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EULOGY

OF SHARGS, A FAVOURITE DOG,

BELONGING TO

DR. T. FORSTER, F. L. S., F. R. A. S., ETC.

PRONOUNCED BY HIS MASTER.

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At Schaerbeek, near Bruxelles, at a quarter before eleven o'clock on the morning of Saturday the 23d June, 1838, died Shargs, my favourite dog and best if not only friend.

Out of pious regard to his memory, I have drawn up the following account of him:—My dear dog Shargs was one of that intelligent dogs which in England and Germany are called "poodles", and by the French "*chiens canards*." He was of a middling size, with long curling hair of a shining and beautiful white colour, excepting a few hairs in his tail and those about his left eye and ear, which were of a fine chocolate brown: his eyes were large, and had a sweet mild and beautiful expression beaming with the benevolence which reigned in his heart, and expressive in the highest degree of all that intellect, which distinguishes dogs in general, but which, perhaps, marks in particular the race to which he belonged. I never allowed him to be shorn, as many poodles are, nor to be taught any tricks imitative of human actions, believing that no dog was ever rendered more amiable by a forced assimilation to his oppressor, man, whose grimaces are all tainted with the dye of hypocrisy, and whose actions, in spite of the ridiculous mask which the world forces him to wear, are expressive of the deep selfishness which reigns over his heart. I never even liked him to

sit up and beg; knowing that a man on his knees is too often a picture of cowardice in a posture of degradation, or of avarice in an attitude of servility. Nor would I suffer the cruel practice of clipping his ears and tail to deform his shape; scorning the arrogance of those who presume to dispute with nature about beauty, and recollecting the forcible description of Rousseau, where he designates man as an animal who, among his monstrous aggressions against the laws of Nature, whom he is for ever deforming, begins that unjust dominion over the weak parts of the creation which brute force and perverted intelligence alone confer, by mutilating his dog, his horse and his slave.

It was my object to bring up a dog with as much of pure nature about him as was practicable under the influence of a kind domestic education, and habitual intercourse with myself and family, of which he became one, in the full enjoyment of a community of interests. With these preliminaries I shall proceed to give some account of his history.

I purchased Shargs, when a puppy of a few months old, of a boy who sold dogs in the street near to St. Clement's, in the Strand, in London, on Thursday the 17th of September, 1829, and brought him at first to my uncle's seat at Hale End, Walthamstow, and the next day carried him down in the Coggeshall coach to Boreham, where I had a house: here he grew up, and lived a recluse life for nearly four years, exhibiting the most extraordinary instance of intelligence, as well as of attachment to me. He seemed to know and to notice every thing that went on in the house, of which he was the constant guardian, and it is remarkable that during this period he never went beyond the garden and fields which belonged to it, having as perfect a knowledge of the boundaries as any Scottish shepherd's dog could have of his master's sheep walks. I wished very much that he should have accompanied me in an aerial voyage which I made on Saturday the 30th of April, 1831, as I ascended from a garden very near my own house; but my wife, fearing some accident might happen to him, this intention was abandoned.

In 1833 his habits were totally changed, when, instead of being always at home, he was always abroad, for in July of that year I left home with my family on an extensive tour of many years' continuance in the South of Europe, in which I was accompanied by Shargs; and so constant and faithful an attendant

was he on me in all my movements that, with the sole exception of a few days in February 1834, and of a week in 1838, he never slept out of the bedchamber from our first leaving Boreham July 15th, 1833, to the day of his lamented departure from this *Valle di Lagrime* June 23d, 1838. During this long tour, he arose every morning about daybreak, and accompanied me in long excursions on foot before breakfast; became familiar with my habits of botanizing and pursuing natural history; and showed the greatest sagacity in acquiring a knowledge of times and seasons, being thereof a most punctual observer. When walking, for instance, in the Pincii Gardens at Rome, in the summer of 1834, he would regularly prepare for returning home to breakfast, at the sound of the great bell at the *Monte Citore*, which rang about eight o'clock, and could distinguish it from the numerous bells which are heard all the morning from the four hundred steeples of the world's capital. In warm weather on going out first in the morning, he went, at a certain hour, to a fountain near *Monte di Trinità*, shaded by the dark green ilex, to be washed, would then join three or four dogs, belonging to the Marquis Boscha, who used to walk with us, and amused himself for hours; but never failed to be ready, at the corner of the garden, to go to the *Piazza di Spagna* to breakfast at eight o'clock; for he had all his meals with us, and ate as we did, taking wine, fruit, tea, and every thing that come in his way; but he was most of all fond of his coffee after dinner, which he never missed, and after it, he laid down while I smoked my pipe, and then regularly took his siesta with me on the sofa. If he walked out in the public streets later in the day, he used to come first and beg to have his string put on to his collar, that he might be led in it, as he was terribly afraid of getting lost in the public thoroughfares. He was the best guard at night I ever knew, and with him on the foot of the bed, I was not afraid of being surprised in the night even in inhospitable and dangerous countries through which we sometimes travelled. He was all vigilance and care. Nothing seemed to escape his notice which passed in the inns in which we slept; and I knew precisely by his particular sort of bark or growl, whether a rat, a friend, or a stranger approached my bed. During our voyages I was accompanied by my wife, my daughter and another lady, and I could frequently tell which of them might be entering any room in which I was reposing with Shargs after dinner, by the manner he wagged his tail and by

the modulation of his voice. In this respect of a graduated preference shown to different members of my family, he resembled Busy, a sagacious terrier, belonging to my father, who died in 1809 and whose organology, like that of Shargs, corresponded exactly to the character of intelligence, fidelity and attachment, qualities which provoked a return of love and esteem, and which contributed, perhaps, to their somewhat premature death; for the kindness of the family being carried to excess in the luxury with which they were fed, brought on the physical evil of repletion, and, as the Orphic hymn says *"Αἴτος ἐξ ἀγαθέοις κάρων βυγχεῖσι σιθάσει."*

It may easily be imagined that participating in the delicacies of the table with the rest of the family, Shargs would become somewhat unhealthy. While pursuing the active life of a traveller, this repletion was carried off by movement; but after we had ceased to roam, and had taken a fixed residence at Schaerbeek in May 1837, he began to show signs of weakness. He walked with me, certainly, every morning in the fields, accompanied by Moustache, another poodle and a great and favourite friend, and he likewise amused himself in the garden: but the severe winter which followed, depriving him of his quantum of exercise, favoured, evidently, some epidemic influence; his ears became inflamed: in March he began to go lame of the left forefoot; a slow and gradual paralysis of all his limbs accompanied by a painful rheumatism of the neck followed, and he was almost deprived of the power of motion before the end of May: still he continued to eat well, as he lay on his cushions beside our dinner table; indeed, I think he ate too much. I was forced to leave him, to visit London for a week, and, on my return, June 18th, I found him getting worse. He knew me, however, and wagged his tail on hearing my voice; but his mind evidently sympathized with the affection of the spinal column, and though he retained his docility and gentle manners to the last, it was with greatly diminished sensibility. A very difficult respiration came on, he lost his relish for food, and got weaker and weaker: my wife and another person sat up with him every night on a sofa close by the bed, and I had frequently to get up, and assist him before morning. At length, about a quarter before eleven on the morning of Saturday the 23d of June, 1838, I noticed a sudden and very beautiful green colour in his eyes, which I have not been able to account for: he then moved once more his hitherto paralysed legs and his tail,

laid his head on his fore paws, and died so gently and easily that the moment of his dissolution could hardly be ascertained (1). Indeed, the precise moment of the separation of soul and body, as it is called, like the precise instant of primary animation *in ovario*, cannot be well ascertained; like all other things in nature, life and death are shaded off by *nuances* so fine, and glide into and out of one another by such imperceptible degrees, that their juncture evades the imperfect power of human sense, and is lost among the mysteries of existence. The manner in which personal identity is begun, continued, and ended with organization, is a mystery, and it is a still greater mystery how the mind after death can be transformed to another body, or continued into another mode of life, and yet retain its sameness: yet there is nothing contradictory to reason in the supposition; and, though we may justly hope, with the opinion of antiquity on our side, to remember the events of this life, when transported to another, to meet and recognise hereafter those objects which we have cherished here; yet the reverse supposition can not destroy the anticipation of existing again. Memory is not necessary to the continuance of personal identity, as Locke erroneously supposed; and whether we are or are not doomed to meet the friends and to recollect the transactions of this life in another state, yet the future and eternal existence of our identical selves, is more probable, even on natural grounds, than eventual annihilation. The combined evidence, therefore, of all religious observances in the world, taken collectively, does more than merely turn the balance in favour of the consoling anticipations of posthumous life. It is to be lamented that any philosophers should have doubted of this wholesome doctrine; but the doubt, bad as it is, is the result of man's delusive pride, in arrogating to himself an exclusive claim to future being, which would destroy the beautiful analogy of all surrounding nature, and which has, therefore, tended to disgust mathematicians and metaphysicians, who are accustomed to logical reasoning and to the investigation of truth by simple modes of induction. Life and death are strange mysteries: their points of juncture afford an instructive lesson, and teach us, beyond every thing else,

(1) On inspection of the body, the viscera in general and the lungs, in particular, exhibited marks of inflammation: the liver was evidently softer than usual, with a considerable obstruction of bile, while the vesica was full of highly coloured urine. No other marks of disorder were discovered. A desire to preserve the cranium prevented our examining the brain.

to appreciate the poverty of our philosophy, and the vanity of human things! In viewing death we reflect that to this we must all come, and then our anxious solitudes vanish from our minds. In meditating on birth, we remember that we were once a mere point of incipient intelligence, with scarcely one idea or sensation! We grew, perceived, acquired knowledge of external nature, became great in our own estimation, pursued science, swept the sky with telescopes, and penetrated the earth in its minutest particles with lenses, and we found all was life; in every atom, through infinite space, existing without any known beginning or end, and we referred our own perceptions to the universe, and, by a more refined metaphysical philosophy, ascribed the latter to its author; and thought ourselves, and the mundane system which we inhabit, as nothing! We boast of our knowledge, but we know nothing of its first principles, and we see, in the prospect of death, the end of all those sensations of which knowledge is composed. The universe is large and beautiful; but, while we are contemplating it, a tile may fall on the temporal bone, or a seed may by chance descend into the trachea, and then, as far as human philosophy goes, the whole universe may vanish in a moment, and become to us as though it had never been; a thought which leaves us the consolation of Pliny: *solum certum nihil esse certi, et homine nihil miserius aut superbius.*

We physicians are accustomed to view death under all its forms, but it is only when much interested in the dying party that dissolution makes a strong impression, or leads to important meditations. In watching the gradual death of several particular friends, both men and animals, one cannot but reflect, how very similar is the death of a human being to that of other animals. How is it possible, therefore, for persons, habituated, as I have been, to exercise from infancy the sure mental powers of induction and analogy, to refer the one to a separation of soul and body, and the other to a simple process of corporeal dissolution. In every department of nature similar effects can be traced to similar causes; and, if something called sensitive life, added to organic mechanism, can produce in the animal strong sentiments of love and fidelity guided by a high intelligence, I ask is it not stupid pride and self love alone that must have induced vain man to refer the mental phenomena of his own species to an infinitely superior principle; to arrogate to himself a distinctive soul, to ap-

propriate to himself an exclusive paradise? Born of flesh and blood, like other animals, and, like them, at first only a living speck in the womb of his mother, supported, like them, by material nutriment, developed, like them, by degrees, in proportion to the increase of bodily organs; subject, like them, to a variety of accidents and diseases; and perishing, just as they do, with the gradual decay of his material fabric, man exhibits no claims to a distinctive sort of existence. Is it in the exercise of certain higher functions of mind, possessed by a few individuals, and in being the prey of baser and more disgusting passions, which degrade the many, that man can vainly found an eternal distinction between himself and other brutes? Let it be remembered that individual defects have filled up the pretended gap between man and beast, and that the cretin and the idiot are below the horse and the elephant, in the scale of intelligence, as much as the hypocrite and the sensualist are below the dog in moral worth! Moreover, phrenology has explained all this, and has shown the exact relation which exists between the organs and faculties, both of men and other animals, in all their varieties and character, and in all their stages of development. We feel, however, a sort of consciousness of personal identity of mind: we feel that the percipient principle within is not identical with the things perceived without us and that what we call ourselves or minds may be united hereafter to other organizations, and exist under other conditions, without any loss of identity! By ascribing to other persons, who look outwardly like ourselves, a similar mental principle, we get an idea of a world of spirits as well as of bodies; and this is highly consoling, because it is in conformity with those future hopes that all religions have professed to uphold. But, I ask, whether—by admitting that animals can exist and perform sentimental and intellectual functions, without possessing such a spiritual nature, we do not weaken the arguments in favour of our own souls? Must not the admission that something less than a spiritual and indissoluble nature, added to organization, is sufficient for the performance of intellectual functions in general, exclude the necessity of referring our own intellect in particular to such an imperishable and spiritual principle? Willing, therefore, to foster, rather than to destroy, the cherished impressions of my infancy, I am induced to adopt the holy doctrine of Pythagoras and the Indian school, which ascribes to every living creature

an eternal existence, and which represents the various evils of sublunary life, whether in regard to men or animals, as mere stages in the preparatory progress of creatures towards the perfections of their creator; a doctrine which, while it militates against no system of religion and of retributive justice, enlarges our minds and enables us to extend our views of divine benevolence, not only to every creeping thing upon the earth, but to the probable inhabitants of every star in the heavens, and which, by teaching us to resolve every phenomenon into the goodness of the creator, exerted in the infinite multiplication of eternal happiness, makes us forget particular evils, in the prospect of a general good, and tends to establish in our minds the fundamental principles of faith, hope and charity. We ought to reflect, too, that our organization and, consequently, our means of knowledge are very limited, and may, perhaps, convey but a very imperfect knowledge of external objects and their various relations, and that the addition of even one more sense, should it please God to confer it, might open to our view many hidden truths, and, by its combinations, reconcile us to so many apparent contradictions. I have always thought that the manifest course of retributive justice furnished, from analogy, stronger evidence of a moral Providence than any other natural phenomena. The constant sight of virtue rewarded and of vice punished here, while some exceptions to this rule, appear to exist, seems to me to afford grounds for believing that these exceptions are reserved for a future state of retribution. But, then, the principle, to be perfect, must be extended to animals. And, if we see evidence, in the horrible depravity of man, mixed with great natural powers of virtue, of a fallen condition, we cannot avoid, with the pious Count de Maistre, including all animals in the general scheme. If they have suffered from the fall of man, they ought, in justice, to be included in the redemption, as Wesley seemed to believe, and as many divines have thought. I do not profess to be a theologian; but, with one theological doctrine, as a naturalist and observer, I can heartily join, where St. Paul says: "*Cernimus nunc per speculum in ænigmate, tunc facie ad faciem; nunc cognosco ex parte, tunc cognoscam ut cognitus sum. Nunc manent fides, spes, charitas, tria hæc; major autem horum est charitas.*"