

THE CALCUTTA ZOO IN THE NINETIES.

By FRANK FINN, B.A., F.Z.S.

Within a few months of my arrival in India in 1894, I was made an honorary member of the Calcutta Zoological Society and put on the council, and up till my departure from India, nearly ten years later, I always took a keen interest in the Zoo affairs, though less in later years than when I first came out, as the garden was, in my opinion, better managed then, when the late Dr. D. D. Cunningham, then Professor of Physiology in Calcutta University, was the leading spirit on the council, than it was when he left India on completing his service, and the management fell into other hands. But all the time I was very friendly with our excellent late superintendent, Rai Ram Brahma Sanyal Bahadur, whom some of my readers have probably met on the occasion of his visit to England, which fulfilled one of the most cherished wishes of his life, for he greatly esteemed our countrymen, and had a particular loyal affection for Dr. Cunningham. His own book on the management of animals in captivity in Lower Bengal is the best that has been published in any language, and reflects credit alike on the practical zoological attainments and command of English of the writer.

The Calcutta Garden is easily the most beautiful I have ever seen, not only because of the splendid tropical vegetation, but because of its undulating contour and fine water supply, although the grass of the lawns was not so neat or the water of the ponds so clear as one sees in an English park, such features being inferior in the tropics so far as I have seen.

The houses were, of course, designed to give free ventilation and shelter from sun, which is the great enemy to animals in the tropics, since few, even from those zones, like to be exposed to its rays during the mid-day hours. Moreover the violent rains during the wet season have to be guarded against. The Lion house was a fine semi-circular building with a covered walk in front—visitors as well as animals, of course, want shade—and at one time we had all the large cats of the world, except the Aunce or Snow Leopard. The collection of Tigers was, as might be expected, fine, the orange-tawny colour of these animals' coats being much richer than one usually sees it here, as they deteriorate in captivity in this country, no doubt owing to indoor life, as the Siberian Tigers kept out-doors at our zoo kept their colour better. I never saw a very good Lion in Calcutta, however, and one nice pair we got out from Europe, as good-sized cubs, grew up stocky, but small, more like Jaguars in size and build, owing, I think, to being left together; premature pairing

being known to be most fatal to fine animal development. This is, I fancy, the reason why animals inhabiting a variety of climates, from the wolf to the sparrow, are larger in the colder ones—they get no chance of premature pairing owing to a harder life and non-forcing temperature. The Clouded Leopard or Clouded Tiger—whichever you prefer to call a beast which is neither Leopard nor Tiger, but a species equally distinct from both—we first had in my time was the finest I ever saw, quite as big as a full-sized ordinary Leopard, allowing for the difference in build.

We had a fine lot of Monkeys, located in two houses of several small outside cages, including Orangs, but never a Chimpanzee. When I first came out a magnificent male Drill inhabited one-half of a small detached stone-work two-compartment cage, and some years afterwards we got an equally fine Mandrill, which was, of course, installed in the other half of the little house, and equally, of course, quite swamped the attractions of his "poor black brother." Besides the ordinary Asiatic Macaques and some common African and American Monkeys, we had some very interesting species of the Langur group, most charming animals. I particularly remember one species with a long black coat and navy-blue face, also a specimen of the Capped Langur, so popular at the Zoo, and, of course, the ordinary Entellus, the original Langur, which lives wild near Calcutta, as does also the original Bunder, or Rhesus. I never saw either of these wild in the garden, however, though no doubt they visited it, as it was quite on the outskirts of Calcutta, in the suburb of Alipore. Palm Squirrels were common in it, and I once saw a grey Mongoose, while Jackals came in after dark, and rendered it necessary to shut up the smaller Cranes and Storks at night, though Adjutants and Sarus Cranes, etc., could be left out.

To conclude with the Monkeys. A very attractive individual was a male Hoolock Gibbon which used to be allowed to go loose, so that one could easily observe his curious upright gait on the ground when he passed from one tree to another—I must say that I did not observe, nor has it struck me in any other Gibbon, that the arms were held up as balancers; it has always seemed to me that the slight bending of them I have seen was simply to get the hands off the ground, the animal being a true biped like ourselves. But, of course, the normal progress of these apes is by swinging hand over hand among the trees, etc., and it was interesting to see this specimen slide down a bough and drink with his hand from a pond. Our free-lance used to pay calls to two females confined in different houses, and ultimately had to be shut up like them, as he got vicious.

(To be continued.)

vessels, taken out, and again put into the same vessel.

The committees had been farces and subterfuges to cover the ineptitude of the so-called shipping control.

Goods were being dragged up and down the country for hundreds of miles, with docks and even ships available within a dozen miles.

WASTED TIME AND LABOUR.

Mr. Tillett stated that on one occasion he was sent for by the Shipping Controller, who complained that in some of the docks the men were not doing what he considered was their duty. He alleged that shipping was being held up, and dock traffic was congested.

"We had a ready reply to that," said Mr. Tillett, "for in one of these very docks that he complained about there were two Government officials. One went along and ordered some hundreds of tons of cargo into a ship, and as soon as his back was turned another came along and ordered it out. (Laughter.) Then they both returned and ordered it back again."

AN OFFICER'S ORDER.

Mr. Tillett added that they had the amusing experience of seeing a young officer peer down the hold of a vessel, and, on seeing the tunnel which houses the shaft which drives the propeller, say, "Take that away. It takes up too much room." (Loud laughter.)

Describing the manner in which the tonnage of vessel was wasted by official muddling, he alleged that trips which should take nine of ten days were taking five or six weeks.

18,000 TONS OF BACON.

Mr. E. Bevin (the Union's Organiser) declared that recently 18,000 tons of bacon were rotting in the docks. The Government's attention was called to it, and instead of taking it over they sold it to a huge American combine—(cries of "Shame")—who immediately put it into cold storage. The Government defended themselves by saying that they had not got the cold storage.

"The trouble (said the speaker) is the appointment of the head of a huge food combine to control the people's food. The appointment of Lord Devonport is an insult to democracy."

LOCOMOTIVES THROWN OVERBOARD.

Another delegate said that a ship was sent to sea with the hold packed full of naval stores, on the top of which were placed railway engines. When the ship got to sea the naval people wanted the stores, and so the ship was sent

back to port, where it happened that at the particular dock it reached there was no crane which could shift the engines. The ship returned to sea, and the naval people had the engines flung overboard.

Mr. Bevin declared that thousands of tons of food which could have been carried to this country were not carried because the ships were engaged in taking only 150 horses across the water.

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Confined, Gibbons did not last long in Calcutta, neither did Orangs; the cages needed to be larger, and here it is to be observed that an arrival which is delicate here, is delicate also in its own home, as I saw with several tropical Asiatic birds and beasts. The difficulty is usually temperament or digestion rather than climate, and in hot as well as cold climates the more space can be given the better as a rule are the results.

We seldom had Elephants and then only young ones destined to go elsewhere, the Elephant being so well known that he did not justify the large expense, but we had Rhinoceroses, the first Rhinoceros really bred in captivity—as opposed to any that may have been born of a female pregnant when captured, having been bred in this garden.

The rhino enclosures were very fine, one surrounded by a wall, with plenty of grass and a pond as big as the three-island pond at the zoo inside it, and the other with an iron post and rail fence extending at the bottom into the garden lake. The last, however, was done away with to build a ponderous new house for small carnivores, a scheme I strongly opposed, but without avail; committees have an incurable passion for building, and I an obstinate objection to "improvements" that do not demonstrably make for more comfort for man and beast. Giraffes and Hippos there were none in my time, though both have been represented, and I fancy have been since I left. Antelopes and Deer were few in species, but shown in fine large grass paddocks; in one, containing a pond, a pair of Sarus Cranes lived along with the Sambur, and when visitors came with food it was curious to see the male crane peck the big stag in the face and make him stand back. I have seen this stag let a crow take a much greater liberty—clean out his eye glands of the secretion, which the bird, whose tastes are peculiarly nasty,

evidently thought a delicacy. And in this case a friendly peck was given when the bird, perched on a bar of the iron fence, wished the stag to move his head a little, and the hint was understood and obeyed.

One large paddock contained a herd of spotted Deer or Axis, which bred very freely—too much so, in fact; I was always trying to get them reduced, but at last disease did it. In the same range were accommodated the fine Banteng Cattle, and such birds as Emus and Cassowaries; in a large paddock with a house for nightshelters were a curious happy family of Gazelles, Kangaroos, Rheas, and Giant Tortoises.

Our reptile house was, of course, very interesting, and needed, like the rest, no heating; it had Pythons, and was strong on poisonous snakes—here I first saw the Hamadryad or King Cobra, and the black and yellow banded Krait, both of them cannibal snakes. The terror of the snakes put in to feed the Krait was painful to see, and was quite opposed to the composure of the tame ducks I saw given to a Python and the Crocodiles—it was "all up with them" before they knew anything was going to happen. There was always the danger of wild Crocodiles in the lake, by the way, so no waterfowl were kept there till some years after I came, when it was netted round, but two islands, one about as big as those in Regents Park, and one a mere foothold for a clump of pandanus or screw-pine, were of exceeding interest, as they harboured a unique colony of wild waterfowl. This had begun, just before my time, with the pied paddy-bird, or pond-egret, the commonest of Indian wading-birds, but these were soon ousted by hundreds of night-herons, burly birds which were even individually far too much for the poor little egrets, but had to yield part of the main island to another invading force of the Indian cormorant, a little fellow compared with ours, not being bigger than a wood-pigeon, and the commonest swimmer in India. After these had settled matters, the cormorants coming in at night and the herons going out then—both being present at once when breeding, and filling the trees with their nests—down came a small but select party of darters or snake-birds, and insisted on settling themselves on top of the lot, being prepared with powerful arguments in the shape of bayonet-like beaks on the end of long snaky necks. These extraordinary looking birds did not stay all the year like the rest, but left after breeding. I could never make out why, until I read in the Bombay Natural History Society's Journal that these birds (unlike their allies, the cormorants) lose all their quills at once when moulting, and so have to find a suitable retreat for the flightless period. This custom of moulting the quills altogether obtains in the American darter also, as could have been seen in our Zoo last year.

At the end of an arm of this lake, and built over it, was our house for small water-fowl, the finest thing I have ever seen in any zoo. All of wire, it was thatched in summer for shade and coolness, and had a great creeper growing inside all over the top, with big pale-mauve flowers, which, with the green leaves, beautifully set off the colours of the birds—blue Porphyrios, painted Mandarins, scarlet Ibises, beautiful, though faded to salmon-colour (though the cock always showed splashes of scarlet in spring), pale-grey and white Gulls, and Ducks of many kinds, nearly all of which, including the arctic-breeding Pintail, stood the heat perfectly, in spite of their thick plumage, which, however, was apt to wear off on the breast, exposing the down.

This could be said of several animals inhabiting cool climates, including the Himalayan and Brown Bears, which one would think could not bear the terrible heat, with their thick fur. The fact is, one cannot usually tell from an animal's habitat, structure, or habits, whether it will bear a change of climate any more than a change of food or close confinement; the whole thing is a matter for experiment.

Among the hardiest creatures we had was an Armadillo of some sort, which must have been there about 20 years when I left; it lived in an iron cage mounted on a brick foundation under a little roof, and could often be seen sleeping on its back.

A very rare beast was the curious Water Civet (*Cynogale bennettii*) with its broad well-whiskered muzzle and short tail. It was the only one I ever saw alive, but I can't say I ever saw it in the water. Another rarity was the Andaman Pig, a curious little black species; there was a sow there when I came, and after an expedition to the Andamans I brought back two young ones one of which at least was a boar, and so they bred. The young were striped chocolate and buff like most young wild pigs, although the animal always looked to me more like a dwarfed tame pig run wild than a true wild animal.

Among the birds in my time were especially to be noted several splendid Hornbills, the Rhinoceros Hornbill and the Javan form of this as well as the Indian Concave-casqued, and once, that very extraordinary bird the Solid-casqued Hornbill (*Rhinoplax vigil*); this was a young bird with the casque not developed, but with the neck bare as in the adult, and possessing a weird and penetrating smell.

We had also the strange Pink-headed Duck (*Rhodonessa caryo-phyllacea*), a splendid and very vicious Argus Pheasant, a *Cariama* which, though matchless, laid an egg, a fair assortment of Parrots, mostly kept in my time in cages (though this has, I believe, been improved on since), Himalayan

Pies, Jays, and Joy-thrushes, three kinds of Birds of Paradise, greater, lesser and red, and the first Trogon that I know to have been kept in captivity.

We had to buy a couple of dozen Green-winged Doves to get hold of this; it was fed mostly on grasshoppers and cockroaches, the Asiatic Trogons being insectivorous, while the American kinds, like the Cuban Trogon, the only species which has been brought to Europe, are chiefly fruit-eaters.

The birds excited particular interest among the native public, who, indeed, call the Zoo the "Bird Place" (Chiriya khana); and the way in which they would go round with keen interest in animals of all classes was rather a contrast to our people's more limited craving for lions, elephants, monkeys, and snakes; though of late years I have certainly noticed a widening of interest in the case of visitors to our Zoo, who take much more notice of birds and other small things than they did once. The usual food the native visitors gave the various creatures was pop-corn, and the most unlikely-looking animals acquired a taste for this, as they do for monkey-nuts here.

The native has a painful interest in some exhibits, for Lower Bengal is well within the haunts of the largest and most terrible of living reptiles, the Estuarine Crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*), and one big crocodile we had, which soon died, as the big ones always did, threw up before his death a human leg and some bones, a grim reminder of what his past had been. As to cobras, one was actually caught wild in the Zoo grounds, though I never saw one there myself, or anywhere else in India, during all my residence there.

THE ELEPHANTS IN THE ADDO BUSH.

(Special to the "African World.")

By SIR HARRY H. JOHNSTON, G.C.M.G.

Readers of that excellent and informative periodical, "Hamlyn's Menagerie Magazine," will have realised—with dismay if they are interested in natural history—that the local authorities and residents at Uitenhage purpose destroying completely the herd of wild elephants in the Addo Bush, a forest district of fifteen square miles (?) on the flanks of the Zuurberg Mountains, behind Port Elizabeth, in South-eastern Cape Province. This herd, with the exception of another small one which may still linger in the Knysna Forest, also in Cape Province, is the last that remains of the wild elephant in southernmost Africa, and,

furthermore, is a distinct sub-species, and to zoologists of very great interest. According to the information quoted by Mr. Hamlyn, the Addo Bush herd, numbers now as many as 150 individuals, so that it has obviously increased of late. The area on which it lives is too small to feed it, perhaps, but in any case, as the Addo Bush is quite unenclosed, the elephants leave the forest and do great damage to adjoining plantations and crops, and are even sometimes dangerous to human beings. For the proper maintenance of such a magnificent legacy of the past, an area of greater size is necessary, but most of all, whatever area was chosen, it would have to be surrounded with some fence or dyke which the elephants could not cross. A comparatively small space of parkland would suffice if it could be strictly enclosed so that the elephants could not escape, because then, when the herd grew larger than the natural supply of vegetation sufficed to feed, they could be kept down to a certain number by judicious killing, and the expense of keeping up such a national park might be partly met by highly priced licences to kill, by the sale of ivory and other trophies.

THE CAPE'S BEAUTIFUL FLORA.

But to think for a moment that the nation of Cape Province is heedlessly going to destroy what any American State would regard as a national asset, brings home to one, alas! once again the want of imagination, the want, if I may say so, of education which characterises so much of South Africa. One has noticed it in times past in the reckless destruction of the unique flora of Table Mountain and other elevated mountains with a sufficient rain supply in southernmost Africa. It has been with the greatest difficulty that any (generally foreign born) Government botanist has secured some degree of protection for the Cape flora, perhaps one of the most singular and one of the most beautiful in the world. Vast herds of big game were, of course, in the past quite incompatible with turning the lands of South Africa to good account for the white or black settler, but even more care might have been taken to preserve examples of the Cape fauna.

DOMESTICATION OF THE SPRINGBOK.

The same magazine from which I am quoting about the Addo Bush draws our attention to a more encouraging outlook: the domestication of that beautiful antelope known as the springbok. The springbok is quite good to eat; it is one of the most beautiful of the antelopes; it is easily tamed, and its pelt is in great demand for the formation of rugs and karosses.

THE ELAND, ZEBRA AND OSTRICH.

In the Orange River State and the Transvaal a greater interest has been shown in the saving and the domestication of remarkable wild animals