

## CHAPTER IX.

ONE of these grand assemblies was held in my time, about three months before my departure, whither my master went, as the representative of our district. In this council was resumed their old debate, and, indeed, the only debate which ever happened in that country; whereof my master, after his return, gave me a very particular account.

The question to be debated was, whether the Yahoos should be exterminated from the face of the earth? One of the members for the affirmative offered several arguments of great strength and weight; alleging, that as the Yahoos were the most filthy, noisome, and deformed animal which Nature ever produced, so they were the most restive and indocible, mischievous and malicious: they would kill and devour their cats, trample down their oats and grass, if they were not continually watched, and commit a thousand other extravagancies. He took notice of a general tradition, that Yahoos had not been always in that country; but that, many ages ago, two of these brutes appeared together upon a mountain; whether produced by the heat of the sun upon corrupted mud and slime, or from the ooze and froth of the sea, was never known. That these

Yahoos in a short time, grew so numerous as to overrun and infest the whole nation. That the Houyhnhnms, to get rid of this evil, made a general hunting, and at last enclosed the whole herd; and, destroying the elder, every Houyhnhnm kept two young ones in a kennel, and brought them to such a degree of tameness as an animal, so savage by nature, can be capable of acquiring; using them for draught and carriage. That there seemed to be much truth in this tradition, and that those creatures could not be *Ylnhniamsky* (or aborigines of the land) because of the violent hatred the Houyhnhnms, as well as all other animals, bore them; which, although their evil disposition sufficiently deserved, could never have arrived at so high a degree if they had been aborigines, or else they would have long since been rooted out. That the inhabitants, taking a fancy to use the service of the Yahoos, had very imprudently neglected to cultivate the breed of asses, which were a comely animal, easily kept, more tame and orderly, without any offensive smell, strong enough for labour, although they yield to the other in agility of body; and, if their braying be no agreeable sound, it is far preferable to the horrible howlings of the Yahoos.

Several others declared their sentiments to the same purpose, when my master proposed an expedient to the assembly, whereof he had, indeed, borrowed the hint from me. He approved of the tradition mentioned by the honourable member

who spoke before; and affirmed that the two Yahoos, said to be the first seen among them, had been driven thither over the sea; that coming to land, and being forsaken by their companions, they retired to the mountains, and, degenerating by degrees, became, in process of time, much more savage than those of their own species in the country from whence these two originals came. The reason of this assertion was, that he had now in his possession a certain wonderful Yahoo (meaning myself) which most of them had heard of, and many of them had seen. He then related to them how he first found me; that my body was all covered with an artificial composure of the skins and hairs of other animals: that I spoke in a language of my own, and had thoroughly learned theirs: that I had related to him the accidents which brought me thither: that, when he saw me without my covering, I was an exact Yahoo in every part, only of a whiter colour, less hairy, and with shorter claws. He added, how I had endeavoured to persuade him that, in my own and other countries, the Yahoos acted as the governing, rational animal, and held the Houyhnhnms in servitude: that he observed in me all the qualities of a Yahoo, only a little more civilized by some tincture of reason; which, however, was in a degree as far inferior to the Houyhnhnm race, as the Yahoos of their country were to me.

This was all my master thought fit to tell me at that time of what passed in the Grand Council.

But he was pleased to conceal one particular, which related personally to myself, whereof I soon felt the unhappy effect, as the reader will know in its proper place, and from whence I date all the succeeding misfortunes of my life.

The Houyhnhnms have no letters, and consequently their knowledge is all traditional. But there happening few events of any moment among a people so well united, naturally disposed to every virtue, wholly governed by reason and cut off from all commerce with other nations, the historical part is easily preserved without burthening their memories. I have already observed that they are subject to no diseases, and therefore can have no need of physicians. However, they have excellent medicines composed of herbs, to cure accidental bruises and cuts in the pastern, or frog of the foot by sharp stones, as well as other maims and hurts in the several parts of the body.

They calculate the year by the revolution of the sun and the moon, but use no subdivisions into weeks. They are well enough acquainted with the motions of those two luminaries, and understand the nature of eclipses; and this is the utmost progress of their astronomy.

In poetry, they must be allowed to excel all other mortals; wherein the justness of their similes, and the minuteness as well as exactness of their descriptions are, indeed, inimitable. Their verses abound very much in both of these; and usually contain either some exalted notions

of friendship and benevolence, or the praises of those who were victors in races and other bodily exercises. Their buildings, although very rude and simple, are not inconvenient, but well contrived to defend them from all injuries of cold and heat. They have a kind of tree, which, at forty years old, loosens in the root, and falls with the first storm; it grows very straight, and being pointed like stakes, with a sharp stone (for the Houyhnhnms know not the use of iron) they stick them erect in the ground about ten inches asunder, and then weave in oat-straw, or sometimes wattles, betwixt them. The roof is made after the same manner, and so are the doors.

The Houyhnhnms use the hollow part, between the pastern and the hoof, of their forefeet, as we do our hands, and this with greater dexterity than I could at first imagine. I have seen a white mare of our family thread a needle (which I lent her on purpose) with that joint. They milk their cows, reap their oats, and do all the work which requires hands in the same manner. They have a kind of hard flints, which, by grinding against other stones, they form into instruments that serve instead of wedges, axes, and hammers. With tools made of these flints they likewise cut their hay, and reap their oats, which there grow naturally in several fields: the Yahoos draw home the sheaves in carriages, and the servants tread them in certain covered huts, to get out the grain, which is kept in stores. They make a rude kind of

earthen and wooden vessels, and bake the former in the sun.

If they can avoid casualties, they die only of old age, and are buried in the obscurest places that can be found, their friends and relations expressing neither joy nor grief at their departure; nor does the dying person discover the least regret that he is leaving the world, any more than if he were upon returning home from a visit to one of his neighbours. I remember, my master having once made an appointment with a friend and his family to come to his house upon some affair of importance, on the day fixed the mistress, and her two children, came very late; she made two excuses, first for her husband, who, as she said, happened that very morning to *lhnuwnh*. The word is strongly expressive in their language, but not easily rendered into English; it signifies, to retire to his first mother. Her excuse for not coming sooner was, that her husband dying late in the morning, she was a good while consulting her servants about a convenient place where his body should be laid; and, I observed, she behaved herself at our house as cheerfully as the rest: she died about three months after.

They live generally to seventy, or seventy-five years, very seldom to four-score: some weeks before their death, they feel a gradual decay; but without pain. During this time, they are much visited by their friends, because they cannot go abroad with their usual ease and satisfaction. However,

about ten days before their death, which they seldom fail in computing, they return the visits that have been made them, by those who are nearest in the neighbourhood, being carried in a convenient sledge, drawn by Yahoos; which vehicle they use, not only upon this occasion, but when they grow old, upon long journeys, or when they are lamed by any accident. And, therefore, when the dying Houyhnhnms return those visits, they take a solemn leave of their friends, as if they were going to some remote part of the country, where they designed to pass the rest of their lives.

I know not whether it may be worth observing, that the Houyhnhnms have no word in their language to express any thing that is evil, except what they borrow from the deformities or ill qualities of the Yahoos. Thus they denote the folly of a servant, an omission of a child, a stone that cuts their feet, a continuance of foul or unseasonable weather, and the like, by adding to each the epithet of Yahoo. For instance, *Hhnm Yahoo*, *Whnaholm Yahoo*, *Ynlhmndwihlma Yahoo*, and an ill contrived house, *Ynholmhnmrohlw Yahoo*.

I could with great pleasure enlarge farther upon the manners and virtues of this excellent people; but, intending in a short time to publish a volume by itself expressly upon that subject, I refer the reader thither; and, in the meantime, proceed to relate my own sad catastrophe.

## CHAPTER X.

I HAD settled my little economy to my own heart's content. My master had ordered a room to be made for me after their manner, about six yards from the house; the sides and floors of which I plastered with clay, and covered with rush-mats of my own contriving; I had beaten hemp, which there grows wild, and made of it a sort of ticking; this I filled with the feathers of several birds I had taken with springes made of Yahoo's hairs, and were excellent food. I had worked two chairs with my knife, the sorrel nag helping me in the grosser and more laborious part. When my clothes were worn to rags, I made myself others with the skins of rabbits, and of a certain beautiful animal about the same size, called *Nnuhnoh*, the skin of which is covered with a fine down. Of these I also made very tolerable stockings. I soled my shoes with wood which I cut from a tree, and fitted to the upper leather; and, when this was worn out, I supplied it with the skins of Yahoos, dried in the sun. I often got honey out of hollow trees, which I mingled with water, or ate with my bread. No man could more verify the truth of these two maxims, that Nature is very easily satisfied; and that necessity is the mother of invention. I enjoyed perfect health of body, and