

ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 1896.

ABOUT THE ELEPHANT

ALLEGED DELUSIONS CHERISHED BY NATURAL HISTORY.

Why Elephants Don't Reproduce in Captivity—Intelligence Exaggerated—Temper Uncertain and Wicked—And Their Sobriety Easily Tempted.

"Forty years ago," said a man who is fond of animals, "the books without exception declared that the lion was the only member of the cat family that bred in captivity, and she but rarely, while it was laid down as infallible that none of the Asiatic or African pachyderms, as the elephant, rhinoceros, and hippopotamus, could be induced under the most favorable conditions of prison life to reproduce their kind.

"As a fact, any and all of the animals referred to will reproduce almost as freely when slaves to man's will as when free they roam the jungles, fields, or rivers of their respective habitats. That they will do so is shown in the fact that they have done so. I am reminded of the disillusion of science in thinking of that giant of the forest, the elephant, and trying to recall those I have seen that were born captives in a foreign land. This number is very limited, but three or four in all. The reason for this, however, one does not have far to go in order to find.

In India the creature is used in the army and in civil life; in the former for bearing munitions of war, and in the latter for bearing burdens or performing ordinary labors, such as laying stones in building operations and in carrying lumber and piling it. In India nothing could be possibly more undesirable than an industry of elephant breeding. In that country, even, the keeping of an elephant is no small tax upon its owner, averaging, say, about \$1 a day. The animal grows but slowly, and is utterly unfit for labor until it is twelve or fifteen years old. Even then it can perform only about one half the labor of a fully matured brute. But a baby elephant, after its first year of life, will cost for its maintenance about fifty cents a day, this cost increasing yearly until the maximum of \$1 is attained. In other words, to rear a baby elephant costs about \$3,275, to say nothing of the interest upon the investment and the risk of the creature's death. This cost takes it to its thirteenth year only, and in all this time it is absolutely unproductive.

"Much easier is it and far less expensive for a community when in need of a few elephants to send out a number of its most experienced hunters, drive a herd of wild ones into a corral, and capture the choicest males and females of the flock. A half dozen or more may thus be obtained within a few days at a merely nominal cost, say less than \$100 for the whole number, and at comparatively little risk to the persons engaged. Before a month elapses they are obedient to their masters and work as drudges day by day.

"This is why a baby elephant is regarded with rank disfavor in India. Indeed, there is excellent reason for saying that the advent of a youngster is esteemed such a calamity that baby-ephitante is freely justified. This is not the case with the lion, tiger, leopard, and other members of the cat family, or with the rhinoceros and hippopotamus. These are never used as beasts of burden, but are desired chiefly for exhibition in zoological gardens where their young never fail to have ever-abiding attractions to grown people as well as children. So general has the breeding of lions become that I doubt if there can be found in captivity to day in all America or Europe a single lion that was littered in its native wilds. The same may be said of the hippopotamus, which, given proper diet and a large tank, would seem to do better in prison than in the streams and rushes of the Old World.

"But there are many disillusion concerning the elephant besides the one already noted. Science saw the creature piling lumber and planks in India, laying stone true to the plummet, saw it waltzing, standing upon its head, drinking from a bowl with the clown and firing off cannon in the circus, and science said: 'Behold a creature humanlike in intelligence.' Thereupon science—this was nearly a century ago—placed the elephant next to man in order of intelligence, and kept it there despite the evidence of the eye and the dictates of common sense until a very few years ago. Those of us who are near the half-century mark and upward in life can easily recall numbers of stories from the school books illustrative of the extraordinary mental force of the great brute. How readily did we accept as truth that fable of a tailor's pricking the trunk of one of these giants, which bore the insult and pain in silence until it reached a pool of very filthy water, when it filled the outraged member, and, returning with it, fairly deluged the wretched little tailor. The chief objections to this highly interesting fiction is that the trunk is the nose of the creature and it could not have possibly held its breath sufficiently long to take this vengeance upon the tailor.

"In keeping with this yarn are those that recite the extraordinary affection of the creature for its master, and how time and again it has risked its own life to save the human beings it loved. The feats performed by the elephant in circus and general industrial life are merely those of mimicry, a rather low evidence of intelligence. It is notorious that human idiots are exceptionally good imitators. While it is true that, in considering the claims of the dog and the horse for recognition as first in brute creation in point of wisdom and understanding their tricks are recited, yet these are regarded merely as corroborative evidences. The actions of these creatures when thrown upon their own resources are the best proofs of their intellectual strength. It is not insisted by any means that the elephant is a stupid animal, but it is a fact that should be punctuated that it is not nearly so intelligent as the dog or horse or opossum. Except upon given occasions the elephant is tractable, obedient, uncomplaining, and a faithful and trustworthy worker. But it only does what it has been commanded to do, and if left to itself would become a vagabond and a loafer. It has a fairly good memory, and once it has been taught to do a thing is not likely ever to forget it.

"Whether it has affection for its master and those of his household is open to proof. Certainly it is frequently employed as a nurse for babies in India, and whether keeping off the flies and other insects or guarding the little ones from predatory creatures of greater size, it is always faithful to its trust. This it might do, however, and still dislike its charge most positively. What it does here is, again, merely imitative, and being in most whole some dread of punishment, for the Indian master is cruel in his treatment of the brute, it may be moved solely by fear in its discharge of duty.

"One fact is most certain, and this is that the elephant is the most uncertain and treacherous of servants at given periods. This is especially true of the male, which at times gets into most uncontrollable fits of rage and will destroy keeper or master if only it may find either at a disadvantage. Instances are of but too common occurrence in which such tragedies have taken place. Not so many years ago old Romeo, a fine elephant, was taken out and shot while on exhibition in a circus at Chicago. This ugly brute appeared to be utterly dead to kindness. He had killed no fewer than five of his keepers, and it was for the crime of murdering the last one of these, as well as for his previous bad character, that he came to his untimely end. This recurrence of uncontrollable passion will always operate against the establishing of cordial relations between man and the beast.

"Long and patient study of the elephant in captivity has not led me up to enthusiastic admiration for his intelligence. But a day or two ago I watched for some time the unavailing effort of the male elephant, in Central park to reach with his proboscis a peanut which lay just beyond the bars of his cage. He could not quite reach it and apparently he was racking his brain for a plan that would meet the exigency. As a fact it would have been the simplest thing in the world. A single tiny blast from his trunk would have sent the coveted prize whirling inside the cage, on a line a little to the right of where he stood. This expedient, however, never once occurred to him, and so he did not get the goober.

"Whatever may be said of the intelligence of the brute, the economy of keeping one for utilitarian purposes is settled. In this country the cost of maintaining one would not be less than \$2.50 a day; yet an elephant can do, day in and out, the work of five horses. But five horses can be fed and sheltered for a less sum than \$2.50 in the aggregate. In India the elephant has been in use from time immemorial, and the people of the Orient are very slow to renounce any practice or custom that age has honored. It probably has never occurred to them to count the cost in the transaction. Menageries and zoological gardens are the only establishments in America that can afford to maintain the creature.

"Reverting to the delusions of science concerning the elephant, I am reminded that work upon natural history of a date much less than forty years ago declared that the African species could not possibly be tamed. This was claimed in face of the fact that Hannibal tamed them, for it was the big-eared African brute that bore such terror to the Roman soldiery. Jumbo, once the pet of the London Zoo, later the property of Mr. Barnum, and lastly the victim of a railroad wreck, was an African monster of great size. Latterly a number of the beasts have been brought out of the Dark Continent and distributed in various gardens throughout Europe, and one is not able to discover that they are in any sense less tractable or docile than their Asiatic cousins.

"Incidentally it may be said there are but two species or varieties of the elephant, and it may be well to correct the erroneous

impression that the African beast is the larger. Neither has advantage in this particular. Jumbo was exceptionally tall, a sort of a giant elephant, and his like is not soon to be found in either continent—Asia or Africa. The chief differentiation between the animals are these: The Asiatic which Americans are chiefly familiar with, has an elongated head, a concave forehead ears of ordinary size, and the male only has tusks. The African has a shorter head, a convex forehead, ears of enormous size, and both sexes have tusks, although those of the male are larger than those of the female.

"Whether Asiatic or African, no wild animal upon earth is more easily or quickly domesticated, and but for the sudden and terrible outbursts of passion to which the creature is subject, none would, probably, gain a stronger hold upon man's affection and confidence. The great size of the brute, its marvellous trunk with its tens of thousands of interlacing muscles and the many curious uses to which it is put, the readiness with which it adapts itself to changed conditions, and the patience with which it goes to and continues its task, combine to make it most desirable and companionable as neighbor and friend. But it may not be trusted at all times, and hence must be loved and praised with qualifications.

"In its native state the elephant is strictly herbivorous, eating grasses or browsing on leaves, but like many other vegetarians in the wild state it becomes omnivorous in captivity. Young people and older ones too, know with what avidity it will eat nuts candy, and bread, &c., and drink lemonade and pop.

"The great Mr. Darwin has clearly pointed out how animals and plants undergo variation under changed conditions. These mutations may be restricted to special organs or functions, or they may be systemic and general. Bears, which with the exception of the polar member of the family, are vegetarians, may readily be converted into flesh eaters, and it is known that the polar bear, which in its icy home is strictly carnivorous, just as readily when in captivity becomes a confirmed vegetarian. At given stations in the British possessions where hay, fodder, and grass are not to be had, the horses have been adapted to the changed conditions, their stomachs contracting until they could readily digest oats alone.

"So the elephant in captivity gets a sweet tooth, a sour tooth, in fact, any sort of tooth. It has been known to devour meat even with great enjoyment. No less than three authentic caves have come to my notice which they were decided tippers. Indeed, one of these enjoyed nothing upon earth so much as getting hilariously and then muddled drunk. It was not his fault that he did not remain in a state of constant inebriety. But his owner was proprietor of a small circus whose daily receipts were somewhat uncertain, and as it took something more than a gallon of whiskey to make him drunk, the man plainly could not afford to indulge Jim's appetite except upon state occasions. When in this condition he would stagger like a drunken man, look foolish and act foolishly, and finally pass into a state of coma, in all things precisely like a man who has indulged to drunkenness. One day while travelling through a portion of Virginia he passed near a moonshine distillery. The owners of the plant literally loaded Jim to the brim, with the result that when he was crossing a bridge a mile or so away he reeled, stumbled, fell, and plunged plump into the river, which was deep and wide. He quickly swam ashore, but the sudden cold bath sobered him completely, and made him so ashamed of himself that he declined during the next fortnight to partake of anything intoxicating. But the ruling passion was mighty in him, and two days after that fortnight he was drunk as ever. I have not seen nor heard from him for now twenty years, but as he was only about fifty years old then, he should now be living, unless overindulgence took him off untimely."

BOTTOM OF THE ATLANTIC.

Queer Contrasts in the Ocean Suddenly Became Dry.

If the Atlantic were to be converted into dry land it would form a huge valley, with the mountain masses of the Eastern and Western continents rising on either side. Itself 9,000 miles wide, it would be divided by two ridges, parallel to each other and to the marginal rims, into three minor valleys each from 500 to 600 miles in breadth. The dividing ridges would reach about half the elevation of the continental margins, and would form broad, undulating plateaux. Here and there they would rise into lofty summits, mostly volcanic, which now are known as islands, such as Iceland and the Azores. These mountain plateaux would be covered by a fine grey mud, like chalk, while the three valleys would be occupied by red clay. The physical features of the new country would present a striking contrast to the scenery of our existing continents. The outlines would be soft and flowing. Precipices, gorges and sharp ridges would be almost unknown. The broad troughs would rise gradually and smoothly into the elevated plateaux. This difference is due to the absence of atmospheric action. The bed of the Atlantic has not been exposed for countless ages, if ever, to the wear and tear of frost, rain and running water, and consequently the physical features of the new land would be such as would be mainly determined by the gradual upheaval of parts of the great Atlantic trough, or by the planing action of the waves during submergence. In the course of time, river systems would be formed, and the sculpture of the new surface would become more varied and picturesque.

Encouraging.

Her Father—Has my daughter ever offered you any encouragement? Saurier—Oh, yes, sir! She said if I married her she'd work you for the rent.

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WHAT WILL FOLLOW?

The Earth is Losing Speed and Will Finally Come to a Standstill.

Prof. Thompson believes in the theory that all planets will eventually come to a standstill. In other words, a day will arrive when the great system of worlds will cease to revolve upon their axes and to make their regular periodical revolutions around the sun. When that time comes, if it ever should, all motion will cease, and the universe will be at rest. Our finite minds cannot comprehend such a state of affairs, but the philosophers give what they call good proof, that such an era is fast approaching.

Primarily the case interests us only so far as it applies to the motion of our own little world, but we have been told that whatever affects the other spokes of the great wheel will surely affect us sooner or later. So it is with our world as respects the others. If there is "a retarding medium in space" that is causing a gradual slowing up of the earth's movements, as all the great astronomers declare, that same "medium" is at work slowly but surely decreasing the axial and other motions of the sun, and this whole vast system of world.

Newton's great mind conceived the idea that the friction of the tides and "other forces calculated to retard motion" were having their effect on the earth's axial as well as annual revolutions, but the majority of thinkers of his time, and of the last hundred years, have argued that such a motion will continue forever. Within the last decade, however, there has been a change of sentiment on that score.

It is now pretty certain from calculations made by astronomers that the earth is now losing speed at the rate of one hour every 16,000 years. When the loss is so slight, it appears that it can be of no particular moment to us. At best, we only live a tithe of the period which it takes to lose that hour, and the whole of the twenty-four hours must be lost before motion entirely ceases. But all should have an interest in the ultimate fate of the old world, and of the universe in general; therefore, it is interesting to know that there is as much as a minute lost in the course of even 100,000 years. Whatever the loss is, it eventually means a cessation of motion and a general standstill.

If this period of planetary rest should ever come what will be the result? Will the great worlds and suns hang in space—the planets freezing on one side and burning up on the other—or, will they fall down, down, down, forever. But in such a case gravitation would cease to exert its influence. Then there would be no "up" or "down."

STRANGE CUBAN CANNON.

The Patriots Manufacture Some Out of Native Trees.

Both the old and the present revolution against Spain in Cuba have brought to the front many clever devices in the shape of home-made weapons. Almost everything has been pressed into service which would suffice for a cannon. Cannon in Cuba have been cast from crude bronze, have been extemporized from captured sugar mill steam pipes, and quite serviceable ones have been made from wooden logs, wound with strips of green raw hide.

There grows in the interior of Cuba a peculiar tree with a winding grain. The wood is remarkably tough, and to split it by ordinary means is almost an impossibility. When wanted for artillery purposes the tree is felled, a section some five feet in length and one foot in diameter is selected and cut, the bark removed, and all knots and uneven places on the surface dressed down. The embryo cannon is then placed on rude trusses, and a bore bored in it with white-hot crowbars or round iron pipes from the sugar mills. This prying out of the interior serves to still further toughen the wood. While the bore is being burned, green ox hides are cut into long strips by commencing in the centre and working towards the outer edge, as one would peel an apple.

When all is in readiness, one end of this raw hide band, which is about three inches

in width, is spiked to the wooden cannon near the breach. A lever, or bar, is attached to the butt. Two or three stout negroes grasp the arms of the bar and slowly turn the hollowed log on its supports. The band of green hide is kept under a strain and in this way the core of the cannon is wound with one of the toughest materials, wire excepted, in the world. The first layer of hide is tightly wound to the muzzle of the growing gun and back toward the breach, again to the muzzle and back, until a number of successive layers have thus been wound on and the promising piece of artillery has grown several inches in diameter. It is then placed in a draught of dry, hot air and allowed to harden. When the hardening and curing process is complete, the persevering patriots have a really serviceable weapon, which will stand a greater strain than manufacturers of modern artillery would readily believe. One of these home-made combination wood and raw-hide cannon is said to have withstood 104 charges of powder before becoming useless. The projectiles for it were made of scrap iron, round tones and fire-hardened clay balls.

TRAILS IN THE FOREST.

The Study of Signs Left by Wild Birds and Wild Beasts.

The traces which wild birds and mammals leave in the woods, to be found by hunters or washed away by the wind or rain, form one of the most interesting studies for those who follow the doings of nature for fun or profit. There is a great deal to be gathered from a hoof mark in a damp place on a river bank or road. It may be a deer's track. It is at least twenty-four hours old. The lily pad stems without leaves sticking above the water or the leafless stems of bushes beside the trail show that the deer was feeding. The ground, pawed slightly, shows that the deer was impatient about something or didn't know exactly what to do next. The trail winding about bushes, across and back again, shows that the deer was calmly walking along. Here is a deep impression of hoof marks, a rod away is another, and another rod beyond a third. These are proof that the deer was alarmed and fled at full speed over the beech ridge. Such a trail means much to a still hunter if the signs are no more than five minutes old. It shows that he has scared his prey, and he regrets it. The bound, on the other hand, does not care. He turns the dog loose and away it goes on the trail of the galloping deer, adding its own paw marks to the deer's trail, telling a common story in woods where bounding is permitted. Wolves often leave their trails beside the marks of deer hoofs.

Animals in a normal state of mind leave trails that indicate their doings as plainly as any tale written by a naturalist. The hunter or student who follows an Adirondack bear's track sees more than he could read in books. There is tragedy in the rotten log that was torn to pieces for the ants and eggs in it, and comfort is suggested by crinkly black hairs on the rough bark of a hemlock tree where the bear had scratched its side with a natural curry-comb. Such a trail ends in a steel trap sometimes, for the bears found in northern New York walk into traps to get a bit of burned honeycomb and spoiled ham.

On the road leading from Northwood to North Lake, northern Herkimer county, a few days ago Elmer Hanlin, jumped out of the buckboard on which he was riding and examined an odd-appearing spot in the middle of the road. It was rather early in the morning, and even the bare earth of the roadbed was still damp with dew. The spot Elmer examined had been packed, being about two by three feet in area. There was hair on this spot, and Elmer and other woodsmen examined it. The hair told that a fox had packed the earth there instead of a deer, as the woodsmen had at first supposed. That disappointed them. Foxes frequently roll in roads like this one, leaving such marks, but deer seldom do so. Foxes and deer like to follow trails men have worn through the woods with shoes or wagons. Foxes do so in about all parts of New York, even in the suburbs of New York city, but deer can only be seen in the thick woods,

or, once in a while, in the vicinity of settlements.

Birds, especially ruffed grouse or partridges, are fond of "dusting" in the dry spots where trees have been uprooted, exposing sand or mould to the sun, or in the roads and trails. Their dusting places are different from the rolling places of a fox or other mammal. The bird flaps its wings and scratches the dirt with its claws, leaving marks sometimes mistaken for the pawing of a deer. The rolling place of a mammal is unmistakable. There the earth is picked while in the dusting place it is shaken up.

The signs that are left by birds in the leaves, along trails of their own, as of man's making, on the shores of lakes and banks of streams, are hard for human eyes often difficult for a dog's nose to detect, but in winter, when there is snow on the ground—uncrusted snow—the things which can be read are easily seen.

The snow signs are a sort of first reader, being easily observed and understood after a little practice. But it takes a good while to learn to read much of the bare ground tales, the language being difficult, often extremely obscure.

Mice as Engineers.

Mice are good engineers. In digging holes for telegraph poles one of the workmen became greatly interested in watching the ingenuity and perseverance of a mouse which had fallen into one of the holes. It was 4 1/2 feet in depth and 20 inches in diameter. The first day the little prisoner spent in running round the bottom of the hole trying to find a means of escape. The second day he had got over his hysterics and settled down to steady business. He began systematically to dig a spiral groove round and round the inner surface of the hole with a uniform ascending grade. He worked night and day. As he got further from the bottom he dug little pockets where he could lie and rest. The interested witnesses kept it supplied with food. After a while the mouse struck a rock; he tried to get under, around and over the obstacle, but without success. He therefore reversed the spiral and finally reached the top.

An Exchange of Favors.

The following anecdote displays one of those characteristics possessed by the Prince of Wales which have helped to earn for him the title of 'The First Gentleman of England.' When the train conveying the Prince and Princess of Wales to Aberystwyth stopped at Welchpool station recently, the little daughter of Mr. Dennis, the general manager of the Cambrian Railways, presented the Princess with a bouquet. After other presentations had been made the Princess called the child back, when the latter offered the Prince a buttonhole of lilies of the valley. The Prince accepted the gift, and remarked, 'If you give me this I must give you mine,' and he thereupon took from his buttonhole a fine carnation and handed it to the child.

Hit the Nail, Too.

'I saw a very curious thing to-day.' 'What was it?' 'A woman driving a nail with a hammer instead of with the back of her best hair brush.'

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