

THE LARGER CATS.

BY GAMBIER BOLTON, F.Z.S.

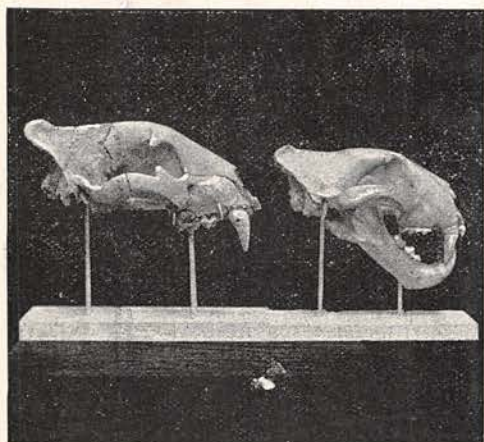


HERE can be but little doubt that with the majority of the British public the members of the *Felidae* or cat tribe are first favourites. The majestic appearance of the lion, with its sleek tawny skin and flowing mane, the stealthy but graceful movements of the gaudily striped tiger, and the spotted and rosetted coats of the leopard and jaguar, all appeal strongly to our sense of what is grand and beautiful in animal life, and as no other section of the mammalia can be said to come up to such a standard, or as a class can be found to show so much of that essentially British quality, pluck, when brought to bay and facing enormous odds, we not only place the *Felidae* first in our estimation, but we find one of them representing us wherever our national flag flies, and the British lion has become a power in the history of the world such as no other animal is ever likely to attain to.

That this well-known creature is not

lion is an exceedingly wide one for it is found not only over the whole of the African continent, from Cape Colony in the south to Abyssinia and Algeria in the north, but it is found in some parts of Asia as well, but in ever decreasing numbers, in fact so scarce has it become in India that it may be said to be almost extinct in that country, and sportsmen, it is said, are not permitted to shoot the few remaining specimens. A mess-room story tells how on one occasion, not fifty years ago, a certain royal prince was spending a few days with a well-known Indian Rajah, and after everything that could be done in his honour had been successfully carried out he expressed as his one great wish the hope that he would be able to shoot an Asiatic lion before leaving the district, where he had heard that a few were still to be found. Blank dismay filled the faces of all present, but with many a sigh and (internal) curse of despair his host promised that his wish should be gratified if it were possible, and gratified it surely was, but the royal sportsman's ardour was somewhat damped when on examining the dead lion at his feet he discovered that its claws were all *gilded* in his honour!

And this slaughter, which has nearly exterminated the lion in Asia to-day, is being repeated in Africa at the present time, for wide as is their range and vast as is that continent, their doom is sealed. Civilisation is advancing by leaps and bounds from every point; each year sees the circle narrowing and closing in more tightly round them, whilst added to all this, innumerable shooting parties, bent on lion killing, are pouring into the country from every side, so that it is now only a question of time before we hear of their complete extermination, and future generations will have to depend on paintings and photographs from which to get their ideas of what the king of beasts was really like. We may go even farther than this and say that we are now within measurable distance of the time when all these things will have become accomplished facts, and there can be but little doubt that the individual is alive to-day who will have the questionable honour of being known to posterity as "the man who killed the last lion." To give some idea of their value at the



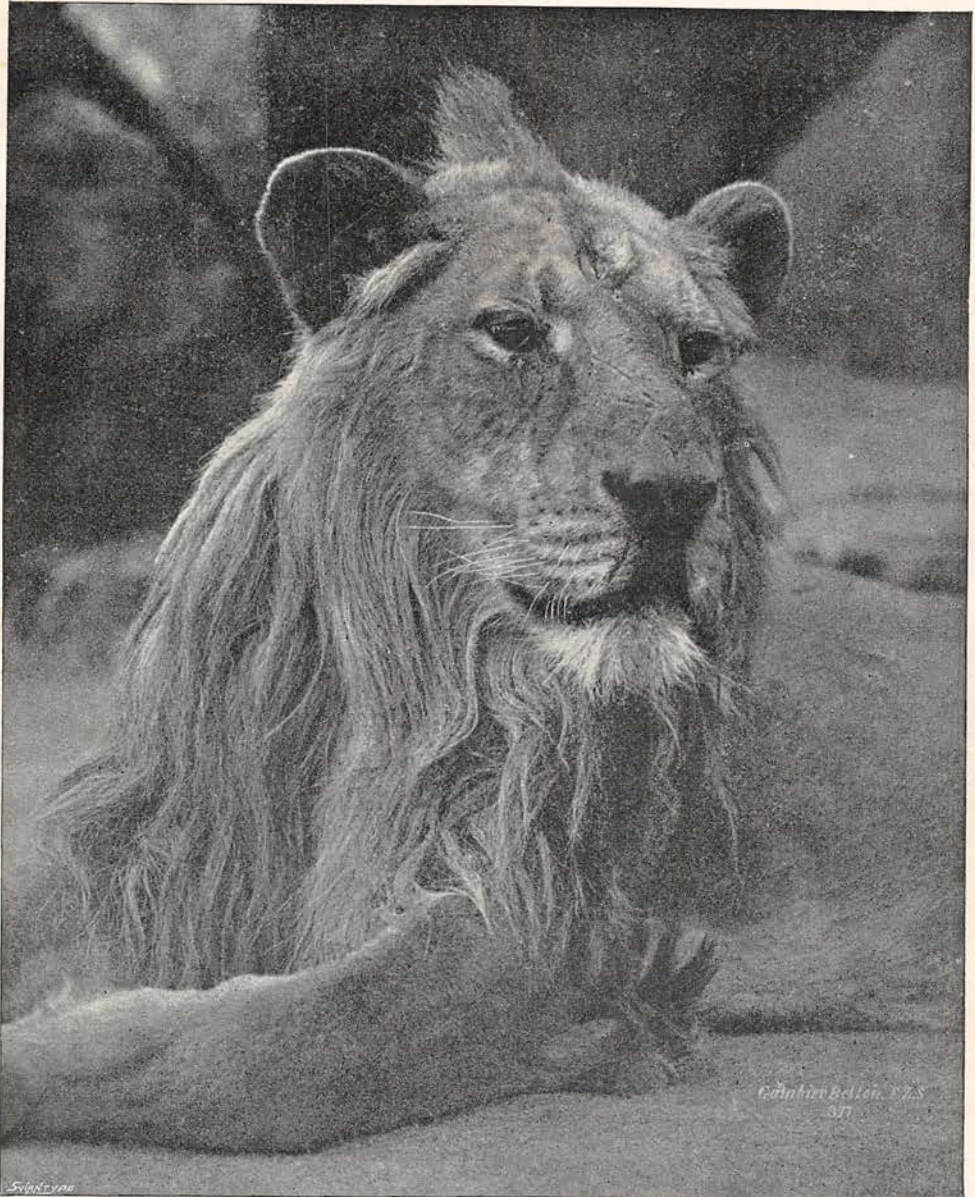
[From a photo by]

[Gambier Bolton.]

SKULL OF BRITISH LION: A SPECIES NOW EXTINCT.

merely the mythological creation of a patriotic people is freely admitted by scientists, for at one time lions were very common in these islands, and the portion of a skull which is shown in our illustration is that of one of these extinct British lions as compared with that of a modern lion, the similarity being remarkable.

Even to-day the geographical range of the



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[From a photo by Gambier Bolton.

AN ASIATIC LION.

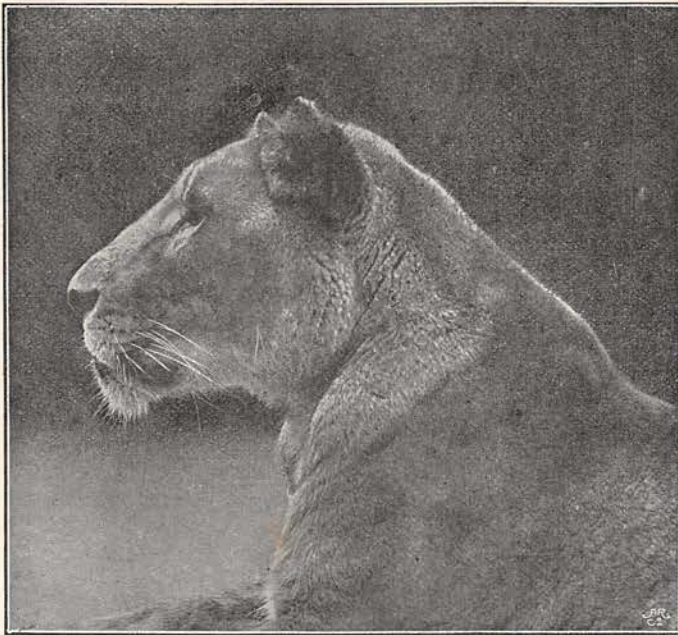
present time, the lion "Toby," at Antwerp, cost £300 last year, and £100 each has been refused for his cubs. (A picture of "Toby" appears as our frontispiece.) Many persons still cling tenaciously to the now exploded theory that there is more than one breed or variety of lion, talking and writing of Cape, Abyssinian, Nubian and Algerian lions; and not content with this they make still worse confusion by dividing the yellow-maned from the black-maned, and the (so-called) maneless lion of Asia from the African lion. But scientists are agreed that there is but the single race, that both yellow and black-maned cubs are produced in the same litter and constantly inhabit the same district, whilst the maneless lions of Asia are now admitted to be nothing but individual specimens which had not reached full age; for although maneless adult specimens have occasionally been reported, yet many well-maned examples have been killed in Asia, and others have been exhibited alive in zoological collections both in Europe and abroad, where they have

African lions often develop an extraordinary growth of mane when in captivity; the celebrated "Hannibal 2nd," of Clifton, near Bristol, having such a heavy top-knot that he was in total darkness when it fell over his eyes, and in consequence of this he was often safely handled by strangers when he came near the bars of his cage to drink.

Animal painters, who of course work only from captive specimens, are continually falling into this trap, and they are greatly to blame for showing us portraits of lions, presumably in their native haunts, bearing full-flowing manes that would do credit to many a menagerie lion, for they ought to remember that when wild they carry comparatively but little mane as a rule, their constant fights with each other, not to mention the thick jungle which they often inhabit, with its thorny creepers and densely matted undergrowth, all tending to keep the growth of the mane down to reasonable limits, just as we see in the case of a long-haired sporting dog when in full work; and out of a roll of

fifty lion skins scarcely half a dozen will bear manes in any way approaching the length and beauty of those shown us by artists, standing or lying amidst their natural surroundings.

Owing to the scarcity of the lion in Asia fights between tigers and lions in their native wilds are of the greatest rarity nowadays, and even in captivity very few well authenticated cases are on record; but two of these are absolutely genuine as the writer can testify, although they do not help us much towards the solution of the problem as to the respective strength of the animals as, strange to say, in each case one of the combatants was a lioness. In one of our British travelling menageries a few years ago, owing to a foolish



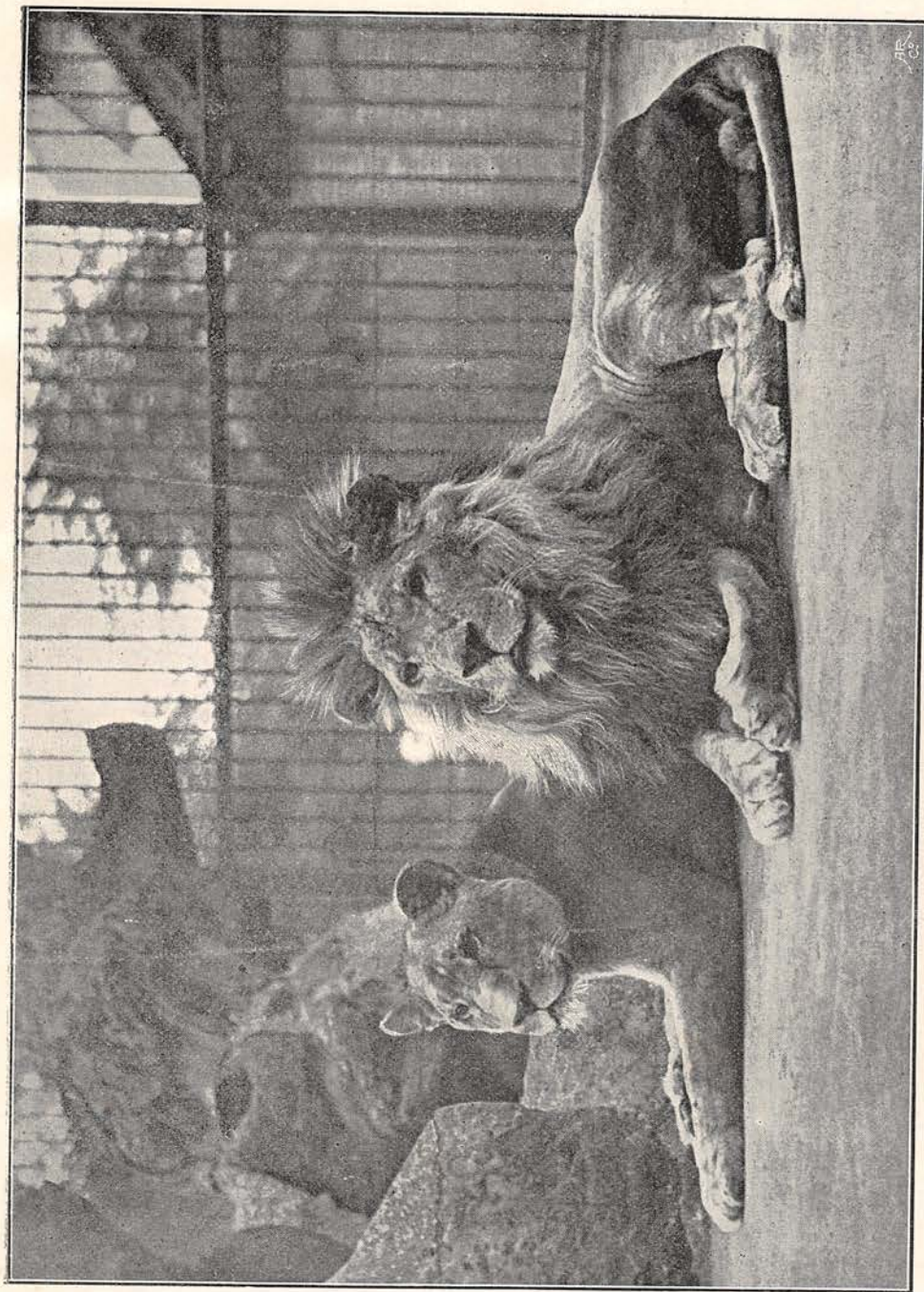
From a photo by]

AN AFRICAN LIONESS.

[Gambier Bolton.

not only developed manes of considerable length but, as shown in our illustration, very much longer than those carried by the average African lion, although, strange to say, they rarely carry more than a tuft on the top of the head between the ears, this being the very spot from which the majority of

blunder on the part of some of the attendants, a tiger was found to have forced the door which separated him from a large lioness, and on the keepers rushing into the tent a terrible sight met their gaze for the two creatures were rolling over and over in a deadly struggle, blood was



From a photo by]

THE KING AND QUEEN.

[Gambier Bolton.

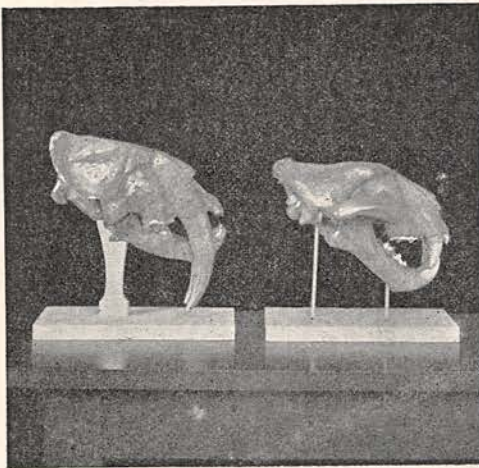
flowing freely and the appalling growls and smothered roars were only surpassed by that still more terrible sound the crunching and smashing of bone, which, when once heard in connection with any of the larger carnivora, can never be forgotten. However they got out the heated irons which are kept in readiness in case of accidents of this kind, and by repeated prods and burns the combatants were at last separated when, to the astonishment of all present, it was seen that the lioness had escaped with scarcely a scratch, whilst the tiger was in such a plight that eventually he had to be destroyed. On the other hand, in the Calcutta Zoological Gardens not long ago two native keepers were left in charge of a lioness placed temporarily in a cage adjoining that of a tiger whilst the superintendent went to his dinner. The men, it appears from the statement of an eyewitness, in their "child-like and bland" way proceeded to bet on the age and strength of the lioness, and to settle their dispute they raised the door which separated the animals, who in an instant were locked in a deadly struggle. So terrified were the keepers at what they had done that both

is no match for the average tiger, being not only generally smaller but much slower and more clumsy in his movements.

Beautifully as the tiger is marked and graceful as are his movements yet few persons who have studied the two animals would ever think of placing him above the lion in their estimation, for putting aside other points, the lack of a mane alone at once takes away the dignity and majesty with which we always connect the king of beasts. Possibly too his gorgeous markings of yellow, black and white have something to do with this, and whilst admiring his pluck when brought to bay, his cat-like movements and the cold cruelty lurking in the depths of his eyes, yet one is tempted to regard the tiger as a brilliantly coloured tyrant or despot of the jungle rather than a dignified monarch like the lion, fit to be placed at the head of the animal kingdom.

The tiger's geographical range, though scarcely so vast in actual distance covered as that of the lion, is still a very wide one having as its southern limits the islands of Java and Sumatra, they then extend northwards through the Malay Peninsula, Burmah and Siam to China and up into Southern Siberia, from thence crossing Assam they range into India from Cape Comorin in the extreme south right up to the Himalaya Mountains, so that to describe the tiger as an inhabitant of the hot plains and steaming jungles only is altogether wrong for they are quite as much at home in the snows of Siberia, and their fossil remains have actually been discovered within the Arctic Circle. The great sabre-toothed tiger inhabited not only India, South America, Italy, Germany and France, but Great Britain as well at one time, and if we may judge by their skulls and other remains which are now and then brought to light in this country, they must have been even more terrible in their destructiveness than their modern relatives, for their huge canine teeth hung down far below the lower jaw, in the same way as do the so-called "tusks" of the walrus to-day, but of what possible use these great fangs could have been to them is a mystery which will probably now remain for ever unsolved.

Few more striking instances of the pluck of the tiger when brought to bay, have ever been recorded than the fight between a captive tiger and forty-six elephants which Mr. Cranford saw in Cochin China, where they are very fond of torturing these animals. A large and freshly caught tiger was fastened to a post by a rope thirty yards



From a photo by]

[Gambier Bolton.

SKULL OF SABRE-TOOTHED BRITISH TIGER.

fled precipitately and were never seen in the gardens again, and on the superintendent hastening to the spot he found that although the tiger was only slightly wounded the lioness was in her death throes, and in a few moments she breathed her last. Thus we are still in the dark as to the respective strength of these animals, although most naturalists are agreed that the average lion



W. H. P. Bolton

[Gambier Bolton.]

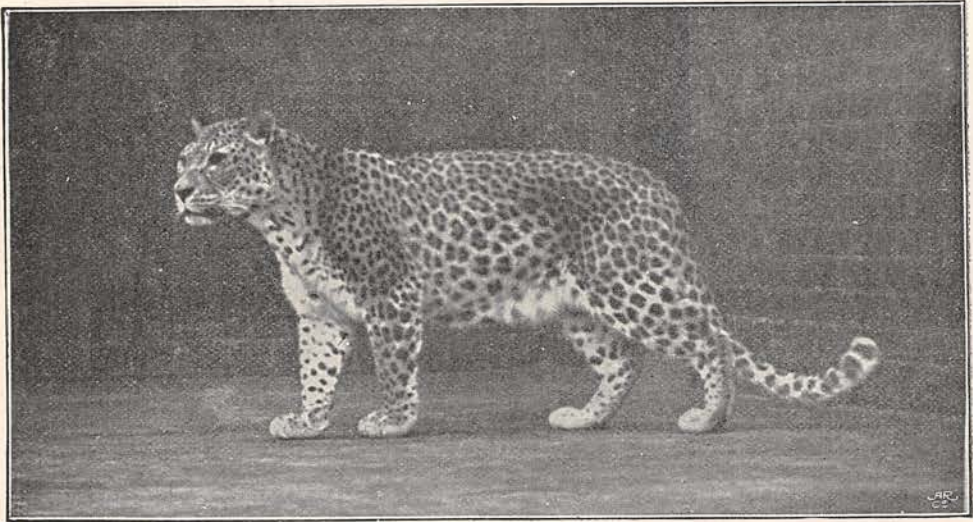
THE LATE DUKE OF CLARENCE'S TIGER CUBS.

[From a photo by]

long. Whilst wrapped up in a strong net his claws were cut and his mouth sewn up, yet this brave brute, and in all the agony and torture he was enduring, flung himself again and again upon his huge enemies until many of them slunk terrified away, and the tiger was only killed at last by the tossing he got from some of the larger and more plucky elephants.

Comparatively few persons have any idea of the enormous number of lives sacrificed each year to the striped monarch of the jungle and mountains, and it would seem not only incredible but absolutely untrue were not the following figures supported by the evidence given in one of the Government Blue Books, for we read there, and in connection with India only, that a single tigress

cattle alone and ever afterwards confine their attentions to human beings, causing, as we have seen, enormous loss of life in any district which they may select as their headquarters. And as Sir Samuel Baker points out, the average Indian native makes but a poor meal for a hungry tiger, so that after killing and eating certain portions of one of them he will leave the remainder and interview another victim as soon as possible; and added to this it must be borne in mind that in many parts of India the man-eater is looked upon with a certain amount of awe and superstitious reverence by the natives which prevents them killing it, so that it is scarcely to be wondered at that in that country the sacrifice of human life should annually amount to something appalling in its numbers.



From a photo by]

PERSIAN LEOPARDESS.

[Gambier Bolton.

had stopped all use of a public road for weeks and had killed no less than 127 natives from a single village before she was shot, whilst for the six years previous to the publication of the report tigers had killed no less than 4218 people in Bengal alone, to which may be added the astounding fact that the lions, tigers, leopards, bears and snakes of India are annually responsible for the deaths of about 20,000 human beings and 70,000 cattle.

Man-eaters, as pointed out by Sanderson and others, appear to commence their downward course by cattle stealing, from this they become used to the sight of the natives in charge of the herds and so lose all fear of man, thence finding how easily their human unarmed victims are killed they leave the

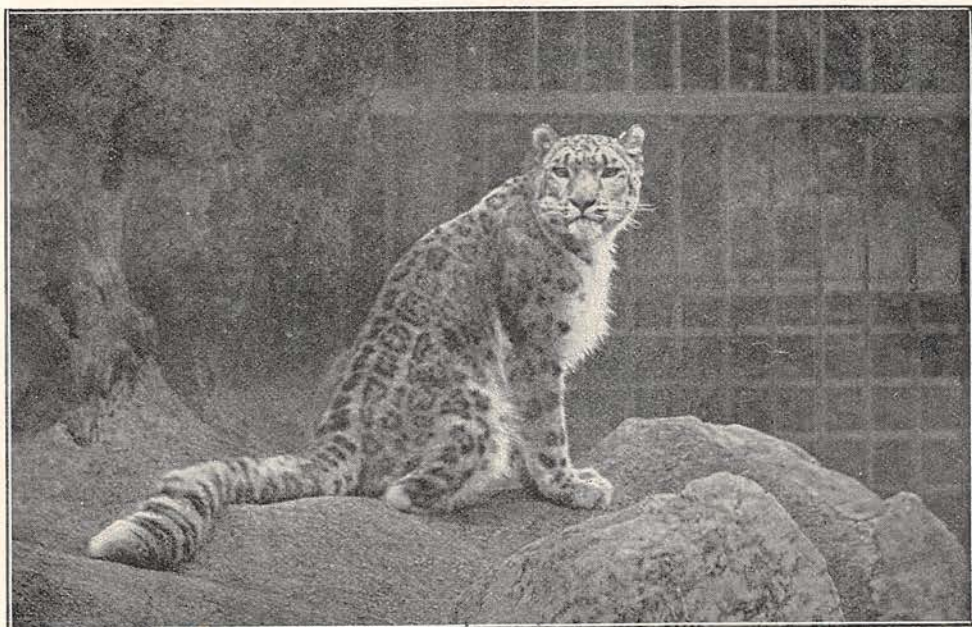
The leopard, often miscalled the panther by uneducated persons, in one respect at least is even more dreaded by the natives of Africa and Asia than the lion and tiger, for in addition to its wonderful activity and the love of killing for the sake of killing only and not to satisfy its hunger, which causes immense damage to the flocks and herds, it is a splendid climber, and not only has the unpleasant habit of dropping down on its victim from the branch of a tree, but also of climbing up after the natives—who sit on roughly made platforms about 7 feet from the ground guarding the crops from the attacks of monkeys and birds—killing vast numbers of human victims in this way every year.

The leopard's range extends throughout

nearly the whole of Africa, thence into Palestine, Arabia and Syria to Persia, India, Ceylon, Burmah, the Malayan region and up into China, and it is said even to Japan. The skins may easily be identified, for, as pointed out by Mr. Blandford, whilst the African leopard has smaller and more solid spots than those of the Indian animal, the Persian leopard—an illustration of which we give, as it is extremely rare in captivity—has a much longer fur than either, whilst the tail is not only longer but very much thicker, and it is not the yellow-fawn colour of the others, resembling rather the whitish-gray colour of the ounce.

The so-called black leopard is nothing but

attentions only to children left unprotected by their parents, many instances are on record where the man-eating leopard has proved himself an even more terrible scourge in a district than the man-eating tiger, Captain Forsyth mentioning one which simply devastated the northern part of the Seoni district, killing about 80 persons before he was shot, whilst Major-General Burton writes of quite a small one which, during two years in the neighbourhood of Nagpore, killed over 100 women and children, generally at the time when they went to the wells for water. In the collection at Regent's Park the leopards may often be seen to go through a series of perform-



From a photo by]

OUNCE, OR SNOW LEOPARD.

[Gambier Bolton.

a melanoid form of the others, cubs both black and spotted being born in the same litter just as we often see in the case of the domestic cat, and when looked at in certain lights the spots show plainly through the general blackness of the coat, so that although at present only discovered in Asia it is entirely wrong to class them as a distinct species. The pure white leopard is extremely rare and very few have ever been met with, but that such creatures do exist has been proved beyond a doubt. To describe the leopard as an animal not given to man-eating, as has lately been done by a well-known writer, is, to say the least of it, absurd, and although often confining their

ances when children are near their cages unattended by adults, rolling on their backs or lashing their tails in the hope of drawing the child within reach of their cages; but accidents of this kind are prevented by the strong outer railing which keeps the public 6 or 8 feet away from the cages, although in spite of all this a dreadful accident happened there some years ago when a boy about nine years old was caught by a black leopard and dreadfully mutilated about the head and face, a man who was with him at the time only saving him from an even worse fate by pluckily ramming his umbrella down the leopard's throat.

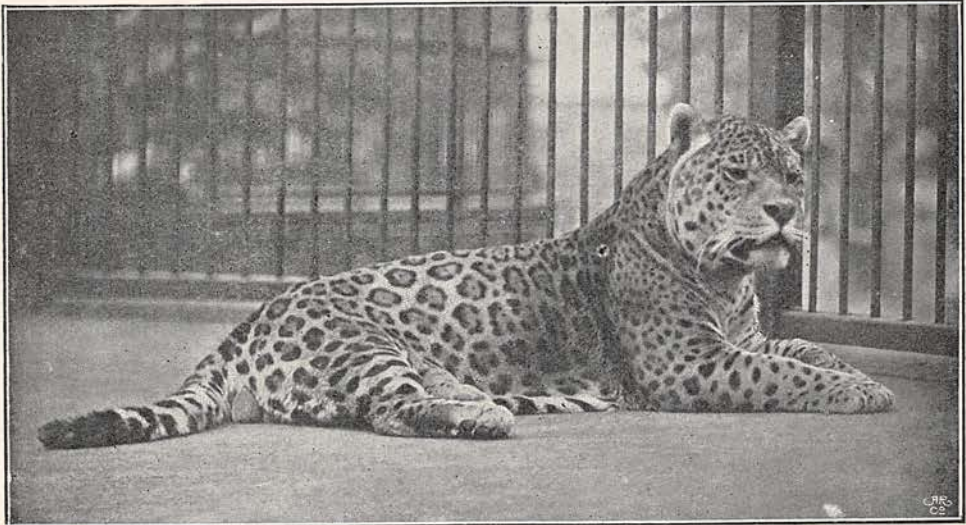
The ounce or snow leopard is extremely

rare in captivity, for living as it does 6000 to 18,000 feet above the sea-level in the mountainous districts of Central Asia, it does not bear warmer climates well, and the specimen given in our illustration is only the second one ever brought to England, although they have been known to scientists for quite a century. The colour of the coat at the time that this photograph was taken was a silvery white, but recently it has become tinged with yellow; the black spots are much larger than those of the leopard, whilst the fur is very dense on the body and remarkably long on the tail, appearing in the photograph to be greatly exaggerated, whereas it is a perfectly correct rendering of it. Very little indeed is known about their habits, but whilst prey-

reported of over 12 feet long, this of course being a very exceptional length, the average being about 9 feet 6 inches.

The colour of the jaguar varies almost as much as that of the leopard, but the usual ground-colour is a yellow-brown; but even this varies considerably in different specimens, some being much lighter and yellower, inclining even to white, whilst according to Baron Humboldt there is a very dark variety, and as we know from the specimen now at the Hamburg Zoo, even all black ones are occasionally discovered, but these are extremely rare.

A glance at our two illustrations of the leopard and the jaguar will show the distinguishing feature by which one may always



From a photo by]

A JAGUAR.

[Gambier Bolton.

ing on sheep and goats, and even ponies at times, it has never been known to attack man, and this particular specimen was so tame that for many months it was kept in captivity in India, fed and attended to by a lady.

The jaguar of America is often called the tiger there, as it is the largest of the cat tribe inhabiting that continent, and there would seem to be a certain amount of truth in this title for it, if, as Baron Humboldt points out, the one he met with during his travels was larger than any stuffed specimen of the tiger in the European museums at the time when he was writing; and cases are on record where the dead jaguar has measured over 7 feet in length, which is nearly the size of a large and full-grown tigress, tigers having been

be recognised from the other, for on the back and sides, and generally wherever open spots or rosettes are found on the jaguar, there will be noticed one or more spots in the centre of each, and whilst these rosettes form in nearly every instance a complete circle, those of the leopard are nearly always not quite complete. There are still people to be found who cling to the idea that the jaguar is nothing but a leopard, although the two animals are quite unlike each other, as will be seen if the photographs are studied closely, for the tail is very much shorter in the jaguar, he is larger and much more clumsy and heavy in his movements; he has shorter and much stouter limbs and thick body, with short round face, not to mention the peculiarity of his voice, which

is a sort of bark and quite different from the coughing roar of the leopard, which may often be heard in the early morning in zoological collections.

The man-eating jaguar is quite as great a pest as any of the other larger cats when once they take to the habit, and they kill off the natives and woodcutters by hundreds every year, whilst Darwin, referring to their cool pluck, mentions the case of a jaguar which, finding a church door open in Santa Fé, strolled in. A "very fine and large" priest coming in soon after was promptly killed, his assistant, wondering what on earth had detained his superior for such a long time, went to search for him and was promptly killed too; another priest then went to look for his friends, and only just escaped from the jaguar's charge by rushing from one pillar to the other, and then hastening from the church he locked the door, and by pulling off some of the roof the jaguar was eventually shot.

These animals are generally supposed to be absolutely untameable, but the specimen in our illustration was purchased as a cub by Lady Florence Dixie, in Corrientes, and became perfectly tame, lying about on the lawn at Windsor with a collar and chain attached, just like any dog, until one day he strolled into the park by himself and rumour says had a very good time amongst the deer, but soon after his recapture he was sent to the Regent's Park collection where he lived for many years, but whether through im-

proper food when young or insufficiency of exercise at that time, he could boast of absolutely the worst pair of bowed front legs that the writer has ever seen on any specimen of the *Felidae*, and under these circumstances it was thought wiser to photograph him when lying down.

We may sum up the larger cats as animals which, though as a rule avoiding human beings, especially white ones, will all at times take to man-eating and then prove themselves a scourge and a pest in any place that they have selected as their headquarters; animals not only constantly fighting amongst themselves but waging incessant and deadly warfare amongst nearly every other class of animal, and this not only on *terra firma* but, like the leopard and jaguar, in the trees or even in the water also, for the latter at least is in the habit of killing tapirs and water-loving rodents, not to mention fish and turtles, whilst often himself coming to grief when seized by the nose by an alligator who draws him under.

Whilst admiring their indomitable pluck when brought to bay, their colouring, shape, grace of movement and general appearance, we cannot but feel enmity towards them when wild as a class, and although perhaps thinking that the world will not be quite so beautiful without them, yet we know perfectly well that where civilisation is to exist the larger cats must be killed off to the very last specimen, as the two cannot exist for long together, and so their final doom is sealed.



Gambier Bolton, F.Z.S.
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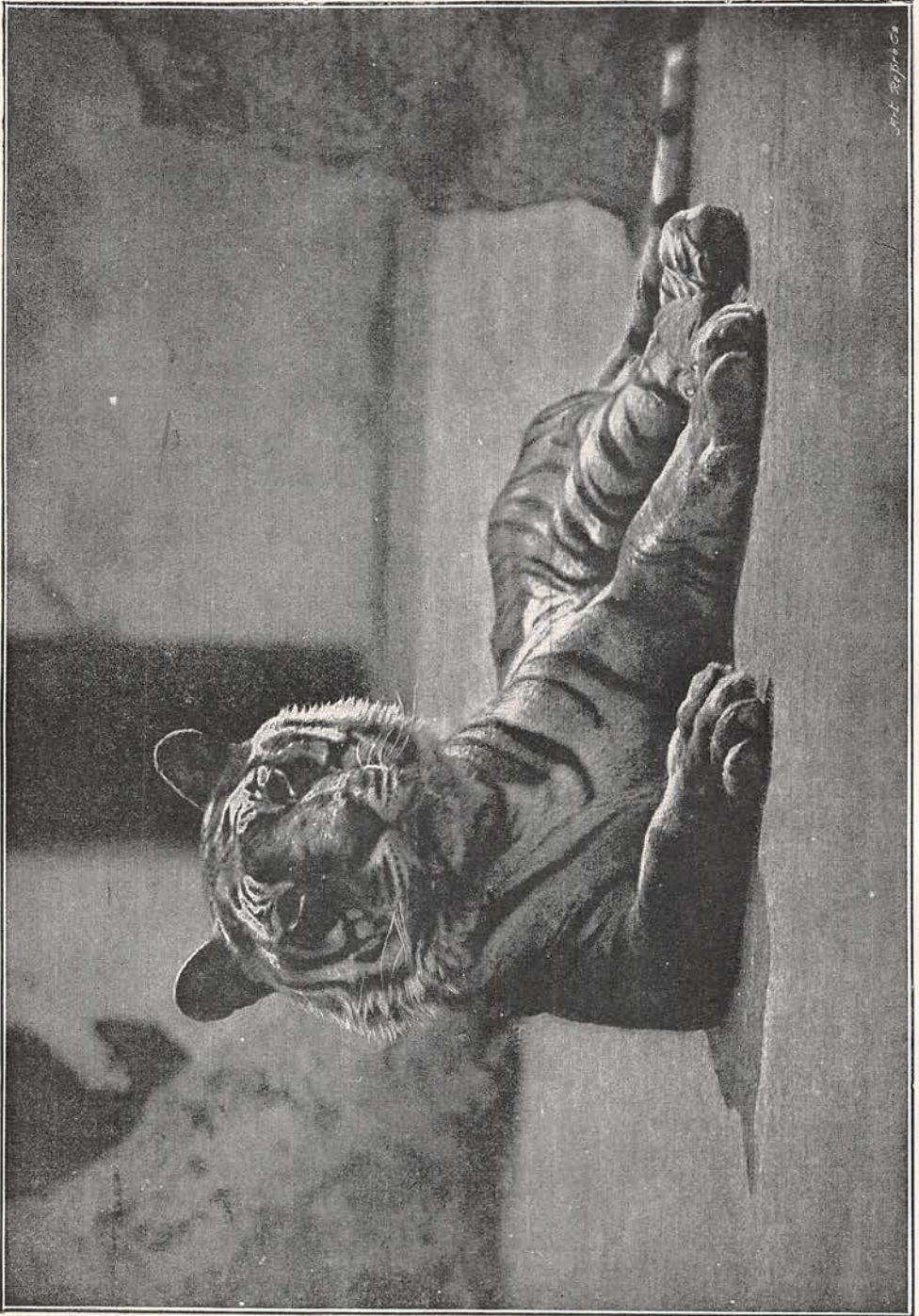
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[FROM A PHOTO BY GAMBIER BOLTON.]

"TOBY."

(The Three-hundred-guinea Lion at Antwerp.)



W. J. P. Co.

[Gambier Bolton.]

A HYDERABAD TIGER.

[From a photo by]