

THE EXPRESSION OF THE
EMOTIONS IN MAN AND ANIMALS

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WITH PHOTOGRAPHIC AND OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

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CHAPTER V.

SPECIAL EXPRESSIONS OF ANIMALS.

The Dog, various expressive movements of—Cats—Horses—Ruminants—Monkeys, their expression of joy and affection—Of pain—Anger—Astonishment and Terror.

The Dog—I have already described (figs. 5 and 7) the appearance of a dog approaching another dog with hostile intentions, namely, with erected ears, eyes intently directed forwards, hair on the neck and back bristling, gait remarkably stiff, with the tail upright and rigid. So familiar is this appearance to us, that an angry man is sometimes said "to have his back up." Of the above points, the stiff gait and upright tail alone require further discussion. Sir C. Bell remarks¹ that, when a tiger or wolf is struck by its keeper and is suddenly roused to ferocity, "every muscle is in tension, and the limbs are in an attitude of strained exertion, prepared to spring." This tension of the muscles and consequent stiff gait may be accounted for on the principle of associated habit, for anger has continually led to fierce struggles, and consequently to all the muscles of the body having been violently exerted. There is also reason to suspect that the muscular system requires some short preparation, or some degree of innervation, before being brought into strong action. My own sensations

¹ 'The Anatomy of Expression,' 1844, p. 190.

lead me to this inference; but I cannot discover that it is a conclusion admitted by physiologists. Sir J. Paget, however, informs me that when muscles are suddenly contracted with the greatest force, without any preparation, they are liable to be ruptured, as when a man slips unexpectedly; but that this rarely occurs when an action, however violent, is deliberately performed.

With respect to the upright position of the tail, it seems to depend (but whether this is really the case I know not) on the elevator muscles being more powerful than the depressors, so that when all the muscles of the hinder part of the body are in a state of tension, the tail is raised. A dog in cheerful spirits, and trotting before his master with high, elastic steps, generally carries his tail aloft, though it is not held nearly so stiffly as when he is angered. A horse when first turned out into an open field, may be seen to trot with long elastic strides, the head and tail being held high aloft. Even cows when they frisk about from pleasure, throw up their tails in a ridiculous fashion. So it is with various animals in the Zoological Gardens. The position of the tail, however, in certain cases, is determined by special circumstances; thus as soon as a horse breaks into a gallop, at full speed, he always lowers his tail, so that as little resistance as possible may be offered to the air.

When a dog is on the point of springing on his antagonist, he utters a savage growl; the ears are pressed closely backwards, and the upper lip (fig. 14) is retracted out of the way of his teeth, especially of his canines. These movements may be observed with dogs and puppies in their play. But if a dog gets really savage in his play, his expression immediately changes. This, however, is simply due to the lips and ears being drawn back with much greater energy. If a dog only snarls at an-

other, the lip is generally retracted on one side alone, namely towards his enemy.

The movements of a dog whilst exhibiting affection towards his master were described (figs. 6 and 8) in our second chapter. These consist in the head and whole body being lowered and thrown into flexuous movements, with the tail extended and wagged from side to side. The ears fall down and are drawn somewhat backwards, which causes the eyelids to be elongated, and alters the

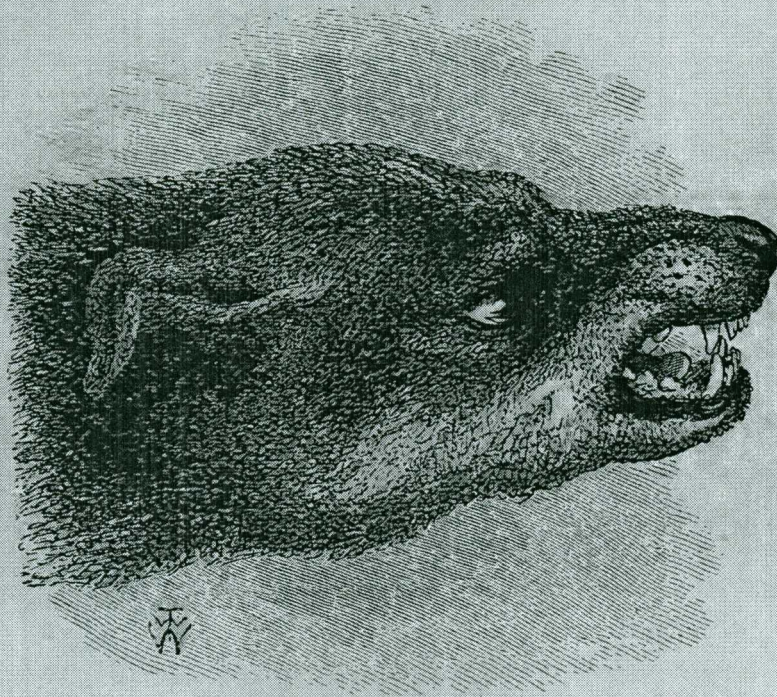


FIG. 14.—Head of snarling Dog. From life, by Mr. Wood.

whole appearance of the face. The lips hang loosely, and the hair remains smooth. All these movements or gestures are explicable, as I believe, from their standing in complete antithesis to those naturally assumed by a savage dog under a directly opposite state of mind. When a man merely speaks to, or just notices, his dog,

we see the last vestige of these movements in a slight wag of the tail, without any other movement of the body, and without even the ears being lowered. Dogs also exhibit their affection by desiring to rub against their masters, and to be rubbed or patted by them.

Gratiolet explains the above gestures of affection in the following manner: and the reader can judge whether the explanation appears satisfactory. Speaking of animals in general, including the dog, he says,² "C'est toujours la partie la plus sensible de leurs corps qui recherche les caresses ou les donne. Lorsque toute la longueur des flancs et du corps est sensible, l'animal serpente et rampe sous les caresses; et ces ondulations se propageant le long des muscles analogues des segments jusqu'aux extrémités de la colonne vertébrale, la queue se ploie et s'agite." Further on, he adds, that dogs, when feeling affectionate, lower their ears in order to exclude all sounds, so that their whole attention may be concentrated on the caresses of their master!

Dogs have another and striking way of exhibiting their affection, namely, by licking the hands or faces of their masters. They sometimes lick other dogs, and then it is always their chops. I have also seen dogs licking cats with whom they were friends. This habit probably originated in the females carefully licking their puppies—the dearest object of their love—for the sake of cleansing them. They also often give their puppies, after a short absence, a few cursory licks, apparently from affection. Thus the habit will have become associated with the emotion of love, however it may afterwards be aroused. It is now so firmly inherited or innate, that it is transmitted equally to both sexes. A female terrier of mine lately had her puppies destroyed,

² 'De la Physionomie,' 1865, pp. 187, 218.

and though at all times a very affectionate creature, I was much struck with the manner in which she then tried to satisfy her instinctive maternal love by expending it on me; and her desire to lick my hands rose to an insatiable passion.

The same principle probably explains why dogs, when feeling affectionate, like rubbing against their masters and being rubbed or patted by them, for from the nursing of their puppies, contact with a beloved object has become firmly associated in their minds with the emotion of love.

The feeling of affection of a dog towards his master is combined with a strong sense of submission, which is akin to fear. Hence dogs not only lower their bodies and crouch a little as they approach their masters, but sometimes throw themselves on the ground with their bellies upwards. This is a movement as completely opposite as is possible to any show of resistance. I formerly possessed a large dog who was not at all afraid to fight with other dogs; but a wolf-like shepherd-dog in the neighbourhood, though not ferocious and not so powerful as my dog, had a strange influence over him. When they met on the road, my dog used to run to meet him, with his tail partly tucked in between his legs and hair not erected; and then he would throw himself on the ground, belly upwards. By this action he seemed to say more plainly than by words, "Behold, I am your slave."

A pleasurable and excited state of mind, associated with affection, is exhibited by some dogs in a very peculiar manner; namely, by grinning. This was noticed long ago by Somerville, who says,

"And with a courtly grin, the fawning hound
Salutes thee cowering, his wide opening nose
Upward he curls, and his large sloe-back eyes
Melt in soft blandishments, and humble joy."
The Chase, book i.