

TAMING OF WILD ANIMALS BY THE ARIKARA

One informant, Whiteowl, told the story of a black bear. A certain woman had a nursing infant, a boy. This baby was named Blackrabbit. This family had at the same time a very young bear cub, which was orphaned, and they were keeping it as a pet. When the woman nursed her baby, the little cub would come and beg to be fed also, and would ask for the other breast. Sometimes when he was hungry and was not satisfied, he would growl. The baby, Blackrabbit, learned to growl also. As the cub began to grow up, he used to go about very sociably visiting at other houses in the village. He was very friendly and soon became acquainted with everyone. As he went about from house to house, the people used to invite him in and give him food from whatever supplies they happened to have ready. The cub took such food as was offered to him and sat down and ate. When he had visited a while and had eaten the food offered to him, he would go on again to another house, or perhaps go back home again.

When he grew larger and could travel farther, he would sometimes go with the women when they went down into the timber to gather firewood, especially when children went along. Sometimes the women would put a load of wood upon his back and ask him to carry it home for them, and he would do so. He was very friendly and good natured and willing.

He was always allowed to go and come as he pleased just the same as a person. He was never kept under any restraint. He was left in the woods sometimes, so that if he wished to remain and go back to his own kind he was free to do so. Time after time, he came home again. At last, there came a time when he did not return. The people never knew whether some mishap had befallen their bear friend, or whether he had chosen to remain with his own kind.

Blackrabbit, the little boy who was nurtured along with this bear cub, developed some bearlike habits, as in gathering berries and eating in the manner of a bear. And also if he were suddenly roused out of sleep he would growl like a bear and chase the one who had wakened him. The people learned to avoid rousing him suddenly.

The same informant also told of another instance of a tame bear. It was during the time when the

Arikara lived in the village near Fort Clark, when Whiteowl's mother was a little girl. Her family took in a small black bear cub. It was kept like a member of the family; it was allowed complete freedom to come and go as it pleased. At first, while it was very young, it was fed corn soup, corn-meal mush, stewed tipsin, stewed Juneberries and chokecherries; then as it became older it was given other kinds of food, whatever the family had. When the cub grew up, he used to go visiting at the neighbors' houses and was treated like a human guest; they would set before him some food of whatever sort they had for themselves. He was very sociable and was fond of children. He would play tag and other games with the children, and would good-naturedly allow them to ride on his back. Sometimes he would saunter out into the woods down by the river on trips by himself to gather berries, wild plums and other wild fruits in their seasons. When he came back from these trips, the people would know whether or not he had found plenty. If he had had good success he would be in good humor and showed his pleasure and satisfaction. He would rub his nose against the people and show that he wanted to play. But, if he had not found much to his satisfaction on the trip, and was hungry and tired, the people would know it for he would be grouchy and growling and grumbling, not disposed to be sociable, and did not want to play. When he returned home in this mood, the women would hasten to prepare some supper for him. When they set the food before him, he would eat with relish. After he had eaten the food they set before him, and his hunger was satisfied, he would go and lie down on his bed and rest. He had a bed made of fine hay at "the head of the house" under the household shrines, which were hung on the west wall of the house, directly opposite the doorway, which was on the east side.

After the cub became full-grown the family really did not care to keep him permanently. They could not bring themselves to kill him, but they wished to persuade him to go back to his own kind. It was decided that one of the men of the family should take him away into the woods at long distance from the village and there leave him. So on a certain day a farewell feast was prepared for the bear in generous portions of the foods, which he liked best. Then after he had eaten all that he would, they decorated him as a man would be decorated for the occasion of some important event. For this purpose, they painted him with red paint on his face and arms and back. This painting with red paint was a token of the wish for good

fortune to the one so decorated.

After the bear was feasted and painted as a departing honored guest the man asked him to come with him for a walk by the river. So, the man and the bear started out and traveled along together through the woods to a place near where Hensler is now, opposite Painted Woods Creek. Here they stopped and the man said to the bear, "Well, my friend, I will take leave from you here. You may now go wherever it may please you to go. I wish you well."

Then the man left the bear and went home. But the next day the bear came back to the village. The next day after that the man again invited the bear to come with him, and again he left the bear in the woods, telling him to go wherever he chose. Now several days passed and the bear was seen no more. Then one day a man, an acquaintance of the family, was at the house. Not seeing the bear there as he had been accustomed, he asked about him, and was told what had been done. Then he said, "Now I believe it is likely that the bearskin which I saw freshly stretched to cure over at the cabin of those white settlers at that place is the skin of our poor bear friend". So a member of the family went with this man to the white man's cabin and looked at the skin. When he did so, he recognized it as the skin of their late companion and friend. They felt grieved for the misfortune, which had overtaken their friend. It would appear that the bear had probably come to the cabin to call on the strangers and to make himself acquainted. He no doubt supposed that they would be friendly as the Arikara people were. But in this he made a fatal mistake. These strangers were not friendly, and they killed him.

When Mrs. Will Deane was a little girl, she had two goslings of Canadian geese as pets. Her uncle had captured them and had given them to her while the people were out on a buffalo hunt. These goslings were not confined, but had full freedom to go where they pleased. They became thoroughly tame and followed the little girl all about wherever she went. They liked to go down to the creek and swim in the stream, but even when they were swimming some distance away, if the little girl wished to leave she had only to call to them "Goat, goat, goat", ("Geese, geese, geese"), and they would turn and swim towards her, come out on the land and follow her home.