

FROM JUNGLE TO ZOO

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"BEHIND THE SCENES WITH WILD ANIMALS," "WILD-ANIMAL
CELEBRITIES," "RATAPLAN, A ROGUE ELEPHANT," ETC., ETC.

WITH 30 ILLUSTRATIONS IN HALF TONE

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LONDON

STANLEY PAUL & CO
31 ESSEX STREET, STRAND, W.C.

CHAPTER V

CAPTURING BEARS, HYENAS, GIRAFFES, TAPIRS, RHINOCEROS, HIPPOPOTAMI

THE best way in which to capture bears alive is to shoot the mothers, and then take the cubs. This sounds very simple, but all bears, especially when they have young ones, are remarkably savage, and bear hunting is one of the most dangerous of all sports.

To capture a full-grown grizzly bear, for instance, is almost impossible, although young males have been caught in pitfalls, and after much trouble and danger finally brought safely to their destination uninjured. But in looking for bear cubs, the first thing is to find out where some female bear has been hibernating during the winter. For it is during the month of February that the little cubs are born, after the mother bear has had her long winter sleep.

As the spring approaches, the mother bear and her little ones come out into the fresh air, where they find winter vegetables, roots, various kinds of nuts, and acorns. It is a wonderful sight to see a great lumbering brown female

When captured, the young giraffes require the very greatest care and attention, some men often sitting up with them all night long in order to take care of them. As a rule, a herd of goats in full milk is kept on purpose to feed and nourish the young animals. But, even then, such sensitive and nervous creatures are giraffes that, even with all care and precautions, a great number of the poor captives die soon after being captured, and not half the number ever reach their destination either in Europe or America.

The rhinoceros of Sumatra is generally taken in deep pitfalls. These pitfalls are most carefully prepared, and covered over so cunningly with bushes, scrub, and branches of trees that even the natives themselves have been known to be deceived. Indeed, there is a story to the effect that a native walking near a pitfall of this kind actually walked not only on top of it, but right into it! Fortunately the pitfall was empty, otherwise that little walk would in all probability have been the last walk that native would have ever taken. When once caught in a pitfall of this kind the rhinoceros is usually hauled up with ropes, sometimes by means of a crane. In any case, as can easily be imagined, getting the animal out of the pitfall and carrying it to its destination is a stupendous undertaking.

The Indian rhinoceros, however, is always

captured when very young. After finding the trail of a rhinoceros and a young one, they are carefully followed up, and, sometimes after enormous difficulties and great personal risks, the mother is either driven off by frightening her, or else she is killed. The young one is then captured, and carefully brought up on milk. Sometimes they thrive and are brought to different parts of the world, and reach old age in captivity. At other times, after much time, trouble, and great expense have been lavished on them they die, and the amount of labour lost is apt to be somewhat disheartening to those who have spent so much to attain so little.

Hippopotami are even more bulky and, if possible, clumsy creatures than rhinoceros. They are captured much in the same manner as the rhinoceros, in pitfalls, or else by killing a mother hippo and then securing the young ones. It is not generally known that the hippopotamus was known to the Romans, although how these animals were captured in those days and transported from their native haunts to other countries seems to be an exceedingly difficult thing to find out. Of course there are endless stories, all of them remarkable, and most of them utterly unreasonable, with no attempt whatever at verification. So that they are practically useless.

Almost the first authentic record we have of a hippopotamus was given by two French travellers

who declared they had seen a living hippopotamus in Constantinople about the middle of the sixteenth century. This is actually the first record of this animal having been in Europe, since the Roman period, until the year 1850. In that year the Zoological Society of London held a council, and determined to try to transport the animal from its native haunts to the Zoological Gardens in London. The Viceroy of Egypt had previously made a very kind offer of assistance in capturing a hippopotamus for the London Zoo, and this offer the Zoological Society now gratefully accepted.

To quote from the Guide to the Gardens :

“The difficulty of obtaining such an animal may be conjectured from the fact that after the Viceroy of Egypt had determined to present one to the Society, it became necessary to dispatch an expedition to the Upper Nile for the purpose of making the capture, and that success was only achieved after two thousand miles of the river had been ascended. In the month of July 1849 the chief huntsman of the party, in searching the reedy margin of an island in the White Nile, called Obaysch, at last discovered a little hippopotamus calf, which, as he conjectured, had only then been born about two days. It was so small that, in his delight at having accomplished the Pasha's orders, he seized it in his arms, and would have carried it to the boat which waited on him, had not the slimy exuda-

tion which is lavishly poured forth from innumerable pores in the skin of the young hippopotamus rendered it so slippery that he was entirely unable to retain his hold.

“The animal having thus slipped from his grasp, all but escaped into the Nile, where the mother doubtless was lying near at hand. The hunter, however, with the presence of mind which characterises the true sportsman, seized his spear, and with a sharp side hook, which has been the fashion in Egypt for three thousand years or more, he succeeded in arresting the headlong plunge of his prize, without inflicting greater injury upon him than a skin wound, which is marked by a scar upon his ribs to the present day.”

In Dr. Sclater's Guide which is used at the present time we also get an interesting account of this first living hippopotamus ever exhibited in England.

“From Obaysch, many hundred miles above Cairo, the hippopotamus travelled down in charge of the hunters and a company of infantry, who finally landed him at the British Agency in the month of November 1849.

“By the obliging and liberal co-operation of the Peninsular and Oriental Company, an apparatus was constructed on board their steamer, the *Ripon*, by which the peculiar requirements of the animal were safely accommodated, and the result was that, on May 25, 1850,