

where they have been often fired at, they are exceedingly wild, alarm their companions, on the approach of danger, by a hissing noise, and scale the rocks with a speed and agility that baffle pursuit.*

It is probable, therefore, that as man, in diffusing himself over the globe, has tamed many wild races, so, also, he has made many tame races wild. Had some of the larger carnivorous beasts, capable of scaling the rocks, made their way into the North American mountains before our hunters, a similar alteration in the instincts of the sheep would doubtless have been brought about.

11 *Wild elephants domesticated in a few years.*—No animal affords a more striking illustration of the principal points which I have been endeavouring to establish than the elephant; for, in the first place, the wonderful sagacity with which he accommodates himself to the society of man, and the new habits which he contracts, are not the result of time, nor of modifications produced in the course of many generations. These animals will breed in captivity, as is now ascertained, in opposition to the vulgar opinion of many modern naturalists, and in conformity to that of the ancients *Ælian* and *Columella*†: yet it has always been the custom, as the least expensive mode of obtaining them, to capture wild individuals in the forests, usually when full grown; and, in a few years after they are taken—sometimes, it is said, in the space of a few months—their education is completed.

Had the whole species been domesticated from an early period in the history of man, like the camel, their superior intelligence would, doubtless, have been attributed to their long and familiar intercourse with the lord of the creation; but we know that a few years is sufficient to bring about this wonderful change of habits; and, although the same individual may continue to receive tuition for a century afterwards, yet it makes no farther progress in the general development of its faculties. Were it otherwise, indeed, the animal would soon deserve more than the poet's epithet of "half-reasoning."

From the authority of our countrymen employed in the late Burmese war, it appears, in corroboration of older accounts, that when elephants are required to execute extraordinary tasks, they may be made to understand that they will receive unusual rewards. Some favourite dainty is shown to them, in the hope of acquiring which the work is done; and so perfectly does the nature of the contract appear to be understood, that the breach of it, on the part of the master, is often attended with danger. In this case, a power has been given to the species to adapt their social instincts to new circumstances with surprising rapidity; but the extent of this change is defined by strict and arbitrary limits. There is no indication of a tendency to continued divergence from certain attributes with which the elephant was originally endued—no ground whatever for anticipating that, in thousands of centuries, any material alteration could ever be effected. All that we can infer from analogy is, that some more

* *Fauna Boreali-Americana*, p. 273.

† *Mr. Corse on the Habits, &c. of the Elephant*, *Phil. Trans.*, 1799.