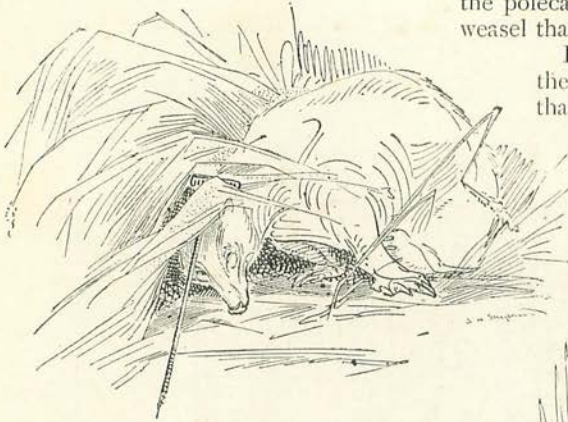




the polecat, nor the stoat, nor the skunk, nor the weasel that went pop.

Every admirer of modesty should love the badger. So little he obtrudes himself that we are often assured that the badger (or the brock, as it is still called locally) is within a specimen or two of ob-



REVELATION.

literation. But it is the brock's modesty that conceals his existence, for well he knows that, in his case, brock's display may not contribute much to brock's benefit; which words are an advertisement.

Badger-drawing is a thing of the past, and rightly. But upon this page the drawing of a



badger may now be seen without danger of interference from the police. He is the white badger, and is never easy to draw.

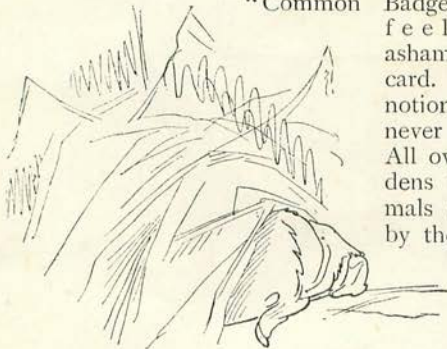
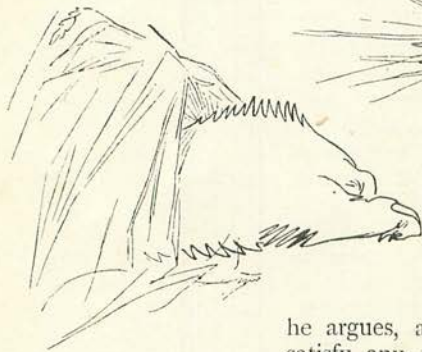
His native objection to daylight overcomes his sense of duty to the public, and nothing will make him show himself, short of taking away all his straw. Raking away

his coverlet only exposes him for a moment; he burrows again and vanishes. He has left his card on the wire,

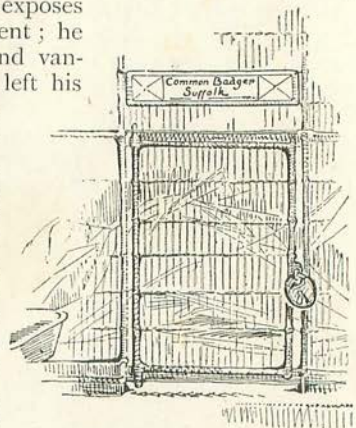
he argues, and that ought to satisfy any reasonable visitor. Although, labelled as he is, "Common

Badger," he may feel rather ashamed of that card. That is a notion that I can never get rid of. All over the Gardens various animals are insulted by the epithet "common."

Then there are the "Stump-tail Lizard," the "Dusty Ichneumon," and the "Hairy-nosed Wombat," not to mention the "Bottle-nosed Whale," that isn't here at all. Is man justified in



ABSQUATULATION.



OCCULTATION.

J.A.S.





DISGRACED AT CREAKLE'S.

so insulting his more virtuous fellow-creatures? Why should we show vulgar discourtesy even to a whale? The ratels, too, although not insulted in name, are grievously oppressed after the manner of David Copperfield at Creakle's. "These animals bite" is the notice for ever fixed upon their cage. It gives rise to sad unpopularity, which the ratels can never mitigate, in the manner of David, with jam tarts and red-currant wine. But more of this presently.

Jack, the otter, in his big round cage, has his own particular affront to endure, none the less an affront because it is in Latin. *Lutra vulgaris* is the scientific name of Jack, but it is just as offensive to call an otter vulgar in Latin as in English. I can quite believe that it was this painted stigma of vulgarity that caused Jack



JACK.

to run away, some few years ago, and set up in the fish business on the Regent's Canal. It took some few days to persuade him to return, and the task of the persuaders was, I take it, none too easy. An otter is a rare good fighter, and there is trouble involved in bringing him home dead; but alive, he is a whirling tangle of teeth and claws, bad to handle. In any case, Jack is never vulgar. He is an epicure in the matter of fish, and an unerring connoisseur. Observe further, the patrician disdain with which he regards the ignorant people who think to feed him with biscuits. It may be thought a vulgar taste that led him to start life afresh in the Regent's Canal, but where else could he go?

But in all the house numbered twenty-seven there are no such favour-

ites as the rats. Why these have never been properly, officially, and individually given personal names I cannot understand. I prefer to call them Edwin and Angelina, because they are always turning and turning; although to imagine Edwin a gentle hermit of the dale, or a gentle anything, is not easy. For Edwin bites, and hard, and so does Angelina. But then it is only their fun.

I admire Edwin and Angelina be-

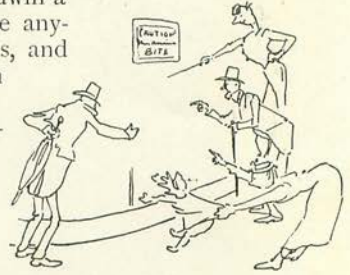


"THEY BITE!"



"THESE THINGS BITE!"

tinkers, tailors, soldiers, sailors, and the others. Each separately reads the label, and then assures all the others that these animals bite. Little Bobby strays from a family party, and reads that fatal label. He rushes back, breathless, to report that "these animals bite," and the whole family come pell-mell. They stand before the label and repeat the mystic formula to one another, and then move off, making way for others, who do the same



"LOOK, THEY BITE!"



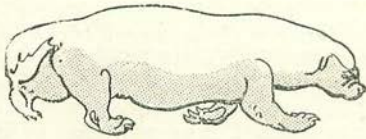
cause they keep up their spirits in most annoying circumstances. Those labels (there are two of them) informing everybody in capital letters that "These animals bite," have a most remarkable effect on human visitors. They touch, in some occult way, a hidden and mysterious spring of human impulse. For no human creature (able to read) can see that label without at once repeating aloud, "These animals bite." It is a most astounding phenomenon. Watch by the wires, and you shall see. A family arrives, and immediately mother points to the label and says, "These animals bite." "Ugh!" says the eldest little girl, also looking at the label, "they bite!" "Look here," says the boy from school, "these fellows bite!" Nurse stoops and informs Toddles that these animals bite. Toddles looks up and replies "Dey bite!" with an air of imparting exclusive knowledge; and then the whole family subsides into a murmuring chorus, whereof the only distinct words are "They bite." And so they move off. Then come old men, old women, young men, and young women, boys and girls,



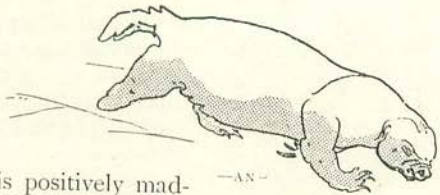
"THEY BITE!"

I. A. Smeaton





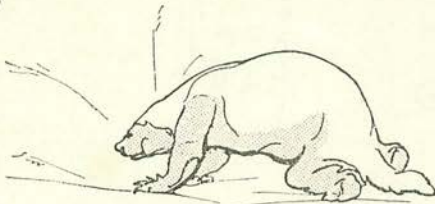
THESE—



—AN—



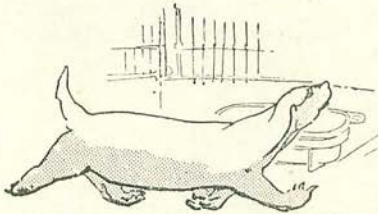
thing. It is positively maddening. No wonder the rats bite; the Archbishop of Canterbury would bite if you tortured him with that exasperating reiteration. As it is, the phrase must eat into the very being of Edwin and Angelina, and they seem to take their regular trot round to the eternal refrain, "These—an-i-mals—bite—these—an-i-mals—bite," always and



BITE.



—MALS—

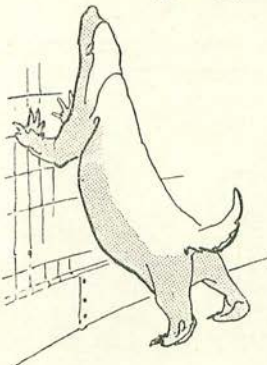


THESE—



—AN—

for ever; Edwin introducing a small variation by a somersault each time as he reaches the narrow part of the cage, and Angelina by a jump against the wires. These perambulations are executed with a steady thoughtfulness that plainly indicates profound cogitation of some kind. If it is not the rhythmical repetition of the notice on the label, it is probably the conjugation of the verb: "I bite, thou bitest, he bites. We bite, you bite, they bite. I have bitten,

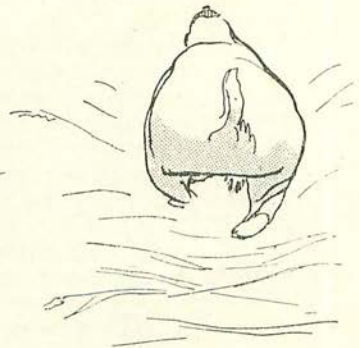


J. A. Seymour

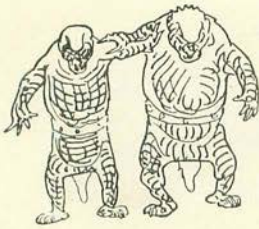
—I—



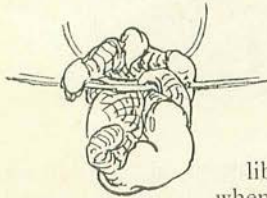
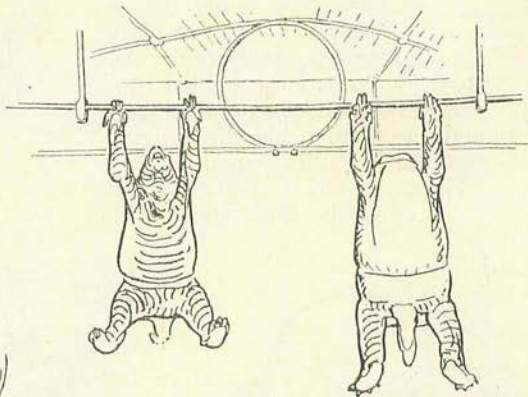
—MALS—



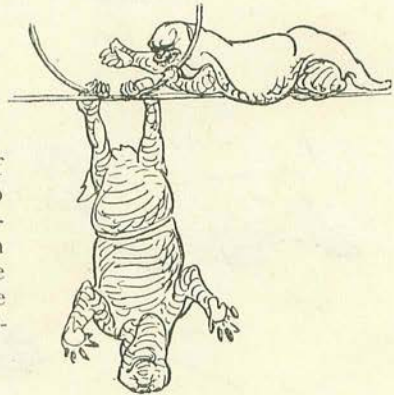
—BITE.



thou hast bitten—" and so on, and so on. Edwin and Angelina are really most deserving and persevering entertainers of the knock-about or Two Macs order, with a strong dash of the Brothers Griffiths. Angelina is best on the horizontal bar, and it is here that she retreats when at feeding time she has a tit-bit to which Edwin may take an independent fancy. The whole cage is well adapted for the performances of the ratels, and, substantially made as it is, anybody is perfectly justified in

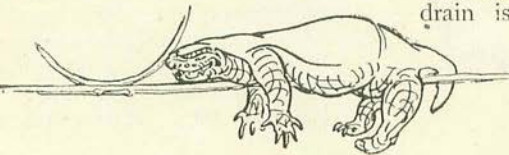


calling it a ratel-trap affair. Edwin and Angelina much prefer their cage to liberty; at closed hours, when the keeper takes them out for a walk, they are inclined to crawl back behind the label that tells of their bites. They have a cement floor, so that they can no longer burrow underneath with a wild notion of coming out in some other part of the world, as they once did; and the drain is care-

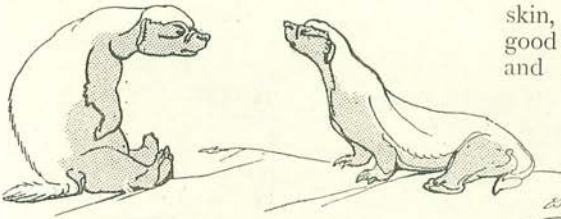


fully covered in now, so that games of follow-my-leader therein, once their chief sport, are no longer

practicable. But chiefly Edwin and Angelina live to revel in the pure delights of mutual assault and battery. Never is Angelina so happy as when she is joyously gnawing her Edwin's head, while his attention is concentrated on a gleeful attempt to drag the hide off her back. It is only from the inside of a skin as tough and elastic as the ratel's that tooth-and-nail combat can be properly enjoyed as a pastime. A ratel is just as fond of being bitten as of biting. It stimulates the healthy action of the

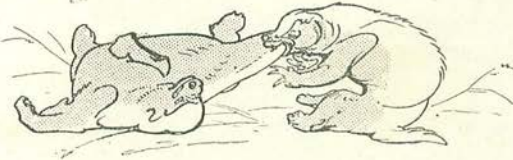
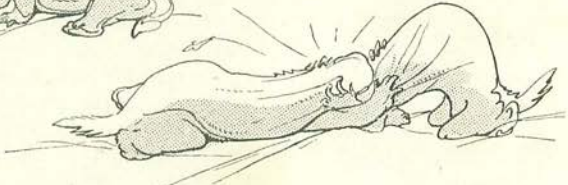






skin, and doesn't hurt in the least. But a good hammering is also enjoyable. If Edwin and Angelina have been particularly good, no more acceptable reward can be offered them than the accidental leaving

inside the cage of a pail. Then the devoted couple may fondle one another vigorously with that pail until it becomes a

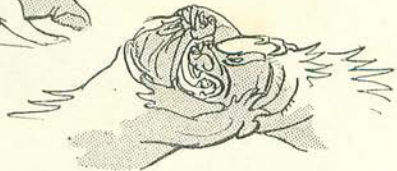
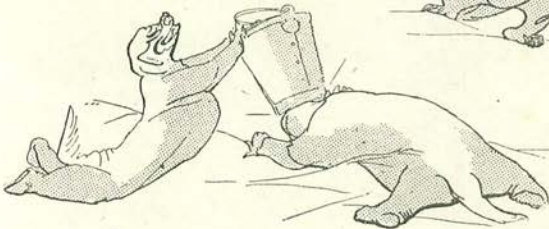


battered wisp of metal, and they feel bright and refreshed all over. Edwin and Angelina between them consume in a week sufficient personal violence to supply Cork political meetings for

six months. With a little more hardening they might even come whole out of a football match. But even ratels have never ventured as far as football. A little infuriate devastation by way of amusement



is all very well, but the ratel avoids extremes. Still, it is not easy to understand the necessity for that notice

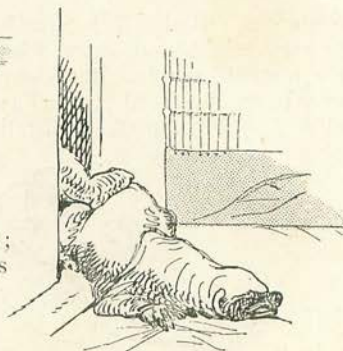
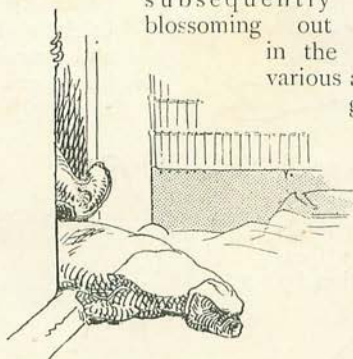
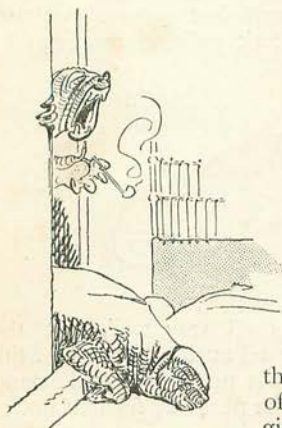
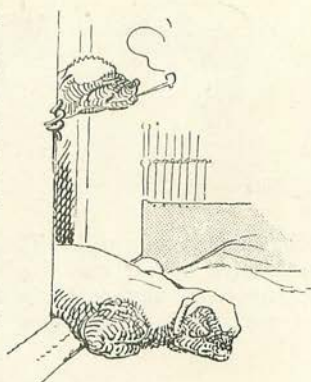
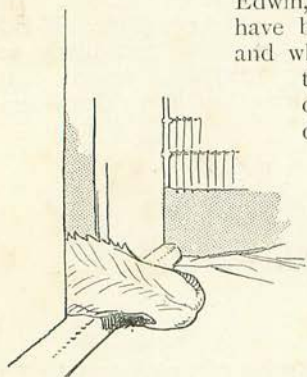


—“These animals bite.” Nobody would think of disputing the fact. They *are* biting, all the time, more legibly than you can paint it on a label. If only they ate all they bit, Edwin would have become Angelina by gradual absorption, and Angelina



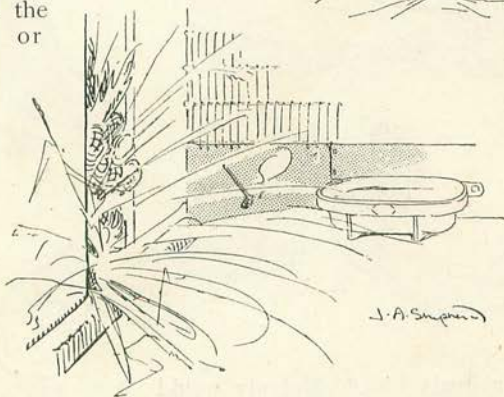
Edwin, long ago; then they would have become absorbed back again, and which would be which by this time nobody but an analytical chemist could calculate. Indeed, I have a theory that the breed of ratels has been evolved out of certain quarrelsome seals, monkeys, and Malayan bears, who all ate each other up entirely, and then attacked a shopful of ladies' muffs; subsequently blossoming out

in the guise of a medley of all the various antagonistic elements, to perform gymnastics and Two-Mac riots for the amusement



of visitors to the Zoo; enacting also at times the instructive little sketch of "Bill Sloggins and the Missis; or

the Door on the Jar and the Family Jar on the Doorstep."



J. A. Simpson