

RUDIMENTARY WAR

The Rarity of War among the Animals.

The stories of monkey warriors, engaging each other in human-like warfare, may be dismissed as the mythical tales of romantic travellers. All such stories are of the same category as those of the ghosts and hobgoblins invented to thrill the immature imagination.

The considerations set forth in Chapter IV have led many naturalists to doubt if war has existence among the Vertebrata sub-kingdom of animals, save among the sons of Adam. Among the insect communities of wasps, bees, ants and termites, something very like organised warfare does take place occasionally. For example, when there has been an exceptionally bad summer, bees will make predatory raids upon neighbouring hives, and in similar circumstances ants have also robbed their neighbours.

It is significant that these latter are property-owning animals, and the raids take place when all, raiders and raided alike, are short of supplies. The importance of this fact will become more prominent as we advance in our study of war and its origin. It is not that the economic factor lies at the root of human strife, but that this factor is an early intermediate cause of organised warfare.

Although there are points of resemblance between insect communities and human societies, the differences are very real, and it may be unwise to speculate prematurely upon the habits of animals so widely different from ourselves.

We may be sure that in so far as war does exist among the higher animals, other than man, it is of rare occurrence and not easily recognised at once as war.

The Atrocity.

Cattle that are at all combative in disposition will attack violently, and often fatally, a distressed member of their own herd which, owing to some accident, in great danger, or in momentary pain, struggles and cries for help.

The victim may be in perfect health and unwounded, and the phenomenon should not be confused with the treatment accorded to a sick and weak member, which is not pursued to a fatal end, and has for its purpose the preservation of the general health of the herd—Nature's plan of isolation for diseased animals, which after recovery rejoin the healthy and vigorous, again to take part in their rough games. This instinct of quarantine has its use, but the atrocity we have under observation cannot be said to have any obvious purpose.

Examples of the Atrocity.

Mr. W. H. Hudson, the eminent naturalist, who made a study of the nature and reason for this strange behaviour, tells how, when a small boy, he witnessed such a tragedy.

A little distance from the farm, while playing among the roots of some trees, he saw gathered on the bare level ground some domestic cattle just returned from pasture. In a vivid manner he thus describes what took place: "Hearing a great commotion among them, I climbed on to one of the high exposed roots, and looking over, I saw a cow on the ground, apparently unable to rise. She was moaning and bellowing in a distressed way, when suddenly a number of her excited companions crowded round and proceeded to gore her. I remember that I was very much frightened at what I saw, and that I ran home as fast as I could."

The naturalist also referred to a personal experience which greatly impressed the late Mr. Andrew Lang, who saw a similar incident take place among a herd of cattle in Scotland. One of them had got wedged between two rocks, and was struggling with distressed bellowings to free itself, when the others turned with sudden amazing fury upon the unfortunate beast and gored it to death.

Felix de Azara records a rather cruel experiment on the temper of some tame rats confined in a cage. The owner caught the tail of one of them through a crack and began

sharply pinching it. Its cries of distress and struggles to free itself greatly excited its fellow-prisoners. After rushing wildly round for some moments, they flew at their companion, fixed their teeth in its throat, and quickly dispatched it.

For the purpose of capturing rats in a farm, boards painted thickly with a suitable adhesive varnish are sometimes laid on the runs from their holes. Rats are unable to escape when their feet and tail become stuck to the board. It sometimes happens that two rats are captured side by side, and when this does take place, they invariably fight savagely with their teeth until one kills the other.

Many Naturalists, including Darwin, puzzled to Account for the Atrocity.

Darwin, who knew how animals possessing the social instinct assist each other, and who describes how an elephant, after escaping from a pit, also helped its companion to escape, was astonished to note that upon a certain occasion some elephants attacked a fellow caught in a trap, from which it was struggling to free itself.

In his *Essay on Instinct* he could not ascribe any satisfactory reason for this cruel behaviour. In *The Descent of Man* he refers to it, and says: "This is almost the blackest fact in natural history, unless, indeed, the explanation which has been suggested is true, that their instinct or reason leads them to expel an injured companion, lest beasts of prey, including man, should be tempted to follow the troop."

After observing that such conduct is not much worse than some barbarian customs among savages, Darwin dismisses the subject, and goes on to give instances illustrating how animals show love and sympathy for each other in danger, old age and sickness.

The hint that the atrocity might in certain circumstances be useful was extended into a current belief among naturalists that it was based upon true instinct. They readily confused it with the instinct of quarantine, and Dr. Romanes, for example, remarks: "We may readily imagine that the instinct displayed by many herbivorous animals of goring sick and wounded companions is really of use in countries where the presence of weak members in a herd is a source of danger to the herd from the prevalence of wild beasts."

Here it is erroneously assumed that the sick are set upon and killed, which is not a fact. Sickness and decay from age or other cause imperceptibly increase, so that the sight of a drooping member grows familiar to the herd, as does that of an individual possessing some malformation or unusual colour, as in the case of an albino.

The individual attacked in the abnormal way we have described is as often as not in perfect health and vigour, and may even be unwounded. It is of the same species as the attackers, and it may be of either sex and of any age.

The Atrocity not confined to the Herbivora.

It is perhaps necessary that we should correct any possible impression that it is only among the herbivora that the useless killing of a perfectly healthy individual takes place at these casual times.

It is the instinct of wolves to devour the creature they overcome and kill. When a pack of starving wolves pursue the ponies drawing a sleigh, if a passenger shoots and wounds one of them, so that it yelps and rolls upon the ground, the others sometimes attack and consume it, in the belief, presumably, that it is one of the ponies. This has given rise to the myth that wolves and other preying beasts are cannibalistic.

A similar mistake is sometimes made by jaguars, for if a jaguar captures a peccary out of a drove and does not instantly escape with his prize into a tree, he runs a risk of being attacked, slain, and then eaten by his fellows, even to the skin and bones.

In no other ordinary circumstances, even when famished, will predatory animals devour their own species, such action being contrary to the instinct of self-preservation.

The Atrocity not based upon Instinct, but the Aberration of an Instinct.

The explanation given by Mr. Hudson is without doubt the correct one. He regards the atrocity as not based upon an instinct proper, but the aberration of an instinct, a blunder into which animals sometimes fall when excited to action in unusual circumstances.

When the individuals of a herd, school or family are excited to a sudden mad rage by the distressed cries of one of their fellows, the sight of its bleeding wounds, the smell of its blood, or when they see it frantically struggling on the ground in violent pain, or imprisoned in the cleft of a tree or rock as if in the clutches of a powerful enemy, they do not turn upon it to kill, but to rescue it.

The illusion creates the same emotion which they experience when attacked by a real enemy of a different species. The excitement must be discharged, and in the absence of a real enemy, the victim is fallen upon in error and slain.

Instincts are not Infallible.

Instincts are very constant, but are not infallible, and the case of the late visitation of Pallas's sand-grouse some years ago is an illustration of how even the wonderfully reliable migratory instinct in birds can err upon rare occasions.

Owing to some unusual atmospheric condition or combination of unknown circumstances, the sand-grouse deviated widely from their ordinary route, and scattered themselves in thousands over the continent of Europe, to perish miserably in strange lands unsuited to their constitution.

Mistaken Actions motivated by False Stimuli.

Animals acting instinctively, as well as men acting intelligently, have at times their delusions and see things falsely, and are moved to action by a false stimulus to their own disadvantage.

A simple experiment may be made by anyone upon a few dogs for the purpose of illustrating how illusion can lead to violent action, ludicrous, rather than painful, to witness.

Let the dogs be encouraged by cries and gestures to expect that some animal they are accustomed to hunt is about to be unearthed and overtaken. If, when they are urged to attack, a rough dummy is cunningly exhibited, the dogs will seize, worry and tear it to pieces without the faintest suspicion of its real composition.

Dogs and monkeys, possessing considerable reasoning powers, accustomed to select leaders and co-operate in

packs and troops for the purpose of actively assisting each other, behave remarkably like humankind when they are irritated by something which does not afford immediate explanation. There is a tendency, when one of the pack cries out in pain, no man being in sight and no cause apparent, for the animals near to blame each other.

Here the exciting irritation—the cry for help—is not strong enough to produce the illusion which results in a fatal attack upon the victim or a general *mêlée* in the kennel, but each dog mistakenly thinks the other inflicted the injury. His impulse is to take the part of his injured companion, and if the cry for help, caused perhaps by a sudden cramp or the prick of a thorn, is not very sharp or intense, the other dogs will not attack, but merely look and growl at each other in a suspicious way.

Physical Captivity or Mental Delusion the Necessary Condition for the Atrocity.

Since the injury or destruction of a perfectly normal individual is of no advantage to the race, and since the excitement must be discharged, it may be asked why the animals do not attack the instrument which restrains their freedom. Why, for example, did not the rats attack the cage they were shut in, and bite at the woodwork and wires? Why were not the imprisoning rocks attacked by the Highland cattle?

Before we attempt an explanation, it is important to note that physical captivity, leading to derangement of instinct, is in every case a necessary condition for the atrocity. The captivity includes the restraint of sudden illness or abnormal accident, for which there is no provision in the web of reason or instinct of the animals. If the pinching hand had been visible to the rats in the cage, the bites would undoubtedly have been inflicted upon it instead of their unfortunate comrade.

An Interesting Experiment.

Psychologists sometimes quote the following experiment to show how slowly an imprisoned animal learns to release itself unaided, although the means of release are prominently provided.

An animal, say a cat, is enclosed in a cage, which has a large catch or trigger inside, a touch upon which will cause the sides of the cage to fall apart, giving liberty to the prisoner.

It is truly wonderful how long the cat will search everywhere for a means of escape without doing the one thing necessary.

There is only one desire in its mind—to get out—but the only way to which it has been accustomed is by means of some opening by which presumably it entered. This has no existence.

It appears to the spectator as though the cat avoided the trigger carefully. It almost seems to be an object of instinctive dislike. Finally, it may be by accident, the imprisoned cat touches the catch and is free.

Let the experiment be repeated several times, and it will be found after a while that the cat becomes "wise" to the trick. At this stage it is necessary to devise a new invention if the cat is to be made a prisoner for any length of time. It is possible, moreover, by the exercise of much patience to train the cat to search for the trigger.

The Resentment generated under Captivity.

Anyone with experience of dogs knows that a normally well-disposed animal becomes very fierce when it is tied or chained up, but he rarely appears to notice the restraining instrument, unless it is touched by someone. The prisoner "hugs his chain" in the most literal way, and nothing enrages him more than interference of this kind.

The caged or chained-up housedog appears to blame anything endowed with movement or sound for his misery, and he will attack any living creature within reach when captivity has brought about temporary insanity and he sees enemies everywhere. If a dog "sees red" there is even danger in unexpected liberation. He may bite the first person he meets, who may be his own master.

Captivity is Abnormal.

The chain or cage is not usually attacked, although the chain or door of the cage may be rushed at if they are seen to move; and the reason why they are disregarded would

appear to be that complete imprisonment or enclosure, from which there is no possible escape, is incredible to the unsophisticated animal mind. Wild animals are adapted for a normal environment, and their inherited web of instincts normally does not include provision for unlooked-for restraint.

If born or introduced into captivity at an early age, wild animals can be habituated to captivity in different degrees, but sooner or later some irritating incident arises, which in freedom would be passed over with scant notice, and tragic consequences result.

The dog, by reason of the position man occupies in his canine mind as representing the pack, will support moderate restraint for short intervals, but the cat, which only associates with man as the jackal does with the tiger, will not suffer restraint of any kind. If tied up, the cat fights to escape, and generally, in its violent struggles for freedom, succeeds in hanging itself.

Who, when at a menagerie, can have failed to be struck with the never-ceasing movement up and down the cage, the miserable captives perpetually trying to find a way out? In nature there is ordinarily a way of escape from any position in which a free denizen of the jungle finds itself.

They vainly but instinctively feel there is a way out, if only it can be found, and are quite unable to regard inanimate chains, bars and walls as real, absolute barriers. Their constantly deferred hope causes deep depression and resentment, and they hate and suspect everything endowed with life as their enemy. A comparatively slight annoyance in these circumstances is sufficient to rouse them to panicky action, to their own disadvantage.

In Confinement all Natural Habits are perverted.

When animals are confined in narrow enclosures, all their natural habits are perverted. Observation of the ways of either herbivorous or carnivorous captive animals would entirely mislead the student of natural history if he assumed they would so act in freedom. Such a student would fall into similar errors as those in which the "aristocracy of intellect," the neo-Malthusian and other superficial philosophers wallow with regard to their fellows who are also confined within narrow enclosures.

Even the domestic cow or mare, kept in an enclosed space, has been known to attack its newly born offspring when irritated by the well-intentioned interference of outsiders. At the Zoo, captive wild animals quite commonly attack and devour their young, even though the parent be well fed and cared for by the skilled keeper. The white bear Barbara is a notorious offender in this respect.

Darwin has some interesting observations to make upon the influence of captivity on fecundity in animals, including man. He teaches that even slight changes in environment by unnatural restraint unbalance the rate of reproduction. In some species, notably domesticated cattle, dogs, cats and rabbits, they become more fertile than they were in a free state, whilst in others there may be sterility or lessened fertility. He remarks: "And as bearing on the above cases of man, it is important to remark that the young are apt to be weak and sickly or malformed, and to perish at an early age."

The Hostile Environment of Captivity.

We are now in a position to understand why animals in the abnormal condition of captivity act in direct contradiction to the whole tenor of their lives. In a narrow enclosure, the captives may be regarded as individually chained up close together. They are living in a hostile environment.

In the overcrowded corral, cattle have been known to turn upon each other in their frenzy, irrespective of age or sex. An infectious emotion like that of fear communicates itself from one to the other until all are in a panic, and nothing, save freedom, can restrain the temporary insanity induced. The excitement only ends in death or exhaustion, the miserable survivors presenting an unhappy scene of apathy.

At rare intervals abnormal natural conditions have been known to produce such an aberration of the social instinct among quadrupeds as those frequently occasioned in the artificial corral. The rivers in the Pampas in an extraordinarily dry summer have, by a combination of drought and salinity, been made undrinkable in certain districts.

Azara in his *Travels* describes, as the result of such a calamity, the fury of the wild horses, mad with thirst, as they rushed into the marshes, those which arrived first being overwhelmed and crushed by those which followed. He

states that more than once he has seen the carcasses of upwards of a thousand wild horses, thus destroyed.

The Key to the Problem of the Origin of War.

It is manifest that we are in possession of the key to the whole problem of the origin of war. War is a biological blunder perpetrated as the result of a derangement of instinct or intelligence.

In turning against a distressed comrade, the herd of cattle oppose themselves to the law of their being, to the whole system of instincts and habits which have made it possible for them to live together in communities, or even to exist at all. They commit an atrocity in the delusion that they are rescuing their distressed fellow. Instead of preserving the species, the animals are perpetrating a "noble and glorious" mistake unknowingly.

Within the hostile environment of the "overpopulated" corral, the cattle are "living dangerously." They seek to preserve themselves by destroying each other, motivated by the aberration of the instinct of self-preservation.

The Factors composing the Equation "War."

Rudimentary war, the violent attack of animals upon a member or members of the same species or family, which occurs indiscriminately as regards sex, age or condition, is an error into which animals fall, actuated by false stimuli.

The conditions favourable for an outbreak of violence are captivity or enclosure caused by an unusual or sudden change of environment for which the animals are not, or have not become, adapted, sudden illness, or injury from not easily ascertainable cause, not frequently met with in the ordinary effort for existence.

In such cases the hereditary or acquired instincts do not extend, and cannot provide for the abnormal conditions, and an aberration of the social instinct takes place.

To initiate the violence, an exciting incident, such as a struggle or cry for help, may be necessary, much as a spark sets into blaze a collection of combustible material.

The factor of captivity is supremely important in the psychology of that temporary insanity we call war. The irritating incident is of lesser importance.