

ART. XV.—*The Travelled Goat: a Great Lexicographer, a Celebrated Painter, and a Distinguished Botanist.*

By TAYLOR WHITE.

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IT seems to me a remarkable fact that, if my thoughts are directed to any particular point or occurrence of which I have had no previous knowledge, I will almost simultaneously meet with this, or similar, information from several sources. Lately, in looking over a number of copies of the *Live Stock Journal*, or possibly the *Field*, dating back some twenty or more years, I came across the mention of the death of a goat which was notable from its having accompanied Captain Cook in his two voyages to New Zealand and round the world, although I forget what date was mentioned. Within a fortnight's time, on looking through Boswell's "Life of Johnson," I find mention of this same goat again, as follows:—

TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

DEAR SIR,—

Feb. 27, 1772.

Be pleased to send to Mr. Banks, whose place of residence I do not know, this note, which I have sent open, that, if you please, you may read it. When you send it do not use your own seal.

I am, Sir, Your most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

TO JOSEPH BANKS, ESQ.

Perpetua ambitâ bis terrâ præmia lactis  
Hæc habet altrici Capra secunda Jovis.\*

SIR,—

Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, Feb. 27, 1772.

I return thanks to you and to Dr. Solander for the pleasure which I received in yesterday's conversation. I could not recollect a motto for your Goat, but have given her one. You, Sir, may perhaps have an epick poem from some happier pen than, Sir, Your most humble servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

To New-Zealanders anything relating to the early history of their country is of interest, especially such as is connected with Captain Cook's voyages; and the value of the service rendered by this animal in producing its small quota of milk may be estimated by our knowledge that sailors and voyagers at that time were greatly subject to scurvy, owing to unsuitable food, and this difficulty and privation is made very evident when Mr. Banks, in his diary, tells us that, Captain Cook being then very ill, a dog belonging to Mr. — was killed and turned into soup for the nourishment of the sick man, who received great benefit thereby.

\* "Thus translated by a friend:—

In fame scarce second to the nurse of Jove,  
This Goat, who twice the world had traversed round,  
Deserving both her master's care and love,  
Ease and perpetual pasture now has found."—[BOSWELL.]

Boswell makes these following remarks on the voyages:—

“I gave him [Dr. Johnson] an account of a conversation which had passed between me and Captain Cook the day before at Sir John Pringle’s, and he was much pleased with the conscientious accuracy of that celebrated circumnavigator, who set me right as to many of the exaggerated accounts given by Dr. Hawkesworth of his voyages. I told him that while I was with the captain I catch’d the enthusiasm of curiosity and adventure, and felt a strong inclination to go with him on his next voyage.

“Johnson: ‘Why, sir, a man *does* feel so till he considers how very little he can learn from such voyages.’

“Boswell: ‘But one is carried away with the general grand and indistinct notion of a voyage round the world.’

“Johnson: ‘Yes, sir; but a man is to guard himself against taking a thing in general.’

“I said I was certain that a great part of what we are told by the travellers to the South Sea might be conjecture; because they had not enough of the language of those countries to understand so much as they have related. Objects falling under the observation of the senses must be clearly known, but everything intellectual, everything abstract—politics, morals, and religion—must be darkly guessed. Dr. Johnson was of the same opinion. He upon another occasion, when a friend mentioned to him several extraordinary facts as communicated to him by the circumnavigators, slyly observed, ‘Sir, I never before knew how much I was respected by these gentlemen; they told me none of these things.’ He had been in company with Omai, a native of one of the South Sea Islands, after he had been some time in this country. He was struck with the elegance of his behaviour, and accounted for it thus: ‘Sir, he had passed his time while in England only in the best company, so that all that he had acquired of our manners was genteel. As a proof of this, sir, Lord Mulgrave and he dined one day at Streatham. They sat with their backs to the light, fronting me, so that I could not see distinctly, and there was so little of the savage in Omai that I was afraid to speak to either lest I should mistake one for the other.’”

On this head we must remember that Dr. Johnson had defective eyesight, which would accentuate this difficulty; but there is no doubt but that many of the Polynesian peoples are well capable of acquiring the habits of civilisation. In fact, we are able to notice this at the present time by comparing the Māori of to-day with his ancestor of sixty years ago.

NOTE.—The place mentioned as where the goat died was either Camdentown or Camberwell, so far as my memory serves. It is unfortunate that I did not make a note of this at the time of reading the paragraph.