the *Beagle*, under the command of Capt. Fitzroy. The *Beagle* sailed from England in December 1831. The object of the expedition was to complete the survey of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, commenced under Capt. King in 1826 to 1830, to survey the shores of Chili, Peru, and of some islands in the Pacific—and to carry a chain of chronometrical measurements round the world. The first edition of Mr Darwin's work was well received. In this edition he has condensed and corrected some parts, and has added to others, in order to render the volume more fitted for popular reading, referring the scientific inquirer to the larger publications which comprise the scientific results of the expedition. Mr Darwin's sketches of animals, birds, and other objects—of the geology of Patagonia—and of the vast changes effected in the American continent (which formerly swarmed with great monsters and extinct species), are written in a simple unaffected manner. Of his minute and critical habits of observation we might cite various instances did our limits permit. Here, for example, is an interesting remark on the parasitical habits of the cuckoo:—

"Many theories, even phrenological theories, have been advanced to explain the origin of the cuckoo laying its eggs in other birds' nests. M. Prévost alone, I think, has thrown light by his observations on this puzzle: he finds that the female cuckoo, which, according to most observers, lays at least from four to six eggs, must pair with the male each time after laying only one or two eggs. Now, if the cuckoo was obliged to sit on her own eggs, she would either have to sit on all together, and therefore leave those first laid so long, that they probably would become addled; or she would have to hatch separately each egg or two eggs, as soon as laid: but as the cuckoo stays a shorter time in this country than any other migratory bird, she certainly would not have time enough for the successive hatchings. Hence we can perceive in the fact of the cuckoo pairing several times, and laying her eggs at intervals, the cause of her depositing her eggs in other birds' nests, and leaving them to the care of foster-parents. I am strongly inclined to believe that this view is correct, from having been independently led to an analogous conclusion with regard to the South American ostrich, the females of which are parasitical, if I may so express it, on each other: each female laying several eggs in the nests of several other females, and the male ostrich undertaking all the cares of incubation, like the strange foster-parents with the cuckoo."

In travelling through Banda Oriental and Patagonia, he was struck with the shepherd dogs of the country:—

"It is a common thing to meet a large flock of sheep guarded by one or two dogs, at the distance of some miles from any house or man. I often wondered how so firm a friendship had been established. The method of education consists in separating the puppy, while very young, from the bitch, and in accustoming it to its future companions. An ewe is held three or four times a-day for the little thing to suck, and a nest of wool is made for it in the sheep-pen; at no time is it allowed to associate with other dogs, or with the children of the family. The puppy is, moreover, generally castrated; so that, when grown up, it can scarcely have any feelings in common with the rest of its kind. From this education it has no wish to leave the flock, and just as another dog will defend its master, man, so will these the sheep. It is amusing to observe, when approaching a flock, how the dog immediately advances barking, and the sheep all close in his rear, as if round the oldest ram. These dogs are also easily taught to bring home the flock at a certain hour in the evening."

The people on the banks of the Plata appear to be as ignorant as those of Central Africa. Mr Darwin thus describes a night at Maldonado:—

"On the first night we slept at a retired little country-house: and there I soon found out that I possessed two or three articles, especially a pocket compass, which created unbounded astonishment. In every house I was asked to show the compass, and by its aid, together with a map, to point out the direction of various places. It excited the liveliest admiration that I, a perfect stranger, should know the road (for direction and road are synonymous in this open country) to places where I had never been. At one house a young woman, who was ill in bed, sent to entreat me to come and show her the compass. If their surprise was great, mine was greater, to find such ignorance among people who possessed their thousands of cattle, and 'retancias' of great extent. It can only be accounted for by the circumstance that this retired part of the country is seldom visited by foreigners. I was asked whether the earth or sun moved; whether it was hotter or colder to the north; where Spain was, and many other such questions. The greater number of the inhabitants had an indistinct idea that England, London, and North America, were different names for the same place; but the better informed well knew that London and North America were separate countries close together, and that England was a large town in London! I carried with me some promethean matches, which I ignited by biting; it was thought so wonderful that a man should strike fire with his teeth, that it was usual to collect the whole family to see it: I was once offered a dollar for a single one. Washing my face in the morning caused much speculation at the village of Las Minas; a superior tradesman closely cross-questioned me about so singular a practice; and likewise, why on board we wore our beards; for he had heard from my guide that we did so. He eyed me with much suspicion; perhaps he had heard of ablutions in the Mahomedan religion, and knowing me to be a heretic, probably he came to the conclusion that all heretics were Turks. It is the general custom in this country to ask for a night's lodging at the first convenient house. The astonishment at the compass, and my other feats in jugglery, was to a certain degree advantageous, as with that, and the long stories my guides told of my breaking stones, knowing venomous from harmless snakes, collecting insects, &c., I repaid them for their hospitality."