

Secrets of the Zoo.

BY ALBERT H. BROADWELL.



DOCTOR-IN-ORDINARY, surgeon by special appointment, dentist, pedicure, and every-other-cure is he who presides over the destinies of the thousand and one wild creatures confined in that wonderfully organized institution, the Zoo.

The life of the Superintendent at the Zoo is much like that of a dozen Harley Street specialists, with the difference that his patients are dumb creatures gathered from every imaginable corner of the globe. From the Arctic to the Equator, and from the Equator to the Antarctic, they are either bought by the Society or presented by its friends and well-wishers. They are curious, fearful, and delicate. Their every little wish has to be met; the very temperature of their respective abodes must, in the heart of London, be regulated as nearly as possible to that of their natural haunts. Their food, their surroundings, their indoor and outdoor habits, have to be studied at all hours of the day and night.

In an extremely interesting book, lately issued by Messrs. Chapman and Hall, Mr. Edward Bartlett, son of Mr. Abraham Dee Bartlett, late Superintendent of the Zoo, relates his father's experiences, and we have gathered from his knowledge of the subject many interesting glimpses of Zoo life as seen "from behind the lions' den." From an early age the late Mr. Bartlett took more than an ordinary interest in all matters concerned with natural history.

Mr. Bartlett and Frank Buckland, the famous naturalist, were intimate friends. In

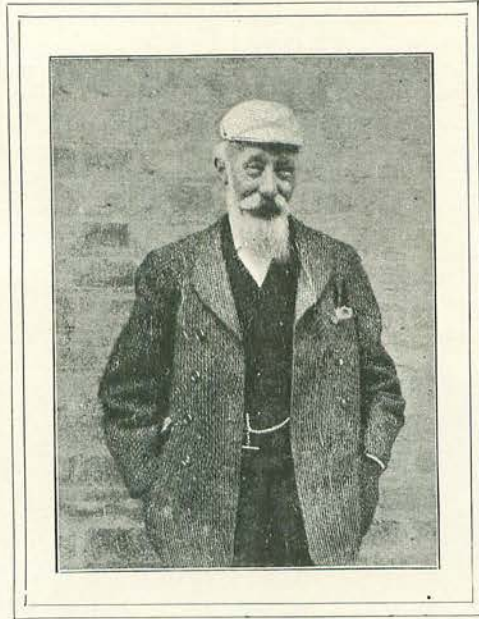
his reminiscences Mr. Bartlett's son says: "I know of none who possessed a more amiable, good-tempered, and kinder disposition than Frank Buckland. Of this I had many opportunities of judging, having on several occasions accompanied him on his duties as Inspector of Salmon Fisheries. I can recollect an instance in point.

"A monster lobster was once forwarded to Buckland's house while he was away inspecting salmon rivers. Mrs. Buckland, not wishing this fine lobster to be spoiled by keeping, invited a few friends to supper. The beautiful creature was duly cracked up, and so far disposed of.

"On Buckland's return he inquired for the lobster, a letter having been forwarded to him requesting that the shell might be carefully prepared and saved. His dismay may be imagined upon hearing of the lobster's fate. Laughing heartily, however, he had the dust-heap searched and every fragment of the lobster-shell carefully

collected; these he very cleverly put together, producing a very fair model of an almost unique specimen."

Upon another occasion, at a party consisting of three or four mutual friends, Mrs. Buckland being present, the conversation turned on the subject of the destruction of under-sized crabs, which were exposed for sale in large quantities, and it was decided by Frank Buckland that he would, as inspector, go round the town in the morning in order to summon the various dealers for offering under-sized crabs for sale. Mrs. Buckland, becoming aware of the proposed inspection proceedings, determined, with her



THE LATE MR. ABRAHAM DEE BARTLETT.
From a Photo. by Henry Goodwin, Esq. (taken in 1891).

usual kindness of heart, to help these poor people in their threatened exposure.

She rose early next morning, went round to the market-place, and cautioned the dealers, telling them that Mr. Frank Buckland would, in all probability, pay them a visit of inspection. It is needless to add that when he paid his contemplated visits he found that all the under-sized crabs had disappeared; he was immensely pleased, and made a great boast as to how well the *standing order* had been obeyed. The mirth of Frank Buckland and his party when, at the breakfast-table, Mrs. Buckland related how she had risen early and forestalled all her husband's intentions may well be left to the imagination of the reader.

Mr. Bartlett's actual experiences of his superintendence at the Zoo make attractive reading, and we will give, in his own words, some instances of the difficulties and dangers that are to be met with in the handling of the wild denizens of the forest and the prairie. The various incidents, as narrated by himself in his notes, are stirring and amusing in turn.

It is no child's play to perform the operation of cutting off the talons of a lion or a tiger, for it must be remembered that these creatures in captivity have but little opportunity of sharpening and shortening their claws, as they would do in their native wilds. When the operation becomes necessary, however, the unfortunate creature of course resists with all his might, and, by reason of his great strength and activity, becomes very dangerous. The keepers catch both front feet of the animal in straps that have a slip-knot; the tighter these are pulled the more firmly the feet can be held and drawn forward between the bars of the cage. The operator, armed with a pair of sharp cutting nippers, accomplishes the operation and gives the relief required. Whilst undergoing

this operation the animal generally bites the iron bars, with considerable danger to his teeth. In order to prevent this, however, one of the attendants is provided with a long pole or bar of wood, which he thrusts in front of the animal's mouth; the wood selected being soft, naturally prevents any injury to the teeth.

It is curious to note, by the way, that the skin of a lion or tiger is so tough that the claws of either are sometimes broken off, or even completely torn out, when fighting.

As space forbids us to go any farther into the lion and tiger stories, which are plentiful, we will hear what Mr. Bartlett has to say of that famous wolf adventure which took place close upon midnight.

He narrates it as follows:—

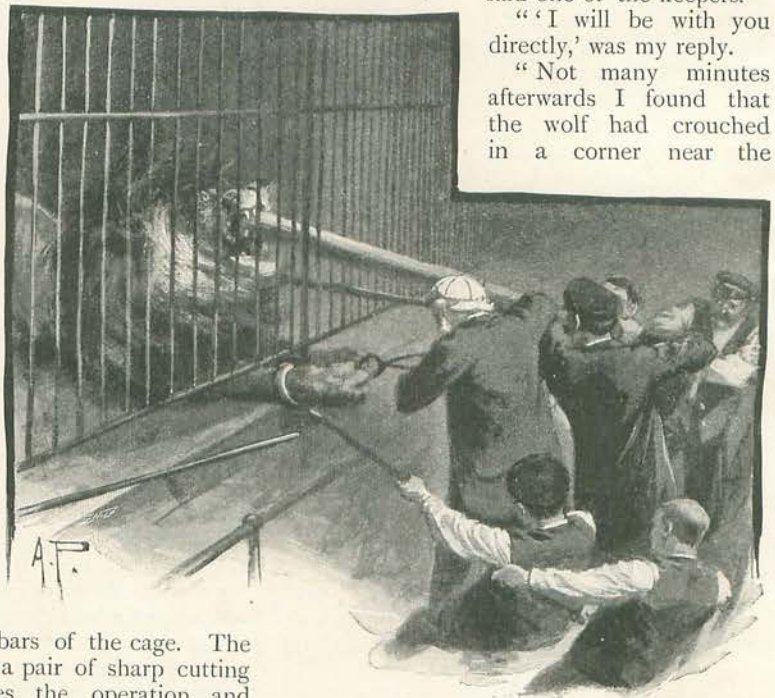
"My instructions to the night-watchman were, 'never to ring the house-bell during the night,' because it not only aroused all the family, but, if it rang, they at once knew that something was wrong. If, however, he had occasion to call me, he was to throw a handful of gravel at my bedroom window, and I would at once attend to him.

"Accordingly one dark night the gravel striking the glass of my window caused me to look out.

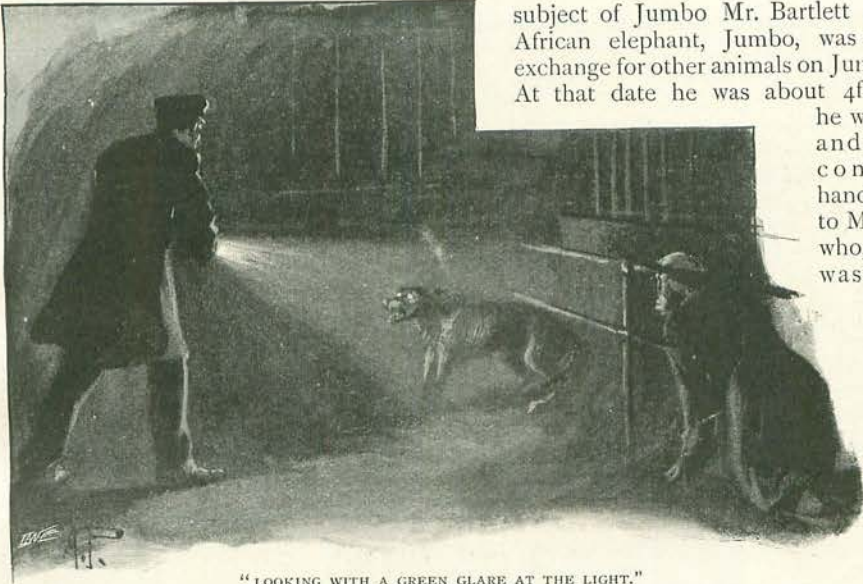
"'A black wolf is loose in the garden,' said one of the keepers.

"'I will be with you directly,' was my reply.

"Not many minutes afterwards I found that the wolf had crouched in a corner near the



CLIPPING A LION'S NAILS.



"LOOKING WITH A GREEN GLARE AT THE LIGHT."

Polar bear's den. By turning on the watchman's bull's-eye lantern we soon caught sight of him, his bright eyes looking with a green glare at the light. 'Keep the light full on his face,' was my order to the watchman, 'and come slowly forward. I will creep sideways up to him, and, if I can get a good hold, I think we can manage him.'

"While the animal was staring at the light I seized him by the neck, and with the prompt aid of my two assistants we safely caged him for the night."

What a wonderful man Mr. Bartlett must have been! It seems strange to hear anyone saying, in plain, business-like language, and talking of a wolf, too, "I seized him by the neck . . . and we safely caged him for the night!" How many of the thousands of visitors to the Zoo would ever attempt such a feat, for a feat of daring it undoubtedly is.

It is interesting to note that the first elephant that ever came immediately under Mr. Bartlett's charge was the celebrated Jumbo. On the

subject of Jumbo Mr. Bartlett says: "The African elephant, Jumbo, was received in exchange for other animals on June 26th, 1865. At that date he was about 4ft. high, and he was in a filthy and miserable condition. I handed him over to Matthew Scott, who, I thought, was the most likely man to attend to my instructions because he had no previous experience in the treatment and management of elephants. The first thing

was to endeavour to remove the accumulated filth and dirt from his skin. This was a task requiring a considerable amount of labour and patience. His feet, for want of attention, had grown out of shape, but by scraping and rasping their condition rapidly improved. Jumbo soon became very frolicsome, however, and began to play some very lively tricks, so much so that we found it necessary to put a stop to his gambols; this we accomplished in a very speedy and effectual manner.

"Scott and myself, holding him one by each ear, administered a good thrashing. He quickly recognised that he



"WE ADMINISTERED A GOOD THRASHING."

was mastered, by lying down and uttering a cry of submission. We coaxed him and fed him with a few tempting morsels, and he ever after appeared to recognise that we were his best friends, and he lived with us on the best of terms until about a year before he was sold. He was at that time about twenty-one years old, and had attained the enormous size of nearly 11ft. in height. At that age, however, elephants as a rule become troublesome and dangerous. Jumbo, not to be outdone, destroyed the doors and other parts of his house, driving his tusks through the iron plates, and splintering the timber in all directions, rendering it necessary to have the house propped up (as it still remains) with massive timber beams. When in this condition and in his house none of the keepers except Scott dared go near him; but, strange to say, the animal became perfectly quiet as soon as he was allowed to be free in the Gardens.

"It was during his fits of temporary insanity that Jumbo broke both his tusks by driving them through the ironwork of his den; they broke off inside his mouth, probably close to his upper jawbone.

"As the tusks of elephants continue to grow throughout the whole of the animal's life, Jumbo's tusks accordingly grew again, pushing forward the broken jagged ends; but instead of protruding in the usual way from under the upper lip, they grew somewhat upwards in his mouth, and

in the course of time it was observed that they were forcing their way through the skin not far below his eyes. The result of this was an abscess on each side of the face.

"Upon my going to him," says the late Superintendent, "he would allow me to put my hand upon these swellings, and appeared

by the motion of his trunk to indicate the seat or cause of his suffering. I therefore determined to cut through the thick skin in order to discharge the accumulated pus and enable the tusks to grow out of this opening. In order to accomplish this I had a steel rod made, about 18in. in length, formed with a sharp hook at the end, the hook being flattened on the inner edge as sharp as a razor.

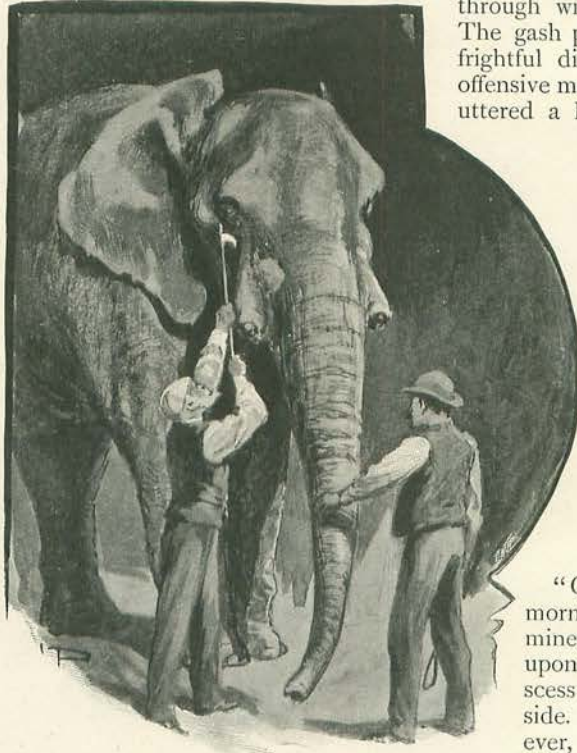
"With this instrument Scott, the keeper, and I entered the den, having previously fastened the doors of the house to prevent anyone entering and disturbing our proceedings, as I was fearful that the noise made by the other keepers would alarm our patient or cause him to be restless. Standing under his lower jaw and passing the instrument above the swollen part, I hooked it fast

into the skin, cutting it through with a sharp pull. The gash produced a most frightful discharge of very offensive matter; the giant uttered a loud shriek and

rushed from us, bleeding, shaking, and trembling, but, strange to say, without showing any signs of anger. After a little coaxing and talking to he allowed us to wash out the wound by syringing it with water.

"On the following morning we determined to operate upon the other abscess on the opposite side. We had, however, some misgiving as to the result of our second attempt to operate upon him,

but, to our intense surprise, Jumbo stood still. He seemed to await the second cut with pleasure and fearful anticipation in one, though the sudden pull caused him to start and give another cry like the one he uttered the day before. The improvement in the animal's condition after these two operations



LANCING AN ABSCESS ON JUMBO'S CHEEK.

was most remarkable: the tusks soon made their appearance, growing through the apertures that had been cut for the discharge of the abscesses instead of coming out under the upper lip, or, under ordinary circumstances, their proper place."

Of adventure with rhinoceroses Mr. Bartlett has much to say. Here, for instance, he relates an incident that is worth retelling:—

"Upon one occasion the hairy-eared, two-horned rhinoceros, through constantly driving one of her horns against the bars of her cage, caused it in growing to curve backwards until the point was in the act of forcing its way through the skin, causing it to become ulcerated. In this case I had great difficulty in operating, not being able to coax the patient into any kind of submission, for she persistently exhibited the most determined resistance to be touched.

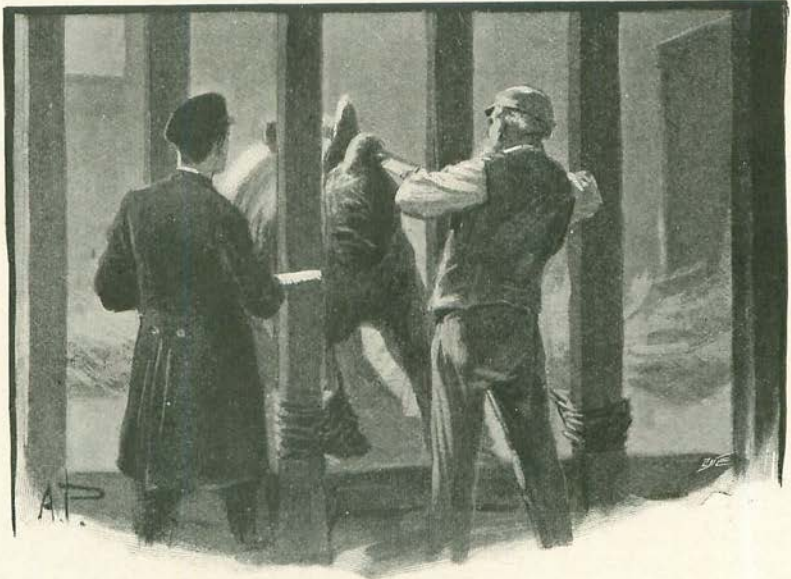
"By means of ropes I managed to make both of her front legs fast, attaching them to the bars of the den. It was a difficult matter to commence using the saw because of her obstinate determination to resist, jerking her head from side to side with the utmost obstinacy. After a little while she became less violent, and I commenced to cut off a portion of the horn that curved backwards. Before I had cut half-way through she snapped the saw in two by a sudden jerk. Having two more saws at hand, the second attempt, I thought, would be successful, but another sudden jerk broke the second saw. She made desperate struggles to get free, but finally became thoroughly exhausted, whereupon she remained quiet for a few seconds, allowing me to complete the operation."

It will interest readers to know how these ungainly brutes are removed from summer to winter quarters and *vice-versâ*, and Mr.

Bartlett tells us what befell him on a memorable occasion:—

"Having resolved to remove, for the winter months, the two young rhinoceroses to the house next to that of the elands, I arranged the night before with the keepers to muster at six o'clock the following morning.

"At the appointed time all was ready. One of the animals had a strong leather collar on, the other a collar made of strong, thick, soft rope; to these collars stout ropes were tied, one on each side of the animal. The men were divided so as to take charge of the ropes attached to the collars, there being about twelve men to each animal, and one or two others to assist in leading or attending to other matters, such as opening or closing gates, keeping the way clear, etc. One keeper was to lead off with a bundle of new hay on his back, for it was hoped that



"I COMMENCED TO CUT OFF A PORTION OF THE HORN."

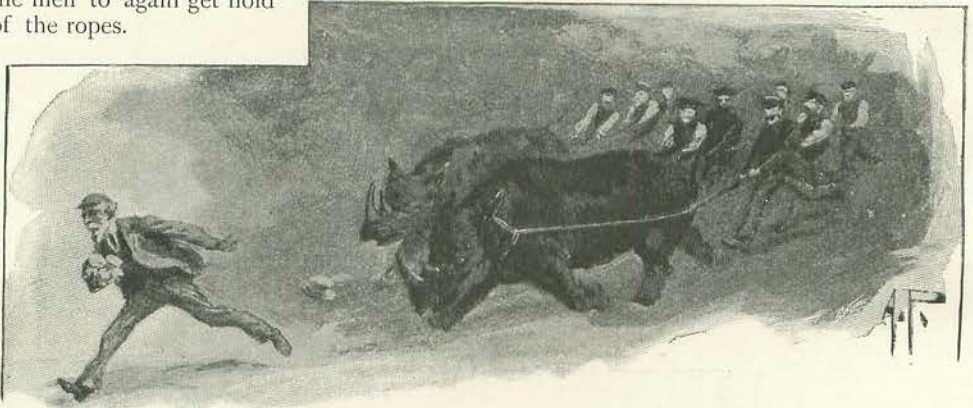
the brutes being hungry would, perhaps, follow him at once.

"When the ropes were made fast, the men arranged, and the gates opened, the animals came out at an easy trot; seeing the crowd of men, however, they suddenly turned round and plunged about. This caused a great commotion, at the same time some of the ropes getting slack became entangled among their legs. Knowing the danger of their being irritated and annoyed I ordered the ropes to be dropped in order that they should be disengaged; then, to

keep the animals quiet, I took a loaf of bread which had been kept in readiness, and, going between them, broke off pieces of bread and fed them.

"Having attracted their attention by these means, they turned round to follow me for the bread; this enabled the men to again get hold of the ropes.

to have carried out the most arduous dental operation on record. The male hippopotamus, "Obaysch," had been suffering from a fractured tooth, and, fearing the resulting consequences might be serious, he had a strong oak fence fixed between the animal's pond



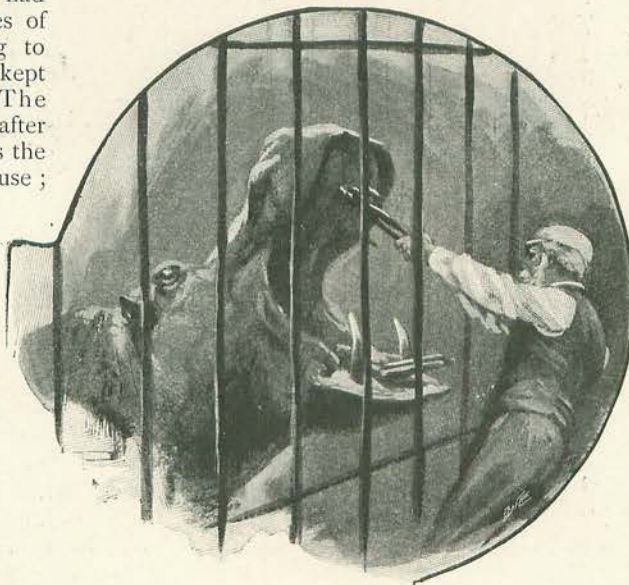
"DRAGGING BEHIND THEM ALL MY BRAVE ARMY."

"No sooner had we started, however, when I found their pace rapidly increasing from a walk to a trot, and from a trot to a gallop, myself taking the lead. Away we went full pelt; I was closely followed by my rough friends, dragging behind them all my brave army, whose weight, strength, and determined efforts did not appear to make the least difference to the speed of my pursuers. Fortunately I had directed the gates of the yard leading to the house to be kept wide open. The animals bolted after me, in and across the yard, into the house; I threw the remaining portions of the loaf on the floor and scrambled over the rails out of the way of danger; they followed close at my heels, then came to a sudden stop inside the house, and all was well."

Mr. Bartlett may justly claim

and the iron railings. The dental operation was successfully accomplished, but not without a fearful struggle. Mr. Bartlett prepared a powerful pair of forceps, more than 2ft. long; with these he grasped the patient's fractured incisor, thinking that, with a firm and determined twist, he would gain possession of the coveted piece of ivory. This, however, was not so easily done, for the brute,

astonished at his impudence, rushed back, tearing the instrument from his hands, and, looking as wild as a hippopotamus can look, charging just as the operator had recovered the improvised forceps. Undaunted, however, Mr. Bartlett made another attempt, and this time held on long enough to cause the loose tooth to



A DENTAL OPERATION.

shift its position, but was again obliged to relinquish his hold. He had no occasion to say, "Open your mouth, please," for the brute did this to the fullest extent. Under such auspicious circumstances the operator had no difficulty in again seizing the coveted morsel, and this time drew it forth, with a sharp pull and a powerful twist. One of the most remarkable circumstances appeared to be the enormous force of the air when blown from the dilated nostrils of the great beast whilst enraged. The patient's furious charges against the iron-barred gateway were sufficient to loosen the brickwork by which the gate was held; had the gate fallen at that moment the courageous dentist *pro tem.* would have been crushed beneath it.

Bears are proverbially treacherous, and have ever been a source of much interest at the Zoo, and we have an instance of the escape of a Polar bear during the time Mr. A. Miller was Superintendent of the Zoological Society's Gardens.

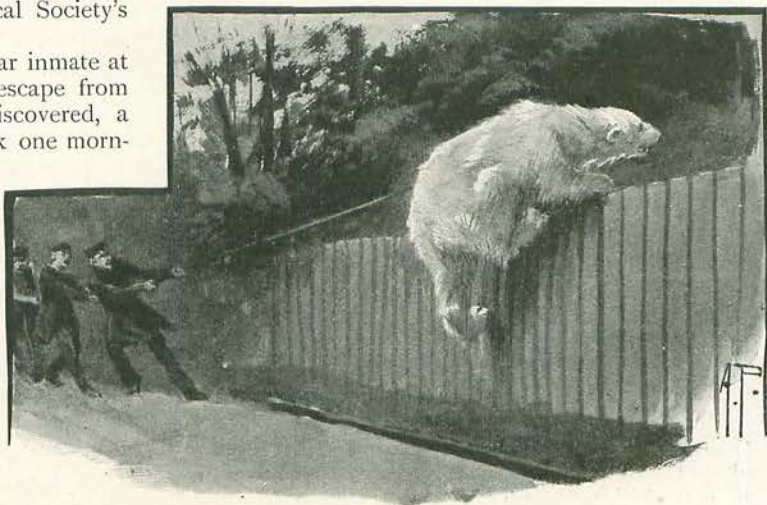
The large Polar bear inmate at the time managed to escape from his den. He was discovered, a little before six o'clock one morning, seated among the shrubs in the Gardens. An alarm was immediately raised, and all the keepers were assembled armed with forks and sticks and anything else available. The head keeper, James Hunt (with that care that becomes a thoughtful husband and father), made the

best of his way to the apartments where his wife and children slept at the back of the old, or circular, aviary. Telling his wife of the danger, he closed the shutters of the windows and locked the door, making sure of their being safe. He then proceeded to the scene of action.

Our white friend looked steadily at the pale faces, and, not appearing anxious to try his strength, he walked leisurely away from the crowd, who, like most other crowds, felt bound to follow. A strong cord being in readiness, and carried by Hunt, was thrown lasso-like and with good aim, the noose

having caught over the animal's head. The brute at once made off, and quickly got over some palings; but here a struggle took place. The men held on bravely, and the cord fitted tighter round the neck of our Arctic traveller, who now put forth his tremendous power, so much so that, after several jerks and a determined pull, snap went the line close under the ear, leaving the noose fixed like a tight collar round the throat. With an angry growl and a scratch or two with his paws he managed to rid himself of the unpleasant bandage, then shaking himself and looking round on all sides, seemingly with a determination not to be caught in that way again, he trotted off at a brisker pace than before.

No sooner was an attempt made to follow him than he was turned to face his foes, and satisfied most of them that a too close acquaintance was dangerous; at the same time it was clear that he had no particular



"HE MADE OFF AND GOT OVER SOME PALINGS."

wish to rush into mischief. As the men stood still in a body he merely looked at them, and, after a few seconds' consideration, walked leisurely away.

It was then arranged to muster in front of him whenever he attempted to go in any direction leading out of the Gardens, or to any part of the Gardens in which he was likely to do damage.

If this plan succeeded the men could turn him without going near enough to be in any great danger. After two or three hours' hard work they managed to drive him into the passage at the end of the carnivora dens, on

the north side, and close to the den from which he had escaped. Here he was at once secured. Possibly no one suffered anything equal in comparison to the fright of the wife and children of the head keeper, who had been carefully locked in, and who were in the dark all this time. They naturally supposed that everybody must have been killed in the struggle.

The most dangerous inmates of the Zoo, however, are not always to be gauged by their size. The reptile-house is, perhaps, the weirdest place in these islands. Here are cobras, vipers, and rattlesnakes. The slightest negligence may mean the death of one or more of the keepers, and a tragic instance is told of how Keeper Girling met his death at the fangs of a cobra.

Girling at the time was keeper in the Zoological Society's reptile-house. From the testimony of his fellow-keeper, Girling had been out all night drinking, although when he returned to his duties in the morning his condition was not observed. Soon after he entered the room he terrified his assistant by taking from the cage the Indian cobra, holding it up, and telling his companion that he was inspired. He held the serpent before his face, when, with a lightning-like dart, the beast struck him with his poison-fangs across the nose and between the eyes, inflicting several punctured wounds. The terrified keeper instantly threw the snake into its cage, the blood meanwhile slowly running down his face.

Here is Mr. Bartlett's graphic version of the story: "About five minutes after this alarming incident I met Girling; he appeared alarmed, and exclaimed, 'I'm a dead man.' He walked backwards and forwards for a few seconds, then, apparently recovering himself, said, 'I'll not give up,' and, going to the sink, bathed his face with cold water. While this was going on I sent for a cab and also for a medical man. The cab arrived before the doctor, and I sent two keepers with him to the University Hospital; on arriving there it required all their assistance to get him from the cab into the hospital. Desperate remedies were tried to save his life, but I am sorry to add he died within an hour of his arrival."

It also comes within the duties of a Superintendent of the Zoo to keep a sharp look-out for any fresh specimens that may be bought at a fair price, and here is a startling instance of contempt of danger, arising from sheer ignorance.

Mr. Bartlett tells it thus:—

"One day a sailor came to the Gardens and asked for me. When I went to him he held in his hand a very old and ragged rice-bag. He said: 'I've got a fine stinging fellow here for you.'

"I asked what he meant, so he opened the bag and showed me one of the largest and fiercest-looking cobras I had ever seen. I felt somewhat alarmed lest the brute should attempt to escape, so I advised the sailor to remain quiet until I obtained, from an adjoining room, a large fish-globe, into which I told him to drop the serpent, bag and all, and then secured the top. I asked him how he became possessed of this dangerous creature.

"'Caught it among some timber,' said he, 'on board a ship at Blackwall, just home from India.'

"'And how did you get here with it in that old rag?'

"'Well,' said he, 'I took the train from Blackwall and the omnibus from Fenchurch Street, and he' (meaning the snake) 'was quite still all the way.'

"'What do you want for it?'

"'Ten shillings and my expenses,' which I paid. He asked me if I would take another if he caught it, as he had seen one larger than the one he had brought with him.

"I gave him some good advice, and told him the danger to which he had exposed himself and his fellow-passengers by train and omnibus. I explained to him the best method of catching and bringing the next snake he found, but I never saw any more of him, so I am inclined to suppose he failed to capture the second cobra.

"I may add that the one I bought was a fine, strong, and poisonous beast, and lived several years in captivity. No doubt my new acquisition had fed, while on board ship, upon the rats and mice it could easily find there."