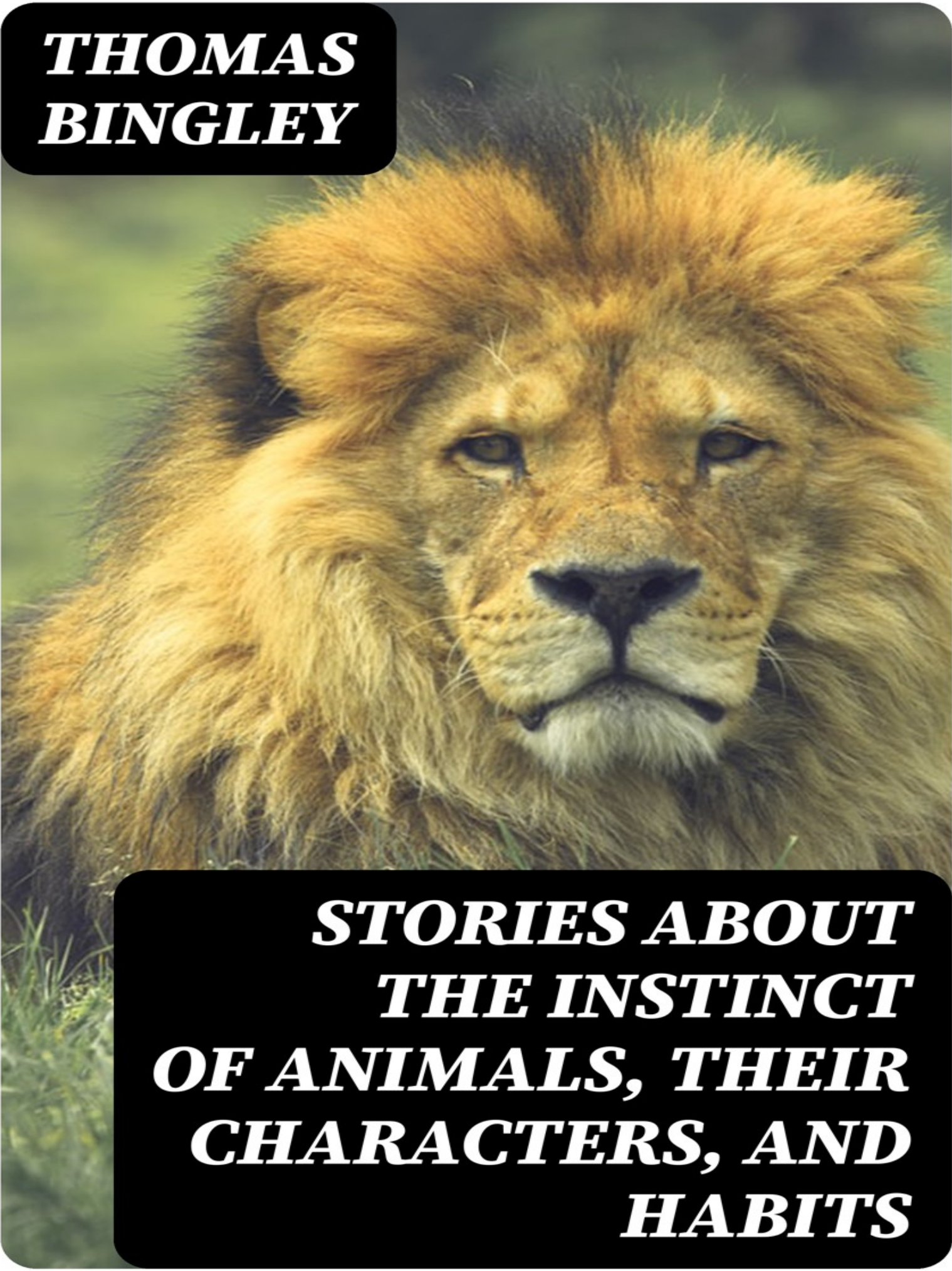


***THOMAS  
BINGLEY***



***STORIES ABOUT  
THE INSTINCT  
OF ANIMALS, THEIR  
CHARACTERS, AND  
HABITS***

**Thomas Bingley**

# **Stories about the Instinct of Animals, Their Characters, and Habits**

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# CHAPTER I.

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Uncle Thomas resumes his Stories about the Instinct of Animals.—Tells about the Horse, and of the Immense Herds which are to be found on the Plains of South America; of their Capture by means of the Lasso; the Arab and his Mare; the Gadshill Robber; the Benevolent Planter; the Lawyer-Highwayman; as well as several other Curious Stories about the Intelligence, Affection, and Docility of the Horse.

"COME away, boys, I am glad to see you again! Since I last saw you I have made an extensive tour, and visited some of the most romantic and picturesque scenery in England. One day I may give you an account of what I saw, and describe to you the scenes which I visited; but I must deny myself this pleasure at present. I promised, at our next meeting, to tell you some TALES ABOUT THE INSTINCT OF ANIMALS; and I propose to begin with the Horse. I like to interest you with those animals with which you are familiar, and to draw out your sympathies towards them. After the STORIES ABOUT DOGS which I told you, some of them exhibiting that fine animal in such an amiable and affectionate character, I am sure it must assume a new interest in your mind. Such instances of fidelity and attachment could not fail to impress you with a higher opinion of the animal than you before possessed, and show that kindness and good treatment even to a brute are not without their reward.

"I wish to excite the same interest towards the other animals which, I hope, I have effected towards the Dog. Each, you will find, has been endowed by its Creator with

particular instincts, to fit it for the station which it was intended to occupy in the great system of Nature. Some of them are wild and ferocious, while others are quiet and inoffensive; the former naturally repel us, while those of the latter class as naturally attract our regard, although, properly speaking, each ought equally to interest us, in as far as it fulfils the object of its being.

"But I know you like stories better than lectures, so I will not tire you by lecturing, but will at once proceed to tell some stories about Horses, which I have gathered for you."

"Oh no, Uncle Thomas, we never feel tired of listening to you; we know you have always something curious to tell us."

"Well, then, Frank, to begin at once with THE HORSE.

"In several parts of the world there are to be found large herds of wild horses. In South America, in particular, the immense plains are inhabited by them, and, it is said, that so many as ten thousand are sometimes found in a single herd. These flocks are always preceded by a leader, who directs their motions; and such is the regularity with which they perform their movements, that it seems almost as if they could not be surpassed by the best trained cavalry.

"It is extremely dangerous for travellers to encounter a herd of this description. When they are unaccustomed to the sight of such a mass of creatures, they cannot help feeling greatly alarmed at their rapid and apparently irresistible approach. The trampling of the animals sounds like the loudest thunder; and such is the rapidity and impetuosity of their advance, that it seems to threaten instant destruction. Suddenly, however, they sometimes stop short, utter a loud

and piercing neighing, and, with a rapid wheel in an opposite course, altogether disappear. On such occasions, however, it requires all the care of the traveller to prevent his horses from breaking loose, and escaping with the wild herd.

"In those countries where horses are so plentiful, the inhabitants do not take the trouble to rear them, but, whenever they want one, mount upon an animal which has been accustomed to the sport, and gallop over the plain towards the herd, which is readily found at no great distance. Gradually he approaches some stragglers from the main body, and, having selected the horse which he wishes to possess, he dexterously throws the *lasso* (which is a long rope with a running noose, and which is firmly fixed to his saddle,) in such a manner as to entangle the animal's hind legs; and, with a sudden turn of his horse, he pulls it over on its side. In an instant he jumps off his horse, wraps his *poncho*, or cloak, round the captive's head, forces a bit into its mouth, and straps a saddle upon its back. He then removes the poncho, and the animal starts on its feet. With equal quickness the hunter leaps into the saddle; and, in spite of the contortions and kickings of his captive, keeps his seat, till, having wearied itself out with its vain efforts, it submits to the discipline of its captor, who seldom fails to reduce it to complete obedience."

"That is very dexterous indeed, Uncle Thomas; but surely all horses are not originally found in this wild state. I have heard that the Arabians are famous for rearing horses."

"Arabia has, for a long time, been the country noted for the symmetry and speed of its horses: so much attention

has been paid to the breeding of horses in our own country, however, for the race-course as well as the hunting-field, that the English horses are now almost unequalled, both for speed and endurance.

"It is little wonder, however, that the Arabian horse should be the most excellent, considering the care and attention which it receives, and the kindness and consideration with which it is treated. One of the best stories which I ever heard of the love of an Arabian for his steed, is that related of an Arab from whom one of our envoys wished to purchase his horse.

"The animal was a bright bay mare, of extraordinary shape and beauty; and the owner, proud of its appearance and qualities, paraded it before the envoy's tent until it attracted his attention. On being asked if he would sell her, 'What will you give me?' was the reply. 'That depends upon her age; I suppose she is past five?' 'Guess again,' said he. 'Four?' 'Look at her mouth,' said the Arab, with a smile. On examination she was found to be rising three. This, from her size and symmetry, greatly enhanced her value. The envoy said, 'I will give you fifty tomans' (a coin nearly of the value of a pound sterling). 'A little more, if you please,' said the fellow, somewhat entertained. 'Eighty—a hundred.' He shook his head and smiled. The officer at last came to two hundred tomans. 'Well,' said the Arab, 'you need not tempt me farther. You are a rich elchee (nobleman); you have fine horses, camels, and mules, and I am told you have loads of silver and gold. Now,' added he, 'you want my mare, but you shall not have her for all you have got.' He put spurs to his horse, and was soon out of the reach of temptation.



"Swift as the Arabian horses are, however, they are frequently matched by those of our own country. I say nothing about *race horses*, because, though some of them are recorded to have run at an amazing speed, the effort is generally continued for but a short time. Here is an instance of speed in a horse which saved its unworthy master from the punishment due to his crime.

"One morning about four o'clock a gentleman was stopped, and robbed by a highwayman named Nicks, at Gadshill, on the west side of Chatham. He was mounted on a bay mare of great speed and endurance, and as soon as he had accomplished his purpose, he instantly started for Gravesend, where he was detained nearly an hour by the difficulty of getting a boat. He employed the interval to advantage however in baiting his horse. From thence he got to Essex and Chelmsford, where he again stopped about half an hour to refresh his horse. He then went to Braintree, Bocking, Weathersfield, and over the Downs to Cambridge, and still pursuing the cross roads, he went by Fenney and Stratford to Huntingdon, where he again rested about half an hour. Proceeding now on the north road, and at a full gallop most of the way, he arrived at York the same afternoon, put off his boots and riding clothes, and went dressed to the bowling-green, where, among other promenaders, happened to be the Lord Mayor of the city. He there studied to do something particular, that his lordship might remember him, and asking what o'clock it was, the mayor informed him that it was a quarter past eight. Notwithstanding all these precautions, however, he was discovered, and tried for the robbery; he rested his defence

on the fact of his being at York at such a time. The gentleman swore positively to the time and place at which the robbery was committed, but on the other hand, the proof was equally clear that the prisoner was at York at the time specified. The jury acquitted him on the supposed impossibility of his having got so great a distance from Kent by the time he was seen in the bowling-green. Yet he was the highwayman."

"So that he owed his safety to the speed of his horse, Uncle Thomas."

"He did so, Harry. The horse can on occasion swim about as well as most animals, yet it never takes to the water unless urged to do so. There is a story about a horse saving the lives of many persons who had suffered shipwreck by being driven upon the rocks at the Cape of Good Hope, which, I am sure, will interest you as much for the perseverance and docility of the animal, as for the benevolence and intrepidity of its owner.

"A violent gale of wind setting in from north and north-west, a vessel in the roads dragged her anchors, was forced on the rocks, and bilged; and while the greater part of the crew fell an immediate sacrifice to the waves, the remainder were seen from the shore struggling for their lives, by clinging to the different pieces of the wreck. The sea ran dreadfully high, and broke over the sailors with such amazing fury, that no boat whatever could venture off to their assistance. Meanwhile a planter, considerably advanced in life, had come from his farm to be a spectator of the shipwreck; his heart was melted at the sight of the unhappy seamen, and knowing the bold and enterprising

spirit of his horse, and his particular excellence as a swimmer, he instantly determined to make a desperate effort for their deliverance. He alighted, and blew a little brandy into his horse's nostrils, and again seating himself in the saddle, he instantly pushed into the midst of the breakers. At first both disappeared, but it was not long before they floated on the surface, and swam up to the wreck; when taking with him two men, each of whom held by one of his boots, he brought them safe to shore. This perilous expedition he repeated no seldomer than seven times, and saved fourteen lives; but on his return the eighth time, his horse being much fatigued, and meeting a most formidable wave, he lost his balance, and was overwhelmed in a moment. The horse swam safely to land, but his gallant rider sank to rise no more."

"That was very unfortunate, Uncle Thomas. I suppose the planter had been so fatigued with his previous exertions, that he had not strength to struggle with the strong waves."

"Very likely, indeed, Harry. I dare say the poor animal felt the loss of his kind owner very much, for the horse soon becomes attached to his master, and exhibits traits of intelligence and fidelity, certainly not surpassed by those of any other animal: for instance,—A gentleman, who was one dark night riding home through a wood, had the misfortune to strike his head against the branch of a tree, and fell from his horse stunned by the blow. The noble animal immediately returned to the house they had left, which stood about a mile distant. He found the door closed,—the family had retired to bed. He pawed at it, however, till one of them, hearing the noise, arose and opened it, and, to his

surprise, saw the horse of his friend. No sooner was the door opened than the horse turned round as if it wished to be followed; and the man, suspecting there was something wrong, followed the animal, which led him directly to the spot where its wounded master lay on the ground.

"There is another story of a somewhat similar description in which a horse saved his master from perishing among the snow. It happened in the North of Scotland.

"A gentleman connected with the Excise was returning home from one of his professional journies. His way lay across a range of hills, the road over which was so blocked up with snow as to leave all trace of it indiscernible. Uncertain how to proceed, he resolved to trust to his horse, and throwing loose the reins, allowed him to choose his course. The animal proceeded cautiously, and safely for some time, till coming to a ravine, horse and rider sunk in a snow-wreath several fathoms deep.

"Stunned by the suddenness and depth of the descent, the gentleman lay for some time insensible. On recovering, he found himself nearly three yards from the dangerous spot, with his faithful horse standing over him and licking the snow from his face. He accounts for his extrication, by supposing that the bridle must have been attached to his person, but so completely had he lost all sense of consciousness, that beyond the bare fact as stated, he had no knowledge of the means by which he made so remarkable an escape."

"It was at any rate very kind in the horse to clear away the snow, Uncle Thomas."