



*Frank Buckland*

*Engraved by Knight from a Photograph*

London Published by Smith Elder & Co. 15, Waterloo Place.

LIFE  
OF XXIII. 52. 27  
FRANK BUCKLAND

BY HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW

GEORGE C. BOMPAS

With a Portrait

LONDON  
SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE  
1885

[All rights reserved]

be my line, and if I have time for other things, so much the better, but my own trade first.'

On his return to England his selection of souvenirs of Paris for himself and his friends, as shown by his Journal, is characteristic.

'September 21.—Bought a beautiful skull and some books for J. Oglo; bought a little owl rare in England.

'22.—Bought another owl.'

The following are further extracts from the same Journal:—

'October 8.—Set the owl's leg again.

'October 11.—Went to Terton to see Noel: introduced to his family. Saw Jenny the monkey, which they gave me.

'October 12.—Raining hard; walked about in the park; found a mole in a trap; looked over Mrs. Noel's collection; some curious things—shells, minerals, mantis, &c. Took the monkey home; put her in the stable; went to hear Dr. Mantell's lecture on Corals: amusing and instructive.

'October 14.—Monkey got loose; trouble to catch her again.

'October 15.—Put the monkey on her pole; good place for her.

'October 17.—The Prince of Canino, Professor Owen, and Sir C. Trevelyan breakfasted with us. Round the Abbey; very much amused. The Prince very like his uncle, sharp and intelligent. He put new names to my owls.

'October 24.—Pollock came to see Jenny; killed a cat for the eagle; Jenny eats grass.

'October 26.—Jenny got loose; great trouble to catch her; she ran all along the roofs of the houses in Dean Street, and at last ran home.'

The history of the chase is narrated in 'Curiosities of Natural History.'<sup>1</sup>

'November 4.—The owl died. Saw Dr. Mantell's bones of a new large Wealden lizard.

'November 19.—Prince Albert came to the Abbey with Colonel Gordon and Colonel Grey. Saw the Royal Monuments, said they were the worst in the place; I carried the keys, and he talked with me about the German students.

'December 8.—Went with Pollock to the Zoological Gardens: saw the new snake house; saw the boa eat a rabbit; heard the rattlesnake's rattle going, saw some of Cleopatra's asps, and some very young slow-worms. Owen to give a lecture next Tuesday upon the rhinoceros that has died.

'December 11.—Went to the Zoological to hear Owen's paper on the rhinoceros; talk with Mr. Mitchell about the rhinoceros.

'December 12.—Sent my owl to the Zoological Gardens.

'December 17.—Dined with Lord Chief Baron Pollock and family; very pleasant party. Saw the microscope, and learned about his wells, &c. He says he is an encyclopædist, and he seems to know everything.

'December 26.—Went to the Museum at Oxford; there a long time; begin to appreciate the collection there.'

In 1850, a short trip to Guernsey with Professor Huxley, then his fellow-student at St. George's, varied his professional studies.

In 1851, the year of the Great Exhibition, Professor

<sup>1</sup> First series, p. 311.

than that of his wife, and his eyes and nose are much more prominent. I have forgotten to mention that Guy Fawkes turns out to be a young lady hippo; she is more delicately featured than her father, and is very like her mother in face.

Many were Frank Buckland's stories of the Zoological Gardens. One was how Obash, the first hippopotamus, once got loose. It was early in the morning, before the Gardens were opened, when a keeper rushed into Mr. Bartlett's house, exclaiming 'Obash is out!' and, sure enough, there came Obash down the long walk, his huge mouth curled into a ghastly smile, as if he meant mischief. The cunning brute had contrived to push back the door of his den, while his keeper had gone for the carpenter to mend some defect in it. Having warned every one to keep out of the way, Mr. Bartlett called his keeper, who tried to coax the hippopotamus back with sweet hay. The brute munched the hay, but showed no sign of going back. What was to be done? Mr. Bartlett is a man of unfailing resource. There was one keeper Obash hated, and ran at him whenever he came in sight. 'Scott,' said Mr. Bartlett, putting a bank note in his hand, 'throw open the paddock gate, and then show yourself to Obash at the end of the path, and run for it.' The man looked at the note, and then through the trees at the beast, and, going into the middle of the path, shouted defiantly 'Obash.' Ugh! roared the beast, viciously, and wheeling his huge carcass suddenly round, rushed with surprising swiftness after the keeper. Scott ran for his life, with the hippopotamus roaring at his heels, into the paddock and over the palings, Obash close to his coat-tails; bang slammed the gate,

and the monster was caged again. Just then, up drove a cab with a newspaper reporter. 'I hear,' he said, 'the hippopotamus is loose!' 'Oh dear no,' innocently replied Mr. Bartlett, 'he is safe in his den; come and see.'

The winter of 1874 was a severe trial to the animals of the Zoological Gardens. Frank Buckland visited them in the coldest weather, and attracted public interest in their condition by a letter to the 'Daily News.'

'During the past severe frost, many of our readers, when assembled round the Christmas hearth, have doubtless remembered the poor animals in the Zoological Gardens. At the very height of the frost, we paid a visit to the Gardens. They presented, indeed, a most forlorn aspect, contrasting greatly with their brilliant appearance on a summer's afternoon. Everything seemed frozen up, and many of the houses were defended from the frost by various contrivances, and the inmates themselves were seldom visible. The Polar bears, the beavers, and seals, alone seemed to enjoy the cold weather. The smaller Polar bear is a female. She has bred twice—two cubs at a time. When born, each is about the size of a large rat. The cubs were put to a foster-mother, but the little wretches were so disagreeable that the canine mother would not attend to them. The seals seemed perfectly happy, and to enjoy the frost and snow much more than they do the summer weather. Out of the four Bladder-nosed seals, that were presented to the Society by Captain Gray, only one remains alive, and he is the big male. When he first arrived he was fed on eels, but now he eats sprats, whiting, and haddocks, and, with the other seals, is a very expensive pet. Old Le Compte, the seal-man,

informed us, "Que les seals ont bien passé leur Christmas avec une double ration de poissons." Le Compte has kept the ice in the big round pond broken, and the seals (especially the two sea-bears) have advanced considerably in their education, particularly in the art of catching fish in their mouths, when thrown from a distance; the big one will "field" the fish with a dexterity to be envied by cricketers. It will be observed that the smaller sea-bear shows his flipper as he swims in the water, so that he might be easily mistaken for a porpoise; the other sea-bear does not show his flipper at all.

'The beavers are quite at home in the cold and snow. Three holes were opened for them in the ice, and were kept open by the beavers themselves continually passing through. This is probably their habit in far distant Canada and North America. It was very interesting to see the beavers collect the snow, which they do by pushing a heap up together; they then collect it between their fore paws and chin, and half push half carry it along. One cunning rascal made a snow hill at one corner of the enclosure, a clever bit of engineering, by means of which he evidently intended to have escaped, by going to the top of the snow hill, and then dropping down the other side. Another of these beavers was evidently not quite satisfied with his present home, and had set to work to improve it. This fellow collected a quantity of snow, and piled it up as a kind of extra thatching on his "hut," as it may be really called, in the middle of the pond. The inside of this "hut" is said to be tunnelled in a most remarkable manner. There is a story extant, not only in schoolrooms but even much higher, probably originated by Peter Parley,

that beavers use their tails as trowels, to flatten down the mud, which forms the roofs and sides of their huts. They never do anything of the kind; they use their tails for sitting on their haunches, and for steering themselves in the water. They also have the power of slapping the water with a loud noise; this is done as a signal when in danger.

'During a very hard frost some four years ago, the rhinoceros fell through the ice which covered the pond of his enclosure: he was then very nearly drowned, but was cleverly hauled out from his perilous position by means of ropes. This year, the moment the frost was gone, the ice was removed, and the rhinoceros let out to have a bath. The old thing would not take the usual plunge, but, just putting her toes into the water, instantly drew back, the water evidently being much too cold. The elephants and the other large animals in the new elephant house, and the giraffes and elands also, have preserved good health during the severe cold: the houses are kept at an agreeable temperature by means of hot-water pipes. The mother hippopotamus and Guy Fawkes, the young one, who has grown amazingly, are also quite well. The water in which they bathe inside the house is always kept warm at as near 55 deg. as possible, and they seem thoroughly to enjoy their perpetual warm bath. The ant-eater retired under a mountain of straw, only turning out at dinner time. In the ant-eater's house is a large tank nearly full of alligators, crocodiles, turtles, etc., which make a great splashing when disturbed. The structure of the lungs of these creatures enables them to remain days—nay even weeks, sometimes months—under water without breathing.

and made to speak by the comparatively feeble hand of the man at the rope below. The sight of these eight bells all swinging, apparently madly, and without order, and yet giving out a most musical peal, which (when the bells are not muffled) can be heard eight miles off, was grand in the extreme. After looking well at the bells, I sent down word to ask the ringers to "fall" them; and it was very interesting to see, how neatly and gently the bells began to lessen their speed, then seem to despair of their work, then labour heavily at it, then begin to slumber, and at last fall into the deep heavy sleep, which they have enjoyed more or less for one hundred and eighty years. Only fancy one hundred and eighty Christmas days! Taking a generation at thirty years, these bells must have rung their Christmas peal to no less than six generations of the inhabitants of Ross since the reign of king William III., A.D. 1695, when the "Man of Ross," John Kyrle, gave the big bell. It is said that the Man of Ross was present at the casting of the tenor or great bell, and that he took with him an old silver tankard, which, after drinking claret and sherry, he threw in and had cast with the bell. By a curious coincidence this bell unexpectedly fell off the wheel soon after John Kyrle's funeral.

Frank Buckland was elected corresponding member of the Zoological Society of Philadelphia, an honorary member of the Chester Society of Natural History, presided over by his friend Canon Kingsley, and a member of other local associations.

He still found time for many public and social engagements; exhibiting objects of newest interest from his collection at the *soirées* of the Royal Society and College

of Surgeons; attending meetings of the Fisheries Preservation Society, under the presidency of the Duke of Northumberland, and of the Thames Angling Association, who presented him with a diamond ring and a watch and chain in testimony of the value of his aid.

He also received an exhibitor's medal for his contributions to the International Exhibition of 1873 at South Kensington.

In 1874 he delivered two lectures at the Society of Arts on Natural History, followed by a lecture at his Museum, and another at the Brighton Aquarium, when he gave prizes to his younger hearers for the best essays on his former lectures; he also lectured at the opening of the Manchester Aquarium in May 1874, and at Harting, Sussex, in the same year.

Two young nephews called in Albany Street while he was preparing for the Brighton lecture. The old rhinoceros at the Zoological Gardens had lately died, and Frank Buckland was busy making a huge pie of a portion of the carcase, to be distributed among his Brighton audience. The nephews came in for an anticipatory share. It was like very tough beef.

He met the Prince and Princess of Wales, and later the Shah of Persia, at the Earl of Granville's. Dined at the Wykehamists' and St. George's Hospital and other public dinners; wrote an article on the Two-headed Nightingale; called on them and the giant and giantess, Captain Bates and Miss Swan. The Two-headed Nightingale returned his visit, and he entertained the giant and giantess at dinner in honour of their marriage, on which happy occasion the Two-headed Nightingale officiated as bridesmaids.