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## *The Zoo in Calcutta.*

IN a former paper on wild beasts I wrote enthusiastically that the summit of my official happiness was attained when I was appointed by Government to be President of the Honorary Committee who superintended the management of the Calcutta Zoological Gardens. For many years I had been hunting and shooting wild beasts. It was now to be my duty to save and protect them. The gardens were in their infancy. We had almost a *tabula rasa* before us. We had a site four times as big as the Regent's Park Zoological Gardens to lay out. We had to provide some sixty new buildings for the reception of our animals, and we had to collect all the beasts, birds, and reptiles representative of India. Fortunately we had considerable funds at our disposal, and our subscribers and members were most liberal. We did not know at first, but we soon learnt, that a Zoo is not a paying concern, if it merely depends on the entrance or gate money from visitors. Probably the British public little knows that the Zoological Gardens in the Regent's Park would soon have to be closed if they had to depend solely on the entrance-money taken at the gates. They are maintained chiefly from the annual subscriptions of the Fellows of the Zoological Society, who thus generously contribute to the amusement and instruction of the rest of their countrymen.

In our Calcutta committee, it was my principal duty to look after the collection of the animals. At first the natives did not seem to understand our object. They brought to us calves with two heads, or goats with five legs, and such other monstrosities. One native lady was much disappointed that we would not accept from her a cat which had been beautifully dyed of a magenta colour. This cat had been one of the principals in a famous cat's wedding, conducted according to Hindoo ceremonial, on which this lady and some of her dissolute friends had spent upwards of a thousand pounds. There were, of course, many animals that

we did not want, such as Brahminy bulls, or zebus, as they are called in England, or tame buffaloes or jackals, or Indian dogs. And we soon had a surplus of monkeys and young leopards. Any one who kept a pet monkey or a young leopard was ready to send it as a present to the Zoo as soon as it had done some mischief or shown itself dangerous to the children of the family. So also as regards the little black bears which are plentiful in Lower Bengal. A small bear-cub, about the size of a fox-terrier, is a very comical-looking creature, and it is absurd to see it feeding itself from a baby's bottle, with its indiarubber tube, just like a young human baby. But the little bear's teeth, and its long and sharp claws, grow more quickly than the rest of its body. When it begins to try to climb up its master's leg, with a liberal application of claw, it becomes time to offer to present it to an institution like the Calcutta Zoo.

It happened that I knew personally almost every rajah or large landowner in Lower Bengal who was the owner of jungles from which the rarer kinds of wild animals could be procured. I therefore wrote to many of these gentlemen to ask for their assistance, and it was most kindly and promptly given. Amongst other native friends to whom I wrote was the Rajah of Hill Tipperah, on the eastern frontier of Bengal. It is a semi-independent State, similar to the Manipore State, which has lately become so unhappily notorious. The heir to the Tipperah throne is styled the Juberaj,<sup>1</sup> and the commander-in-chief of the rajah's forces is called the Senapati. The rajah wrote to me a letter promising to send some animals, and after a few weeks I received from him a telegram, which is probably almost unique in the annals of telegraphy: 'The Senapati starts to-day by boat with one young tiger, two leopards, one bear, two gyals, two hog-deer, a white jackal, and two pythons and several birds. Please accept them for the Zoo.' The journey by boat from Tipperah to Calcutta occupies about ten or twelve days, and in due time the Senapati found his way to my house and reported his safe arrival with his live cargo. The Senapati was a tall, well-built man, arrayed in white garments, and wearing a white muslin turban, with a shield and sword as emblems of his profession. I thought it a very excellent idea on the part of the rajah to employ his Senapati on the peaceful duty of escorting wild animals to Calcutta. I found out that the Senapati's full pay and allowance as

<sup>1</sup> Juberaj is a Sanskrit title, composed from the same roots as *juvenis* and *rex* in Latin. Senapati comes from *sena*, an army, and *patis*, a chief or leader.

commander-in-chief amounted to only sixteen rupees a month, not always regularly paid. When he came to take his leave of me, and found himself in possession of a little bag containing a hundred rupees as an honorarium for his services, it gave him some trouble to maintain the solemnity and dignity becoming a commander-in-chief. I have no doubt that he was really in earnest when he said that he would like to come again with some more animals for the Calcutta Zoo. What a pity it is that the Senapati of Manipore was not thus innocently employed in the transport of wild animals to Calcutta.

Although the buildings at the Zoo were pushed on as rapidly as possible, it took some time to finish the large house for lions and tigers. This building was designed in imitation of the lion-house in the London Zoo, with modifications suited to the hot climate of Calcutta. A broad verandah kept off the rays of the sun to the south. The apartments for the animals consisted of an outer den and an inner den, spacious and lofty, with iron gratings and doors communicating with the dens on either side, as well as with one another. Before the whole of this building was completely finished we were obliged to put some tigers into those dens that were ready for use. This led to a rather awkward incident. A fine male tiger which Mr. Metcalfe had procured from Patna, and a tigress, presented by the Rajah of Burdwan, had been put together in one suite of apartments. One morning these two animals were turned out as usual into their outer den, whilst the grating that separated it from the inner den was lowered by the machinery that was worked by one of the keepers from the roof. Presently some workmen were let into the inner den from the door at the back, to make some trifling alterations and additions. These workmen, having finished their job, went out again by the door through which they had entered the den. They had found the door open, so they left it open, and it happened that no one came to shut it. In the evening the keeper stationed on the roof came along, and with his machinery he, as usual, raised the grating that had kept the tigers in the outer den. When the tigers entered their inner den they saw the open door, and very naturally walked out into the gardens. There is much reason to believe that when the tigers thus got loose they did not know what to do with their liberty. They had passed the greater part of their life in captivity, and were probably as much astonished and frightened at what they saw as the people were who saw them walking about the grounds. Luckily it was rather

late in the evening, and most of the visitors for the day had gone away to their homes. The native superintendent, Baboo Sandyal, hearing a commotion, very properly went to see what had happened. He found himself almost face to face with the two tigers, and he promptly took refuge in a sort of sentry-box made of bamboo matting, which was sometimes used by one of the money-takers at one of the minor entrances to the gardens. The tigers saw him, and it may be that they knew him, as he had looked after their feeding and cleaning. At all events, when he had ensconced himself in the sentry-box, the tigers came sniffing about, and his alarm was great. There was an aperture in the front of the box which could not be closed. It was above the tigers' heads, so that they could not see it. But the Baboo in despair put his head out and shouted for help. This shout so frightened the tigers that they ran back into the gardens instead of getting out on to the high road as they might have done. They wandered back towards their own dens, but finding no admission, they got on to a grassy bank close by, and jumped down into a large open enclosure in which the rhinoceros lived. There was a little house in which the rhinoceros used to sleep or shelter himself from the heat of the sun. The tigers wanted to enter, but the rhinoceros would not admit them, and as they had probably never seen a rhinoceros they were much frightened. But they could not get back out of the rhinoceros enclosure, as it was surrounded by a wall rising eight feet high on the inner side. So they lay down and passed the night where the wall sheltered them from the winds in front of a little tank or pool of water in which the rhinoceros performed his ablutions. News of the escapade having been brought to my house in Calcutta, I drove to the gardens at sunrise to see what was to be done. At the entrance I met Sir Ashley Eden, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, in a great state of indignation. He told me that Mr. Metcalfe and one of his friends had come down very early and had got on the roof of the lion-house, and deliberately shot the poor tigers as they lay in the rhinoceros enclosure. It was really unnecessary to shoot them, as they could not have escaped, and might easily have been captured and secured. The only thing to be said was that Mr. Metcalfe had procured and presented one of the tigers, and as he was then the head of the Calcutta Police, he was anxious to protect the public against any mischief that might be done in consequence of the escape of the tigers.

As many people regard the lions and tigers as the most important part of the show, I may here say something more about the tigers and lions that we managed to collect. In India, as the land of tigers, there was no difficulty in procuring them; we were only obliged to limit our numbers to seven or eight, for want of room, and on account of the expense of feeding them. We lost several tigers at first from overfeeding them. The public always want to see the tigers fat and fleshy, but such a condition usually conduces to fatal liver disease. The finest tigers that we had were a male and female that had been caught full-grown in a pitfall. There was no doubt that they belonged to a family of tigers who had killed and eaten many human beings on the high road to Hazaribagh. Other kinds of natural tiger food, such as deer and wild pigs and cattle, were scarce in that part of the world, and the tigers had found human beings an easy and agreeable prey. When the jaws of a tiger once close on the human neck, death is instantaneous, and the victim makes no struggle. The deer and cattle with their horns and hoofs, and the wild pigs with their sharp tusks and horny feet, may injure the tiger.

When a tiger has once found out how easy it is to spring on a defenceless man or woman and to break their neck, it becomes indifferent to other food. Our two tigers were in perfect health and good condition. They were morose, and would not submit to be petted or played with, though they would condescend to eat the *dhoop*-grass, fresh with morning dew, that we cautiously placed before their noses. Eventually they gave us some tiger-cubs. I think there were at least three editions of three cubs at a time before I left India, and there have been others since.

Lions are almost extinct in India. It was said ten years ago that there were only eleven of them left, strictly preserved, in Guzerat. Our first African lion was an old beast from Barrackpore that Lord Northbrook presented to us. I think we had to import a wife for him from the London Zoo, but they never had any cubs. Our two best lions came from Mesopotamia, where they were captured and sent to us by the late Mr. Carter, of Busrah. They came separately. The first to arrive was named Haroon-al-Rasheed. He was about the size of a half-grown St. Bernard dog, and as tame as a puppy. For some time I kept him in my own garden in a common dog-kennel with a chain and collar. As long as I could lift him off the ground by the skin of his neck and back he was quite manageable. But when he grew bigger, and in fact outgrew his kennel, it was necessary to

transfer him to the Zoo, where his temper was soon spoiled by the folly of the visitors, who poked at him with their sticks and umbrellas. It was a caution to see how swiftly he swung round his head to where his tail had been an instant before. I often wished that he would catch one of his silly assailants. A few months after Rasheed had landed in Calcutta a wife arrived for him, and she was named Zobeide. She was a most gentle thing, and Mr. Schwendler took special charge of her in his own house. I used sometimes to walk about the Zoo with her, but one day I met the late Lord Lytton there, and the sight of a loose lioness was too much for him, so that he desired that she might be put into a cage. Rasheed and Zobeide made a very pretty pair, and we were much disappointed that they had no family. After a time poor Zobeide became mortally ill. I shall never forget the sight when I drove down one cold morning to inquire for her. Poor Zobeide lay stretched on the floor of her den, covered with a great German blanket, whilst she still tried to lick the hand of Mr. Schwendler, who was sitting on a chair at her head, having passed the night there vainly endeavouring to find some remedy for her deadly illness. We also had two fine young Indian lions sent us by the Chief of Guzerat, thanks to the instigation of one of my sons, who had gone to that country with his brother-in-law, Sir Richard Temple, Governor of Bombay. These animals were very interesting, and the male was beginning to show a fine mane, whereas it used to be said that Indian lions were maneless. But one day they both got caught in a violent hail-storm, which so chilled them that they became paralysed in their backs, so that it was found necessary to kill them and put them out of their misery.

Leopards we had in any number. There are leopards in many parts of Bengal, and the young ones are easily caught. We usually kept a couple of black leopards, which are procurable from Singapore and the Straits. They look very beautiful when they can be induced to let the sun shine on their black skins, so as to show the pattern of the spots on it. But they were the most untamable and sulky creatures that we had to deal with, and they were always very reluctant to exhibit themselves. Their activity was wonderful. I once found one clinging to the top of the wall of his den, which was more than 12 feet from the ground, and apparently he must have made a leap of 12 feet almost perpendicularly to reach his position. It gave him no trouble to jump down

again. Very different in its habits was the clouded or tortoise-shell leopard which Dr. Anderson calls *Felis macrocelis*. It is said to be common in Assam, but we only had one specimen of it. Owing to some unknown cause this poor beast went blind with cataract in both eyes. Then Dr. Anderson took it in hand and operated on the cataract, and restored the animal's sight. Its affection and gratitude to him were unmistakable. It was a very tame and gentle creature, in spite of its powerful jaws and teeth, which made most of the visitors keep out of its reach, where it was tethered by a long chain to a shady tree, into which it delighted to climb. This reminds me of another pet and patient of Dr. Anderson's, a Tibetan lynx, that was bought by him at Darjeeling in 1878, when it was about six months old. After it had been nearly two years in his private house it met with a serious accident, which may best be described in Dr. Anderson's own words: 'Wishing to stalk a passing cat, it sprang over the railing of the verandah in which it lived, and was nearly strangled by its chain. When lifted up it was found that the left thigh-bone was fractured. It was laid down carefully on its right side, and with great docility the animal maintained this position for weeks, until the fracture had united. While a patient it permitted itself to be carried about, and purred with pleasure when it received more than usual attention.' When Dr. Anderson was temporarily leaving Calcutta, the lynx was transferred to the Zoo, where he says, 'as it had been accustomed to human society,' Mr. Schwendler kindly housed it in his own garden adjoining the Zoo. 'On my return from leave,' continues Dr. Anderson, 'after a year's absence, whenever the lynx saw me and heard my voice it threw up its head, uttered its peculiar satisfied cry of recognition, rubbed itself against my legs, purred like a cat, and let me lift it up in my arms. I could always handle it as freely as a pet dog.' But it must be acknowledged that the natives who came to the Zoo had a wholesome fear of the lame lynx, whose big round head, and yellow eyes, and capacious jaws, with its uncanny stumpy black tail, did not inspire them with any wish to go and play with it.

We had a fair collection of oriental bears, which were exhibited in different buildings. Lord Northbrook gave us a fine pair of the large black Himalayan bears. Owing to the carelessness of the native keeper in charge of these animals, the mother ate a cub to which she had given birth, and afterwards she pined and died. The male was fairly tame, and would stand up against the



rails of its den and eat grass from my hand. We could get any number of the common black plains bear, and for these little gentlemen we had a bear-pit, with two tall poles in it, up which they used to climb, and get buns, &c., from the public, as was once the fashion in the London Zoo. We received so many of these little black bears that we were obliged to do a small business in bears' skins and bears' grease, for even a small bear costs something to feed. We had some difficulty in getting the Cashmere Isabelline bears. I once bought one that was performing in the streets of Calcutta, but its teeth had been pulled out, and its nose mutilated by the muzzle that it wore when it was going through its street performances. A military friend sent us down from Cashmere two fine little cubs of this breed. They were about six months old, and very friendly, being about the size of a colley-dog, but their long hair made them look bigger. We put them into a comfortable house, with strong iron gratings eight feet high, and a tree for them to climb up in the centre of their house. We had forgotten that this house had only a mat-and-thatch roof, and we did not suspect our young friends of wishing to escape. They, however, thought differently. One night they climbed up to the roof, made a great hole in it, and escaped. Now comes the strangest part of the story. They got out of the gardens on to the high road, and crossed the iron bridge that spans Tolly's Nullah. Then they reached the Racecourse and the open plain or maidaun that surrounds the Fort; and they were making their way direct by compass towards Cashmere, distant some two thousand miles. But they got into one of the sunken military roads that leads into the Fort, and here they must have crossed at least one drawbridge and passed one native sentry, who, if he saw them, did not interfere with them. Then they came to a halt, and lay down under a commissariat bullock-cart for the rest of the night. In the early morning they were found here, fortunately by an English soldier, who seemed to have grasped the situation, and with the aid of his comrades the little bears were caught and secured in sacks, and in the course of the day they were brought back to the Zoo, where Tommy Atkins was handsomely rewarded for his exertions. If the bears had fallen into the hands of the natives they would probably have been clubbed to death before any questions could be asked.

We had deer of almost every kind known in India, from the tiny mouse-deer to the stately sambur and barasingha. We also had a pair of wapiti, which are really North American deer,

though they are closely allied, according to Dr. Anderson, to the *Shou* or *Cervus affinis* of the Chumbi Valley, between Sikkim and Bhootan. Our wapiti came from the London Zoo, in exchange for other animals that we sent to England. It was very difficult to keep them in good health in the hot climate of Calcutta. They were lodged in a large cool stable with a thick thatched roof, and were never exposed to the sun, except in the very early morning and just before sunset. It was a great delight to them to plunge into a branch of the lake adjoining their stable, and so rid themselves of the innumerable black flies that settled on them in spite of all that could be done to prevent it. These large deer were very tame, and much petted by Mr. Schwendler. But one day the female got frightened, or took offence at something he had done, and she rushed at him and knocked him down, and then began to batter him with her sharp fore feet, until his life was endangered, and he was rescued with some difficulty by the native keeper. A stag defends itself with its horns, but female deer, and other cognate animals that have no horns, fight and stamp with their fore feet, and give some terribly hard blows.

I must go back to two special kinds of small bears that we had, one of them being the Cat-bear, and the other the Binturong, sometimes called the Black Bear-cat. A live specimen of the binturong may be seen in a small cage in one of those odorous houses in the London Zoo where few people like to stay long. We treated our binturongs to larger houses to dwell in, and gave them much more liberty, for they were turned out every day for a run in the gardens, weather permitting, and they delighted in climbing up into trees and hanging from a branch by their prehensile tail. The binturong is about the size of a fox, but its long, shaggy, pepper-and-salt coat makes it look larger. It would make an excellent pet for a lady in England. But it is not to be compared in beauty with the cat-bear or panda, known to science as *Ailurus fulgens*. The cat-bear has a thick, soft, reddish chestnut upper coat, with a lining of jet black fur. The muzzle is white, its pointed ears are lined with white, and it has a long, barred, black bushy tail. In its habits it is like a bear, but there is also the cat element in it, as its claws are retractile, and it scratches and spits like a kitten. They are very sensitive of heat. The first one that we had was allowed to take its daily exercise in a shady clump of bamboos, and lived for two years before it succumbed to the heat of the climate. The next one that was given, or rather lent, to us, had to be sent up to its old master at

Darjeeling every year, as soon as the heat in Calcutta became dangerous to its health and life.

Another animal obtained from Darjeeling was the flying squirrel. This animal does not really fly, but it climbs up a high tree, and jumps off and supports itself for a long distance by spreading out the loose skin along its stomach, like a sort of parachute, between its extended fore and hind legs. It makes a very good ghost in a house. In March 1857 I had gone to Darjeeling with my family, and we took a house that had been unoccupied during the winter. The house was said to be haunted, but this is a common invention among the native servants if a house is too far from water or from the bazaar. Our house was built round a central stack of chimneys, the ceilings of the rooms being covered with boards. We took possession of the house, and the first evening that we were there, about 8 P.M., there came a curious sort of noise on the ceiling, as if a goat, or some animal with hoofs, was running about. Lantern in hand, I led the way up the ladder that reached to the roof of the house, armed with a poker, and followed by native servants. On emerging on the ceiling, something rushed round the central chimney stack and fled through a garret window which was open and broken. Then all was still and we retired. The next night the noises came again. We climbed the ladder again, and I made straight for the broken window, just in time to give a fatal blow with the poker to a flying squirrel who came running across the floor; his claws, that were turned up, making a noise upon the boards like the hoofs attributed to the evil one! The fact was that a pair of flying squirrels had made their nest in the loft of the house. There were high trees on the mountain side, almost overhanging the house, from which they could make a big jump on to the roof of the house, and then they climbed through the broken window into the loft or garret, and brought up a young family there. We had two or three specimens of flying squirrels in the Calcutta Zoo, but these animals are becoming scarce, owing to the exposure of life that their peculiar system of flying involves.

In the land of monkeys it would have been strange if we had not speedily formed a large collection of monkeys. In fact, they were presented to us in such numbers that we turned several of the common sorts loose on to the trees in the gardens, and as soon as they found that they were fed daily they never wandered far away. Our most interesting collection was a family party of about twenty langoors, or Hanuman monkeys (the *Semnopithecus*

*entellus* of science), which are seldom to be seen alive in any other Zoological Gardens, for they are gregarious, and unless a large number of them are kept together, they soon pine and die. At first we used to keep them in pairs, and were surprised at the mortality that occurred. Then we put more than a dozen into a large house, and they kept one another alive with their games and gambols. There was one deformed but rather large monkey among them who had a humped back and a sort of foolish look. Probably his mother had let him fall when he was a baby, and his spine had been injured. It was curious to see how the other monkeys made a sort of butt of this deformed brother. They would jump on his back or pull his tail, or take away his food, or tease him in fifty ways, and he never resented it, except by a ghastly grin. These hanumans in most parts of India are held sacred by the Hindoo community. On the other hand, I have been at places where the villagers would come and beg us to shoot these big monkeys that were ravaging their crops and fruit-trees.

It ought to be mentioned that there were six hundred birds in our collection. The hot climate is favourable to almost all birds, except those which are migratory in their habits, or are really inhabitants of a cold region like the Himalayas. We had fine large cages and many houses of different sizes for our different birds. There can be no doubt that birds like to have plenty of room to be able to stretch their wings occasionally, and to get down on the ground and have a good scratch at the soil. Our house for hornbills or toucans was excellent. It was built of very stout iron wire rods, enclosing the trunk and lower branches of an old tree, so that the birds lived almost in their natural condition. A hornbill is something like a big magpie in all its sly tricks and ways. They catch a little ball of food, if thrown to them, with a sharpness and precision worthy of a cricketer. On one occasion when Mrs. Hornbill had made herself a nest in a hollow in the trunk of the tree in their house, and deposited her eggs in it, Mr. Hornbill came and plastered up the opening with mud, leaving only a space sufficient for him to insert his bill and feed the female and the nestlings. He feeds them in a very affectionate manner, by throwing up from his own stomach pellets of food, enveloped, something like a sausage, in 'gizzard sacs' formed of portions of the interior lining of his own stomach. This is perhaps more curious than nice; so I will pass on to what was called the Andool House, a large aviary or conservatory of oval shape, about 200 feet long and 100 feet broad at its widest point. The design of this

aviary was borrowed from the Botanical Gardens, where it was used as a house for orchids and other shade-loving plants. It consists of a light but strong framework of iron rods, arched overhead and covered with a thin layer of thatching grass to break the sun's rays, whilst creeping plants are trained up the sides and along the roof to afford additional shade. Numerous beds of dwarf palms and other oriental forms of vegetation were distributed throughout the building, and amongst them there hung the large wire cages and perches in or on which the birds were kept. The house being pervious to the air, and at the same time well protected in its own shade, was the most welcome and suitable abode for birds. It realised what may be called 'the poetic silence of the grove' at midday, when the birds were dozing and apparently respecting the general desire for sleepy silence. But in the early morning and towards sunset they became much more animated. The chief and most valuable inhabitants of this aviary were the cockatoos, of which Mr. Schwendler had succeeded in making an admirable collection. The cockatoo, as is well known, erects its crest and bends forward its head when excited or pleased, and it was very pretty to see them all sticking up their crests and fluttering their wings, to show the bright under-feathers, at Mr. Schwendler's approach. In my opinion, the Leadbitter cockatoo surpasses all the others in beauty, but it is very hard to decide when a number of them are simultaneously displaying their bright crests. We had a very tame pet in a *Gymnopsis* cockatoo, which has no crest; and close to it there was a cage containing a huge black parrotlike bird from the Solomon Islands, though I forget its name, which took much pleasure in swallowing stones or bits of brick. As might be expected, this bird died, and was found to have ruined his health by eating too many bits of brick and stones.

It used to be an amusement, and also a duty, to me to try and show the animals to native gentlemen when they came from their country seats to visit Calcutta; and I invariably invited them to come with me to see the Zoo. I think that the giraffes puzzled them most. One fine old Hindoo nobleman with whom I have many a time been out tiger-shooting on his own property, suggested that the giraffe was a new sort of tiger, but he was comforted and convinced when he saw them eat the branch of a tree from my hands. I wish that he could have been present to witness a performance by this pair of giraffes, which I did not see myself, though fortunately Lord William Beresford saw it and told

me of it. On the morning of the Queen's birthday, Beresford was riding past the giraffe enclosure when a *feu-de-joie* was fired by the soldiers of a native infantry regiment whose quarters are not far distant from the Zoo. At the first round of the firing the giraffes were startled. When the second round came they took to their heels and jumped clean over the fence of upright *gurran* or wattle-sticks, about ten feet high, that surrounded their enclosure. When the third round came the giraffes were so puzzled that they turned round and popped over the fence again, and sought refuge in the house in which they were lodged at night. It is a great pity that a sportsman and rider like Lord William Beresford, who saw this strange sight, had not a mount on one of the giraffes.

C. T. BUCKLAND.