

Memorandum on Mr. Blyth's paper on the Animals known as Wild Asses.—By Major R. STRACHEY, F. R. S.; F. L. S.

In Mr. Blyth's recent paper on the Animals known as wild Asses, he states that "the late Prof. H. Walker referred the Tibetan *Kyang* to *EQUUS HEMIONUS* of Pallas; and the *Ghor-khur* of this country is even more satisfactorily referable to *E. ONAGER* of Pallas, figured by Gmelin: but Prof. Walker committed the extraordinary mistake of figuring and describing an Indian *Ghor-khur* for a *Kyang*, so that the alleged distinctions which he has pointed out are valueless. However this mistake originated, there is no doubt whatever of the fact."*

Now I am in a position to say *quite positively* that Mr. Walker was right, and that Mr. Blyth is wrong, in the *matter-of-fact*. The animal in question was bought in my presence for the late Mr. Thomason for Rs. 100, at the fair at Bágesar in Kumaon, from a Tuhári Bhotiya by whom it had been got in Tibet. The story of its attachment to the pony, to which Mr. Blyth also alludes, is odd, and I will state it in full, with the hope that I may satisfy everybody that I really do know something of the personal history of Dr. Walker's *Kyang*.

Mr. Thomason paid a visit to Almora (the capital of Kumaon) at the end of 1847. I was there at the time, and so was my brother Mr. John Strachey. We heard of the *Kyang*, and Mr. Thomason having been informed of its existence, asked my brother to buy it for him, and to send it down to Calcutta to be forwarded thence to England to the Zoological Society. The animal was bought, as I before said. But on attempting to remove it from the place where it was tied up, it most flatly refused to stir, neither coaxing nor force was of any use. We were rather puzzled what to do, when on enquiry of its old Bhotiya owner, we learned that it had always been in company with a white pony for which it had a strong affection. It then occurred to us that if we got the pony too, the *Kyang* might be induced to follow where the pony led; and so it turned out. One or two attempts were made subsequently to surprise the *Kyang* into a more independent sort of existence, but it was of no use, and so the pony and he went off to Calcutta together.

* Journal Vol. XXVIII. p. 230.

The end of the pair was tragical. In a gale of wind off the Cape the Kyang died; and the Captain somewhat savagely threw the pony overboard alive, as his existence seemed no longer necessary after the Kyang's death.

Thus much as to the Kyang's identity. I must add, however, that although I am thus forced to show Mr. Blyth's mistake in this matter-of-fact, I in reality corroborate the force of his arguments as to the probable specific identity of the two Asses,—the Kyang and the Ghor-khur. It is obvious that Dr. Walker's description of a true Kyang, answers perfectly for a true Ghor-khur,—and as Mr. Blyth observes (though in a somewhat different sense), the alleged distinctions pointed out by Dr. Walker are probably enough valueless.

I have no pretensions to such a knowledge of Zoology or Anatomy as would make my opinion of any weight on the question of specific identity; but I may add a few words as to some of the more prominent features of the Kyang, having seen many of these animals dead and alive.

In the first place, my impression as to the voice of the Kyang is that it is a shrieking bray—not like that of the common Ass—but still a real bray and not a neigh. The differences of opinion on this point are easily reconcileable, I think, considering the inarticulate nature of the sounds.

As to the colour of the animal, it varies very greatly, and I think no dependence, as regards specific character, can be placed on mere depth of tint or brilliancy of hue. So also as to the dorsal and humeral stripes. The dorsal stripe is always plain. The humeral cross varies much, but is often as strongly marked as in the Ass bred in Kumaon, in which, however, it is not commonly very well defined.

I see nothing in the habits of the Kyang to make it improbable that it is, in fact, the same species as the Ghor-khur. The Kyang must be a very hardy animal to be able to live on the desert plateaus of Tibet; and though in winter the climate in which he exists is different enough from that of the plains of Sindh, yet in the summer the arid surface and scorching heat of the mid-day sun place the Kyang much more on a par with the Ghor-khur than might be supposed.

The Kyang, so far as external aspect is concerned, is obviously an Ass and not a Horse.



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