

JOURNAL OF RESEARCHES into the Natural History and Geology of the Countries visited during the voyage of H.M.S. Beagle round the world. By C. Darwin. Second edition, with additions.—(Murray's Library, Nos. 22, 23, 24.)

A work especially interesting to the naturalist, and scarcely less attractive to the general reader. The author has retained the form of a journal for convenience, and though this circumstance now and then occasions a want of unity, it has the advantage of presenting a faithful delineation of first impressions, always the most striking, if not always the most accurate. As a specimen of Mr Darwin's lighter style, take this sketch of

RIO DE JANEIRO INNS.

“On first arriving, it was our custom to unsaddle the horses and give them their Indian corn; then, with a low bow, to ask the senhor to do us the favour to give us something to eat. Any thing you choose, sir, was his usual answer. For the first few times, vainly I thanked Providence for having guided us to so good a man. The conversation proceeding, the case universally became deplorable. ‘Any fish can you do us the favour of giving?’—‘Oh, no, sir.’—‘Any soup?’—‘No, sir.’—‘Any bread?’—‘Oh! no, sir.’—‘Any dried meat?’—‘Oh! no, sir.’ If we were lucky, by waiting a couple of hours, we obtained fowls, rice, and farinha. It not unfrequently happened that we were obliged to kill, with stones, the poultry for our own supper. When, thoroughly exhausted by fatigue and hunger, we timorously hinted that we should be glad of our meal, the pompous and (though true) most unsatisfactory answer was, ‘It will be ready when it is ready.’ If we had dared to remonstrate any further, we should have been told to proceed on our journey, as being too impertinent. The hosts are most ungraceful and disagreeable in their manners; their houses and their persons are often filthily dirty; the want of the accommodation of forks, knives, and spoons is common; and I am sure no cottage or hovel in England could be found in a state so utterly destitute of every comfort.”

There is spirit, too, in the description of .

SOUTH AMERICAN HORSEMANSHIP.

“One evening, a donidor (a subduer of horses) came for the purpose of breaking-in some colts. I will describe the preparatory steps, for I believe they have not been mentioned by other travellers. A troop of wild young horses is driven into the corral, or large enclosure of stakes, and the door is shut. We will suppose that one man alone has to catch and mount a horse, which as yet had never felt bridle or saddle. I conceive, except by a Gaucho, such a feat would be utterly impracticable. The Gaucho picks out a full-grown colt; and as the beast rushes round the circus, he throws his lazo so as to catch both the front legs. Instantly the horse rolls over with a heavy shock, and whilst struggling on the ground, the Gaucho, holding the lazo tight, makes a circle, so as to catch one of the hind legs, just beneath the fetlock, and draws it close to the two front legs; he then hitches the lazo, so that the

three are bound together. Then sitting on the horse's neck, he fixes a strong bridle, without a bit, to the lower jaw: this he does by passing a narrow thong through the eye-holes at the end of the reins, and several times round both jaw and tongue. The two front legs are now tied closely together with a strong leathern thong, fastened by a slip-knot. The lazo, which bound the three together, being then loosened, the horse rises with difficulty. The Gaucho now holding fast the bridle fixed to the lower jaw, leads the horse outside the corral. If a second man is present (otherwise the trouble is much greater) he holds the animal's head, whilst the first puts on the horsecloths and saddle, and girths the whole together. During this operation, the horse, from dread and astonishment at thus being bound round the waist, throws himself over and over again on the ground, and, till beaten, is unwilling to rise. At last, when the saddling is finished, the poor animal can hardly breathe from fear, and is white with foam and sweat. The man now prepares to mount by pressing heavily on the stirrup, so that the horse may not lose its balance; and at the moment that he throws his leg over the animal's back, he pulls the slip-knot binding the front legs, and the beast is free. Some 'domidores' pull the knot while the animal is lying on the ground, and, standing over the saddle, allow him to rise beneath them. The horse, wild with dread gives a few most violent bounds, and then starts off at full gallop: when quite exhausted, the man, by patience, brings him back to the corral, where, reeking hot and scarcely alive, the poor beast is let free. Those animals which will not gallop away, but obstinately throw themselves on the ground, are by far the most troublesome. This process is tremendously severe, but in two or three trials the horse is tamed. It is not, however, for some weeks that the animal is ridden with the iron bit and solid ring, for it must learn to associate the will of its rider with the feel of the rein, before the most powerful bridle can be of any service.

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"The Gauchos are well known to be perfect riders. The idea of being thrown, let the horse do what it likes, never enters their head. Their criterion of a good rider is, a man who can manage an untamed colt, or who, if his horse falls, alights on his own feet, or can perform other such exploits. I have heard of a man betting that he would throw his horse down twenty times, and that nineteen times he would not fall himself. I recollect seeing a Gaucho riding a very stubborn horse, which three times successively reared so high as to fall backwards with great violence. The man judged with uncommon coolness the proper moment for slipping off, not an instant before or after the right time; and as soon as the horse got up, the man jumped on his back, and at last they started at a gallop. The Gaucho never appears to exert any muscular force. I was one day watching a good rider, as we were galloping at a rapid pace, and thought to myself, 'surely if the horse starts, you appear so careless on your seat, you must fall.' At this moment, a male ostrich sprang from its nest right beneath the horse's nose: the young colt bounded on one side like a stag; but as for the man, all that could be said was, that he started and took fright with his horse.

"In Chile and Peru more pains are taken with the mouth of the horse than in La Plata, and this is evidently a consequence of the more intricate nature of the country. In Chile a horse is not considered perfectly broken, till he can be brought up standing, in the midst of his full speed, on any particular spot,—for instance, on a cloak thrown on the ground: or, again, he will charge a wall, and rearing, scrape the surface with his hoofs. I have seen an animal bounding with spirit, yet merely reined by a fore-finger and thumb, taken at full gallop across a court-yard, and made to wheel round the post of a veranda with great speed, but at so equal a distance, that the rider, with outstretched arm, all the while kept one finger rubbing the post. Then making a demi-volte in the air, with the other arm outstretched in a like manner, he wheeled round, with astonishing force, in an opposite direction.

"Such a horse is well broken; and although this at first may appear useless, it is far otherwise. It is only carrying that which is daily necessary into perfection. When a bullock is checked and caught by the lazo, it will sometimes gallop round and round in a circle, and the horse being alarmed at the great strain, if not well broken, will not readily turn like the pivot of a wheel. In consequence many men have been killed; for if the lazo once takes a twist round a man's body, it will instantly, from the power of the two opposed animals, almost cut him in twain. On the same principle the races are managed; the course is only two or three hundred yards long, the wish being to have horses that can make a rapid dash. The race-horses are trained not only to stand with their hoofs touching a line, but to draw all four feet together, so as at the first spring to bring into play the full action of the hind-quarters. In Chile I was told an anecdote, which I believe was true; and it offers a good illustration of the use of a well-broken animal. A respectable man, riding one day met two others one of whom was mounted on a horse, which he knew to have been stolen from himself. He challenged them; they answered him by drawing their sabres and giving chase. The man, on his good and fleet beast, kept just ahead: as he passed a thick bush he wheeled round it, and brought up his horse to a dead check. The pursuers were obliged to shoot on one side and ahead. Then instantly dashing on, right behind them, he buried his knife in the back of one, wounded the other, recovered his horse from the dying robber, and rode home. For these feats of horsemanship two things are necessary: a most severe bit, like the Mamaluke, the power of which, though seldom used, the horse knows full well; and large blunt spurs, that can be applied either as a mere touch, or as an instrument of extreme pain. I conceive that with English spurs, the slightest touch of which pricks the skin, it would be impossible to break in a horse after the South American fashion."