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## STRANGE HYBRIDS.

BY F. L. OSWALD.

The proverbial admixture of mishaps in the luckiest events has often been experienced by the discoverers of happy theories, and Darwin's "Origin of Species" seemed at first as irreconcilable with the phenomena

of hybridism as Lucian's "slow and steady sunrise of culture" with the midnight of the middle ages.

Recent experiments seem, however, to prove that the alleged permanence of species has been considerably overrated. Prof. H. D. Karsen, of Riga, reports that the deer and the roe can be crossed to any desired extent, and a correspondent of the *Journal de la Physiologie* (vol. ii., p. 374) describes a "rabbit farm" in the neighborhood of Angoulême, where Mons. Charles Roux succeeded in cross-breeding hares and conies. The hybrids again could be crossed as readily as black and white rats, and in several cases proved

more fertile than the parent species. The post trader of Fort San Gabriel, in southern Mexico, told me a few years ago that he was one night awakened by the rabid barking of a pet spaniel, and on searching the yard with a lantern found that a large wolf had crossed the ditches and forced his acquaintance upon a mastiff bitch. The offspring of the *mesalliance* were killed; but a similar occurrence in the Russian Caucasus was reported in time to save the curious hybrids, which last year were exhibited in Tiflis, and sold at a considerable advance over the average price of pet wolves. A litter of wolf puppies in the Zoological Garden of Cincinnati, O., now attracts more sight-seers than the baby jaguars, and will probably remain

in their present quarters. They are the progeny of a gray wolf and a female Esquimaux dog, and strangely combine the characteristics of their shaggy parents. At the approach of a visitor they will at first retreat with a wolfish leer, but presently crouch down, wagging their bush tails and whining, after the manner of a penitent poodle dog. Their snarls and yelps in a scramble for tidbits likewise resemble the dinner concerts of a dog kennel, but they do not bark. Their nearest approach to the alarm signal of a watch dog is a coughing whoop, followed by a long-drawn howl.

The menagerie of the Englische Garten, of Munich, boasts a similar attraction: a pair of lynx kittens romping about in charge of their mother, who seems rather puzzled at the premature savagery of their scimmages, and sometimes hides in a corner, as if ashamed to own her relationship to the vindictive youngsters. Two of their sisters died before they had opened their eyes, but the survivors have passed the perils of the teething period, and it would be interesting to know if they will prove as sterile as the ocelot-leopards in the Hamburg Zoo.

A few years ago a farmer of Polk County, Tennessee, found a woolly fawn on a plateau of the Chilhowee Range, where sheep had been permitted to run half wild all summer. The curious little waif was adopted by a neighbor, but died from overpetting,

and the contradictory accounts of its appearance left the current explanation of its origin rather doubtful. Analogous cases have, however, been recorded in Italy and Switzerland, and rams have been known to breed with goats and female roes. The Alpine ibex or steinbok (*Capra ibex*) visits goat herds wherever the raids of pot hunters result in an excessive competition for

existence of bull-headed colts, owing their paternity to the union of a stallion and a cow. Columella, the Roman Humboldt, indorses that belief, together with a number of such evident myths, that Buffon undertook a long journey to investigate a test case, which, however, left the controversy undecided, since the problematic foal turned out to be a young

hinny—half horse and half donkey. Zebras, quaggas, and horses, on the other hand, interbreed as freely as Mr. Roux's rabbits, and the same may be said of several species of African antelopes, such as the koodoo and the gemsbok.

Lion-tigers have been born in several menageries, but the most interesting hybrids seen in the second half of this century were a litter of Siberian fox-dogs. Their mother had been a spitz and their male progenitor a black fox, and there was, withal, something strangely racoonish in their appearance that would have warranted the suspicion of a triple *mesalliance* if the *Procyon lotor* were not a

total stranger to the fauna of the eastern continent. The pretty little pets had been born in the Amoor district, where the mercury of the Fahrenheit thermometer sinks to sixty degrees below zero, and were accordingly well equipped with Siberian furs, so much so, indeed, that their appearance suggested a plan of perpetuating the breed for the sake of its peltry value. They were exhibited in the Berlin Thiergarten till an agent of the Regent's Park Zoo persuaded the managers to exchange them for a pair of manebaboons.

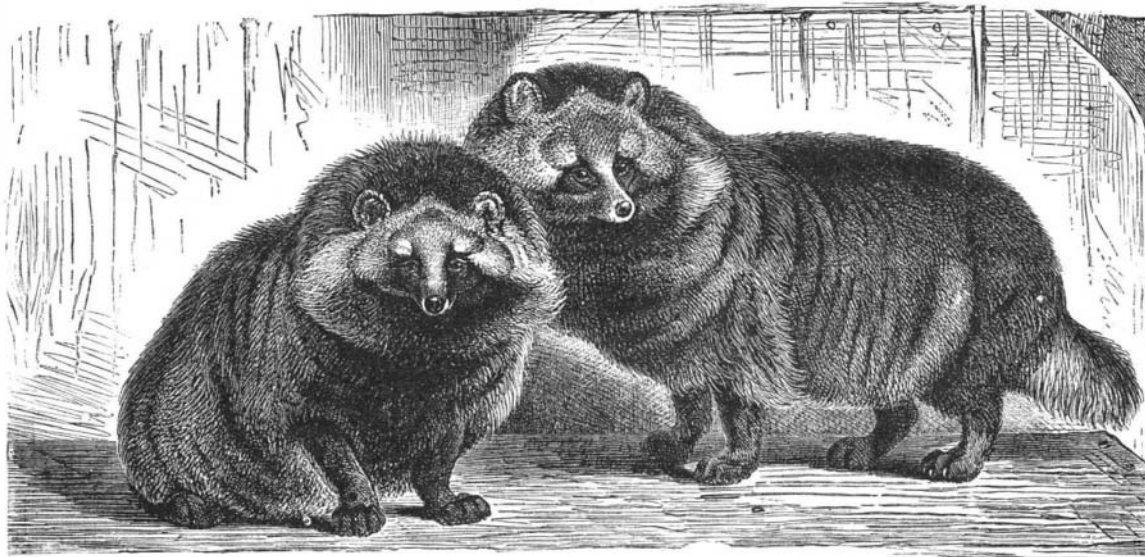
Cases of spontaneous hybridism (between animals in a state of nature) have been rarely observed, but their possibility is suggested by the existence of animals

that appear to form a connecting link between different species, or even genera, as the big horn of our Rocky Mountains, which seems to unite the head of a moufflon sheep with the body and the color of a deer. There are birds that hold the exact middle between the titmouse and the woodpecker, and between the woodpecker and the thrush, as the dormouse bridges the gap between the rats and the squirrels and the horned toad between the lizards and the frogs.

The classification of such intermediate creatures has, indeed, often puzzled naturalists, as in the interesting case of the Persian dove-partridge, a gregarious bird that haunts the steppes of Central Asia, and rears a brood of chicks resembling young quails, but whose flight and general appearance differ so much from those of a prairie grouse that in our zoological gardens it is often mistaken for a true pigeon.

## Antiseptic Paper.

An antiseptic paper, which, it is stated, may be applied over wounds and fixed in position with a bandage, can be prepared by impregnating sheets of unsized paper with mercuric chloride. This is dissolved in the proportion of two and a half drachms to a pint of distilled water (previously sterilized by boiling), and six drachms of pure glycerin added. After thoroughly soaking, the paper is allowed to dry, and is then ready for use.—*Therapeutic Gazette*.



SIBERIAN FOX-DOGS.

the few remaining females of its own species, and the Zoological Garden of Cologne procured a pair of ibex kids that were nursed by a common goat (not their mother), who at first appeared to have taken a liking to the curious hybrids, but neglected them as their uncongenial temper became more apparent, and they both died in the course of the next winter.

The editor of *The Field* mentioned a case of a prolific union having taken place between a mastiff and a lioness who had been kept in the same cage, but subsequent investigations justified a doubt in the possibility of that unique instance of hybridity between animals of different *genera*, though as eminent a naturalist as Louis Buffon seems to have believed in the



IBEX KIDS.