

ANIMALS FOR SHOW AND PLEASURE IN ANCIENT ROME

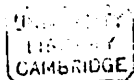
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ELK IN THE ARENA, FROM AN IVORY OF
ANASTASIUS, A.D. 517



was still a collection of animals, perhaps worth calling a zoological garden, at the royal palace at Alexandria, and it was described by Ptolemy VII; but all that we have of his description is a note on the pheasants kept there. The giraffe exhibited at Rome by Cæsar in 46 B.C. presumably came from Alexandria, and was perhaps a present from Cleopatra. How many of the animals killed in the Roman Shows of 29 B.C., after the annexation of Egypt, came from the collection of the Ptolemies—if indeed any did—we do not know; but it is not unlikely that the one hippopotamus and the one rhinoceros, which are particularly mentioned by Dio as killed on this occasion, had been taken thence.

We may now return to the animals exhibited at Alexandria under Ptolemy II. The great procession already mentioned took all day to pass through the Stadium of the city; it was headed by a representation of the Morning Star, and the Evening Star came at the end of it. Only the items of zoological interest concern us here.

After a representation of Dionysus returning from India came the following animals:

(1) Elephants drawing chariots. There were twenty-four chariots with four elephants harnessed to each. Where did these beasts come from? It is improbable that Ptolemy II had as yet organized the capture of African elephants from a base on the Red Sea coast, and their subsequent training; and though some of the other animals exhibited on this occasion certainly came from Ethiopia, it is not likely that he had at this time as many as ninety-six elephants from that region. It seems more likely that they had been acquired with their mahouts from India by Ptolemy I, and that Seleucus I had permitted them to pass through his dominions to Egypt. For though Seleucus probably felt aggrieved by Ptolemy's occupation of Southern Syria in 301, yet he had owed his life and his kingdom to the protection and help which he had received from Ptolemy at an earlier time; and just as he had not gone to war with his old friend over Southern Syria, so, even after 301, he may have felt that he could not refuse a request from

Athenæus,
XIV, 654c

Dio., LI, 22, 5

Athenæus, V,
198d foll.

Ptolemy for facilities for obtaining Indian elephants, though these were instruments of war. But after the deaths of Seleucus I and Ptolemy I it was the hostility between their successors that made the son and grandson of Ptolemy try to get elephants from Ethiopia. With the ships of the time, it was practically impossible to keep up a considerable force of elephants in Egypt by bringing the animals overseas from India, and there is no evidence that it was ever done by anyone. On the other hand, presumably Carthage would not allow the export of elephants to Egypt from the western half of North Africa.

More will be said later in this chapter about the elephant-hunting for the Ptolemies in Ethiopia, which seems to have begun about 275 B.C. Here it may be noticed that in the middle of the third century Antigonus Gonatas of Macedon alluded to the wealth of Egypt and its "elephants, and processions, and palaces," which, he said, had dazzled the Achæan Aratus.

(2) Sixty pairs of he-goats, each drawing a chariot.

(3) Twelve pairs of *kōloi*, drawing chariots. The *κῶλος* may be the *κόλος* of Strabo, who describes it as between a stag and a ram in size, swifter than either, white in colour, and inhabiting the Scythian and Sarmatian country, north and north-east of the Black Sea. Hesychius says that the *κόλος* is a large goat without horns. The animal in question is the Saiga antelope (*Saiga tartarica*) obtained through one of the Greek settlements on the northern side of the Black Sea.

(4) Seven pairs of *oryges*, drawing chariots. These were antelopes, either of the kind now known as *Oryx beisa*, or of that now called the White oryx (*Oryx leucoryx*). Aristotle says that the *oryx* is one-horned, an assertion probably due to reports of persons who had seen *oryges* on which had been practised the trick (known to-day among breeders) of binding together the soft and flexible horns of a young antelope, so that the two should grow into one (see below, p. 78). *Oryges* imported from North Africa were to be seen later in the arenas and parks of Roman Italy in the imperial age. The *Oryx beisa* is now to be found mostly in Abyssinia, but in the third cen-

Tarn,
*Hellenistic
Civilisation*,
2nd edition,
p. 57

Plutarch,
Aratus, 15

Strabo, VII,
4, 8

Cf. Herodotus,
IV, 29

Aristotle, *H.A.*,
II, 499b, 20

The "Ethiopian birds" may have included ibis, egrets, flamingoes—but the possibilities are innumerable.

(13) After other groups of animals unnamed in the summary of Athenæus, came sheep of different kinds: one hundred Ethiopian, two hundred Arabian, twenty Eubœan. Strabo alludes to the "white-fleeced" North Arabian and the "goat-haired" Ethiopian breeds of sheep.

(14) Twenty-six white Indian oxen, perhaps zebu; these had been bred on the shores of the Mediterranean since the days of Tiglath-Pileser; some varieties, not all, were sacred.

(15) Eight Ethiopian oxen, probably of the race that had been famous since the days of Hat Shep Sut in the fifteenth century—they were remarkable for their size and horns of curious twist.

(16) A large white bear. Though it is not quite impossible that this was a polar bear, it is more likely to have been an albino of the straw-coloured bear of Syria or "white" bear of Thrace.

(17) Fourteen leopards, probably from Africa or Syria.

(18) Sixteen *pantheres* or *pantheroi*. Perhaps cheetahs. See Appendix, pp. 184, 185.

(19) Four lynxes.

(20) Three cubs (*ἀρκηλοι*); leopard-cubs or cheetah-cubs.¹

(21) A giraffe, which must have come from Ethiopia.

(22) A rhinoceros, definitely described as Ethiopian; that is to say, it was of the two-horned African kind, not a one-horned Indian animal. It may be noticed that Strabo mentions only one horn on the rhinoceros which, he says, he had seen, that Diodorus, in trying to describe the Ethiopian rhinoceros, gives it only one horn, and that Pliny speaks of the *rhinoceros unius in nare cornus, qualis sæpe visus* (at Rome), without mentioning the two-horned African kind. Was it then usually the Indian, not the African, rhinoceros that was seen in the Mediterranean world from the time of Pompey

¹ Ælian, *N.A.*, VII, 47, quotes Aristophanes of Byzantium as saying "the young of leopards are called *σκύμνοι* and *ἀρκηλοι*," adding that some say *ἀρκηλοι* are a different species from *παρδάλεις*.

Strabo, XVI, 4, 26; XVII, 2, 3

Loisel, *Histoire des Ménageries*, Vol. I *Égypte, Jardins of Ammon*

Cf. Frederic II of Sicily exchanging with the Sultan of Cairo a polar bear for a giraffe Cf. Pausanias, VIII, 17, 3

Strabo, XVI, 4, 15
Diodorus, III, 35, 2-3

Pliny, *N.H.*, VIII, 20 (29), 71

(when the animal was first exhibited at Rome) to that of Vespasian? Unlikely as it may seem, probably it was; the Indian rhinoceros is very hardy, it thrives in very small quarters; and my experience goes to prove that its expectation of life in captivity is double that of its African cousin. However, the two-horned rhinoceros did appear at Rome under Titus and in the Antonine age (see pp. 74, 86).

In the sixth century A.D. Cosmas Indicopleustes, who had seen a live rhinoceros in Ethiopia "at a distance," and a stuffed specimen at close quarters, duly ascribes "horns" to the beast.

(23) Somewhere in the procession there were twenty-four lions of great size (*λέοντες παμμεγέθεις*). These may have come from the Cyrenaica, or from the borderlands of Syria and Arabia, or from Mesopotamia. The idea mentioned in Diodorus, that the lions and leopards of the part of Arabia adjoining Syria were larger and stronger than those of North Africa, may have originated in the capture of some exceptionally large South Syrian or Arabian beasts. Diodorus also says that lions and leopards were more numerous in that region than in North Africa (Libya); and that notion may have been started at Alexandria because most of the lions and leopards seen there came from the neighbouring parts of Asia.

It may be remarked that the tiger is absent from this list; and if it had appeared in the procession, it would surely have been mentioned both by Callixenus, the authority of Athenæus, and by Athenæus himself. Indian monkeys too are noticeable by their absence from among the named animals. The sea journey would probably have been fatal to them.

The modern value of the named animals may be estimated at about £44,500, of which £20,000 would be for the elephants on the assumption that they were not particularly fine beasts. The quarters of the whole collection would probably cover about 100 acres.

Apart from the recorded details of this procession, we have hardly any information about the strange animals which were brought to Alexandria in this age. Diodorus gives an account of the difficulty with which a great snake was captured in

Cosmas Indicopleustes, XI, 441b-c

Diodorus, II, 50, 2

Diodorus, III, 36-7

Ethiopia by hunters who hoped, not in vain, to be richly rewarded for it by Ptolemy II. After an unsuccessful attempt to take it in a contraption of nooses and ropes, they marked its lair, which they blocked up in its absence, and close by they prepared a hole in which they placed a purse bag of rushes. When the snake returned and could not get into its lair, it was driven by the raising of clamour and din towards the hole, and when it was there, the cords for closing the mouth of the bag were pulled. The captors managed to bring it alive to Alexandria, where it was kept on view at the royal palace. Diodorus says that it was made very tame by meagre feeding. A python will become tame without being starved; but perhaps the effects of weakness were mistaken for tameness. The length of the monster is given as 30 cubits (45 feet); one cannot say that this is impossible, though I know of no snake alive or dead that has at all approached it.

On the cebus or cepus monkey from Ethiopia, which was worshipped in Egypt at a place near Memphis, and was probably the nisanas guenon, more will be said when we come to its appearance in the Roman arena in 55 B.C. (see p. 55 below).

Whether specimens of the Ethiopian hyena ("the animal which the Ethiopians call *crocotta*") or of the warthog (if that is the *choirelaphos*, i.e. pig venison, which Cosmas Indicopleustes had "seen and eaten" somewhere) ever reached Alexandria in Ptolemaic times, we do not know.¹ But the warthog is

¹ The *Corocotta* is mentioned at Rome in the reigns of Antoninus Pius and Septimius Severus (see pp. 84-5 below). The *Choirelaphos* (i.e. warthog) and the *Taurelaphos* (buffalo) appear in a list of Indian and Ethiopian animals in Cosmas Indicopleustes. He explains that the Indian *taurelaphos* is tame, the African kind wild. The latter is evidently the Cape buffalo (*Bos caffer*). He says that he has eaten the *Choirelaphos*; there is no description of the animal, but there is a drawing which suggests strongly the wart-hog (*Phacochoerus africanus*). Pliny knew both this animal and the Indian horned pig, the *Babirusa*, but Cosmas never went within hundreds of miles of the known habitat of that curious creature.

Names of beasts compounded with -elaphos may in some cases indicate a resemblance of their flesh to venison, or their value as food.

Strabo, XVII, 1, 40; XVI, 4, 16

Diodorus, III, 35, 10
Cosmas Indicopleustes, XI, 444c

Cosmas Indicopleustes, XI, 444c; 441c;
Hakluyt Society's translation, p. 363

not difficult to keep alive, and the young pigs are extremely small; transport would be easy as compared with the removal of a giraffe. It may have appeared in Rome (see p. 71 below). The hyena would present no difficulties—it is even tameable.

It has been mentioned above that under Ptolemy II and Ptolemy III elephant-hunting in Ethiopia was carried on from the Red Sea coast. It may be that the comparatively powerful Ethiopian kingdom, or kingdoms, on the Nile would not permit the collection of elephants by military or semi-military expeditions passing by the route up that river, whereas the inhabitants of Northern Abyssinia and the adjacent regions were at this time in the condition of simple savages who could be persuaded by presents and subsidies to let the king of Egypt's men go about their business among them. At any rate, under Ptolemy II a fort or trading post called Ptolemais of the Hunts (*ἐπι θήρας*) was established on the Red Sea coast near Suakin. This apparently served as the base from which expeditions went up country to procure elephants in Abyssinia and the eastern Sudan. The animals captured were shipped from Ptolemais to the port of Berenice, which was founded in this reign on the coast in the latitude of Assuan. From Berenice they were taken to the Nile at Coptos (Koft) by a road constructed by Ptolemy II.¹ Under Ptolemy III another coastal base for expeditions into the interior of Ethiopia was established some 300 miles south of Ptolemais of the Hunts. This was Berenice the Golden, near Massowa, perhaps the Adulis of the later Axumite kingdom. It is possible that inland from Berenice the Golden another trading-post was founded at Koloë, which was later reckoned as three days' journey from Adulis.

¹ Myos Hormos (Kosseir), which was much nearer to Coptos than was Berenice, was also founded on the Red Sea coast under Ptolemy II, and at the beginning of the first century A.D. was the chief Red Sea port for the trade that passed through Coptos. But the difficulties of transporting elephants by sea would account for their being landed at Berenice rather than further north at Myos Hormos.

Cf. Expedition of Queen Hat-shep-sut to Punt. Circa 1500 B.C.

Tarn, Hellenistic Civilization, and edition, pp. 214-15

Flinders Petrie, Koft, II, 64

Periplus Erythraei Maris, 4

Diodorus, II,
50, 2

ment of Diodorus that in the part of Arabia which borders on Syria lions and leopards are more numerous and larger and stronger than in Libya.¹ Only, it may be said that transport to Italy from North Africa would be on the whole quicker and easier than from Syria.

It remains to notice the rarities among the animals at Pompey's Games.

Pliny, *N.H.*,
VIII, 19(28), 70

There was a Gallic lynx, then seen at Rome for the first time. Pliny calls it a *chama*, and says that the Gauls called it *rufius*, and that it has a wolf's shape and leopard's spots. It would have been too cowardly to show fight in the arena.

Ibid., 20(29), 71

A one-horned rhinoceros was shown—"such as has often been seen," says Pliny. He evidently knew of no earlier appearance of this animal at Rome. When Lucilius, in the second century B.C., compared a man to "an Ethiopian rhinoceros," he had probably only heard of the beast. No doubt Romans had seen it by that time at Alexandria. On the point that it seems to have been the one-horned Indian rhinoceros, not the two-horned African kind, that had often been seen at Rome when Pliny wrote, see p. 34 above.

Lucilius,
Sat., 159 Marx

¹ A poem on hunting written early in the third century A.D. (the *Cynegetica* traditionally ascribed to Oppian) gives what may well have been then a common opinion about the lions of different countries: that those of Armenia and Mesopotamia—yellow, large-headed, bright-eyed, with high and prominent brows, and well-maned—were comparatively weakly; that those of Arabia Felix (the Yemen) had large manes and were remarkably fine beasts, but there were not many of them; that in thirsty Africa lions were very numerous and strong, "lording it over the lordly lions," and had scanty manes, and a sheen running over their bodies (this is correct), which were somewhat dusky in hue. The author of the poem had himself seen a well-maned black lion which had been brought to "Libya" (i.e. to some part of Roman Africa west of Egypt) from "the Ethiopians" (presumably some negro people), and had been sent to the Emperor. "Oppian," *Cyn.*, III, 20-47. The lions in the Troglodyte country on the African shore of the Red Sea had long been famous for their ferocity, if Strabo's remark that they were called *μόρμηκες* (XVI, 4, 15) means, as I think it does, that they had a grip like that of the ant which will lose its head rather than loose its hold.

The Indian rhinoceros is likely to have reached Rome by way of Egypt, where probably it would arrive by the overland route. Rhinoceroses, tigers and other rare beasts had been carried round with the Indian courts for show or fights from time immemorial.

Lastly, there were monkeys from Ethiopia, which Pliny, it seems, knew as *cephoi* (*quas vocant cephus*). He says that they had "hind feet like human feet and legs, and forefeet like hands," and that they had never been seen again at Rome.

The *cepos* (*κῆπος*), says Strabo in one passage, is the size of a gazelle, with a leonine face and a body like that of the *πύθηγε* (i.e., probably, of varied hues, like the genet's—see Appendix I); elsewhere he describes it as satyr-faced, something between a dog and a bear, and a native of Ethiopia. There is a much fuller description of the *cepos* in Ælian. "Pythagoras," he says, "writes in his book on the Red Sea that there is a land-animal on its shores appositely called *cepos* [*κῆπος*, a garden], because it is many-coloured. One full-grown is of the size of an Eretrian hound. . . . The head and back to the tail are of a bright fire colour, and golden hairs are scattered over the rest of the body. The face is white as far as the cheeks, whence to the neck descend golden bands; the parts under the neck, to the breast and the front legs, are white. The two teats, the size of a fist, seem blue, the belly is white, the hind feet black. You can truly compare his muzzle to that of the dog-face." This description suits very well the *nisnas guenon* (*Cercopithecus pyrrhonotus*) found in North-East Africa, Kordofan, and Darfur, where it is known to this day as the *keb*. A fine engraving of the *keb* in the temple at Latopolis (near Essène-Esneh) suggests sacred associations. Strabo says it was worshipped near Memphis.

No doubt the troop of these monkeys which was exhibited at Rome in 55 B.C. had been procured from Alexandria.

Between the shows of Pompey in the year 55 and those of Julius Cæsar at his quadruple triumph in 46 B.C., we have no record of any great exhibition of animals at Rome. How a Roman of this period would try to collect animals for the

Pliny, *N.H.*,
VIII, 19(28), 70Strabo, XVI,
4, 16; XVII,
1, 40
Ælian, *N.A.*,
XVII, 8Denon (D. V.
Baron), *Égypte*,
Paris, 1802,
Plate 97
Strabo, XVII,
1, 40

Though elephants took part in fights in the arena (Pliny mentions not only elephant-duels, but also the appearance of "single elephants" in the finale of gladiatorial shows under Claudius and Nero—meaning perhaps that there would be one elephant on either side in a *mêlée* of gladiators), it is likely enough that these animals were not often killed in such displays. And the imperial government seems to have made little or no use of them for war. Though some elephants were taken to Britain in the Claudian invasion of the island (A.D. 43), it appears that they were not with the expeditionary force when it landed, but that they came later with the Emperor himself; which suggests that they were brought rather to impress the natives in ceremonies than to be employed in military operations. It is clear from a story in Dio that at the end of the second century A.D. the elephants kept in or near Rome were not trained for war.

A white elephant from Siam may have been sent to Augustus. Horace speaks of a giraffe or white elephant (*elephas albus*) attracting the attention of the public at *ludi*. It is possible that envoys from Siam are referred to in some vague phrases of Florus, who mentions, among the foreign ambassadors received by Augustus, "Seres, and Indians living right under the sun, bringing elephants, as well as gems and pearls among their gifts," and having been four years on their journey.¹

However that may be, a number of exotic animals which had rarely or never been seen before at Rome were exhibited there under Augustus. Some of these may have been spoils of war; for example, the hippopotamus and the rhinoceros which were killed in the games of 29 B.C. may have been found at Alexandria when Augustus annexed Egypt. Others came as presents to Augustus from far countries. To the rulers of Eastern peoples beyond the limits of the Empire it would seem that a Great King had arisen in the West, to whom

¹ *Seres etiam habitantesque sub ipso sole Indi cum gemmis et margaritis elephantos quoque inter munera trahentes nihil magis quam longinquitatem viae inputabant < . . > quadriennium impleverant; et iam (mss. et tamen) ipse hominum color ab alio venire sole fatebatur.*

Pliny, *N.H.*, VIII, 2(a), 5; 7(7), 22

Dio, LX, 21, 2

Dio (Epitome), LXXXIII, 16

Horace, *Epp.*, II, 7, 196

Florus, II, 34; (IV, 12), 62

Dio, LI, 22, 5

their ambassadors should bear gifts. The annexation of Egypt by Rome was followed by a development of trade between that country and Southern India, and in Augustus' own record of his achievements it is said that embassies were often sent to him by Indian Kings.

Ambassadors from India on their way to Augustus were seen by Nicolaus of Damascus at Antioch; and his account (as reported by Strabo) tallies in two points with the account given by Dio of an Indian embassy which found Augustus at Samos in the winter of 20-19 B.C.¹ Nicolaus wrote that among the gifts which the ambassadors were bringing to Augustus were some large venomous snakes (*ἐχιδνας μεγάλας*—hamadryad cobras?), a snake of ten cubits (a length attained by the Python Molurus), a river tortoise measuring three cubits (which is quite possible), and "a partridge larger than a vulture"—probably the Argus pheasant, possibly the Lesser Bustard or the Tragopan pheasant. According to Dio, the Indian embassy received by Augustus at Samos brought some tigers. But Pliny says that the first tiger shown at Rome was a tame animal, exhibited in a cage at the dedication of the Temple of Marcellus in 11 B.C. And if tigers had been presented to Augustus at Samos in 19 B.C. it would surely not have been eight years before the Roman public saw this novelty, unless indeed the animals died before they could be brought to Rome from Samos. But in any case it is probably true that the first tiger seen at Rome was a gift to Augustus from some Indian king.

Suetonius says that a rarity brought to Rome would be put on view by Augustus somewhere in the city, and that in this way a rhinoceros was exhibited at the *Sæpta*, a tiger on the stage, and a snake fifty cubits long in front of the Comitium. Whether this rhinoceros was the one killed at the shows of 29 B.C., cannot be told. The tiger on the stage was no doubt the tame beast mentioned by Pliny as appearing at the dedica-

¹ According to both, one of the presents for Augustus was an armless boy, and one of the Indians accompanying the embassy voluntarily burnt himself to death at Athens.

Mon. Anc., XXXI

Strabo, XV, 1, 73
Dio, LIV, 9, 8

Pliny, *N.H.*, VIII, 17(25), 65

Suetonius, *Div. Aug.*, 43, 4

stage, on which rocks and a forest were represented, was made to rise from out of the crypts below the arena with Orpheus on it among beasts and birds; but the Orpheus was a criminal and the scene ended with a bear killing him.

Ibid., 15; 11,
22

A bear died by the hunting-spear of Carpophorus, and another, in flight from a *venator*, was caught in bird-lime. Lastly a bear was tossed by a two-horned rhinoceros.

Ibid., 22; 9

This two-horned (African) *rhinoceros*—*cornu gemino*—was of a kind which appears to have been rarely brought to Rome; it was the one-horned (Indian) variety which had "often" been seen there by Pliny's time. This two-horned beast that Martial saw was sluggish, and its keepers had difficulty in making it show fight; but when roused at last it threw the bear into the air like a bull tossing a dummy figure. It also killed a bull.

Pliny, *N.H.*,
VIII, 20(29), 71

Dio (Epitome),
LXVI, 25
Martial, *de*
Spectac., 19; 17

Four *elephants*, according to the Epitome of Dio, fought in these shows—perhaps in a gladiatorial mêlée. Martial describes the goading of a *bull* by flaming darts, and the irritating of it by dummy figures, till it was brought to attack an elephant, which killed it, and then kneeled before the Emperor—entirely of its own accord, says Martial: "You may be sure that it too recognizes our god."

Dio (Epitome),
LXVI, 25
Martial, *de*
Spectac., 28

Trained *bulls* and *horses* appeared in a water-show—the arena being suddenly flooded, and the animals swimming in the water and drawing boats shaped as cars; at least something of the sort is suggested by Martial's description. The bull that was lifted in the air by a machine, as carrying Hercules up to heaven, may have been a real bull; that in a representation of the story of Pasiphæ was probably a wooden figure, as in a performance in Nero's time. Carpophorus killed an *aurochs* and a *bison*, probably from Germany. Martial calls the former *bubalus*; but Pliny had written that this name, which was properly that of an African antelope, was wrongly applied by the vulgar to the *urus*. The maned bison and the very strong and swift *urus* Pliny mentions as two kinds of wild ox native to Germany; and Cæsar had heard tales of *urus*-hunting among the Germans.

Ibid., 16;
16b; 5; 23

Pliny, *N.H.*,
VIII, 15(15), 38

Cæsar, *B.G.*,
VI, 28

A great *boar* was killed by Carpophorus. And in a representation of Diana hunting wild animals, a pregnant wild sow was killed, which in its death gave birth to its young—a reference to Diana's function as Lucina, the goddess of birth.

Martial, *de*
Spectac., 15;
12-14

A deer or antelope of some kind (*damma*), chased by hounds in the arena, fled to where the Emperor sat, and seemed to implore his protection, while the hounds refrained from attacking it. On how this was managed, Martial's reference to the Emperor's divinity throws no light.

Ibid., 30

Lastly, the Epitome of Dio records a fight of *cranes*. Possibly the birds were exhibited performing their curious mating-dance—a "turn" that would be much to the credit of the skill of its producer.

Dio (Epitome),
LXVI, 25

Domitian (A.D. 81-96), the brother and successor of Titus, was not genial, but was ambitious of using his power in an imposing way. "He frequently gave magnificent and expensive shows," says Suetonius. He was interested in archery, and had an arena at his Alban villa, where the *venationes* were "very fine" (*eximie*), and where he admitted spectators to exhibitions of his own skill with the bow, often killing a hundred beasts at a single shoot, and practising the trick of making two successive arrows stick in an animal's head as if they were horns. It seems that some privileged persons were allowed to shoot with him. And when one of them, M.' Acilius Glabrio (whom the Emperor afterwards put to death), was holding the consulship, he was compelled, says the Epitomator of Dio, to fight a large lion; but it may have been a voluntary action, for Glabrio was apparently a noted amateur *venator*.

Suetonius,
Dom., 4
Ibid., 4, 4; 19

Dio (Epitome),
LXVII, 14
Juvenal, IV,
94-101

Under Domitian Martial occasionally wrote verses on particular incidents in the animal-shows given by the Emperor at Rome, but his references to the subject under this reign (if those in his *Liber de Spectaculis* belong to the reign of Titus) are not many, and about half of them are concerned with a single trick—that of lions trained to "retrieve" hares without harming them. The following points in his allusions may be noticed.

(a) In A.D. 93, at the fêtes which celebrated the return of

Martial,
VIII, 26

Pausanias, IX,
21, 1-2; VIII,
17, 3

Hist. Aug.,
M. Antoninus,
4, 8
Marcus
Aurelius,
Meditations,
III, 2; IV, 16;
X, 8

"Mémoire sur
les animaux
promenés ou
tués dans les
cirques,"
Mongez,
Mém. A. des
inscriptions et
Belles Lettres,
2e Serie, 1833

Pausanias in the Antonine age saw giraffes, two-horned Ethiopian rhinoceroses, Pæonian bulls,¹ and white deer in the shows or in a garden (see pp. 131, 132).

It need hardly be said that Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 161-80) did not care for the public entertainments of his age. It is mentioned as an instance of his reasonable conformity to social demands, that when he was young he let himself be taken to hunts, or the theatre, or spectacles. And he could admire the beauty of the lion's scowl, or of the foam that dripped from the wild boar's mouth. But the cruelty of the Roman shows repelled him. Yet once, when the spectators demanded a performance by a lion trained as a man-eater, Marcus Aurelius apparently showed less firmness than Claudius (see p. 69 above). He yielded so far as to allow the performance, but turned his back on the spectacle, and refused to give way to a clamorous request by the public that he should free the slave who trained the beast.

This story suggests the remark that there would often be difficulties about getting untrained animals to attack men in the arena. The strange scene and the noisy multitude would scare wild beasts, and make them reluctant to attack even a victim bound to a stake. Men condemned to the beasts were forced, as we shall see in Appendix IV, to move their hands so as to irritate the animals.²

¹ These have been thought to be bison, but Pliny says that neither the bison nor the *urus* was used in Greek medicine (*N.H.*, XXVIII, 10 (45), 159); and he seems to distinguish bison from the *bonasus* of Pæonia, an animal "equina iuba cetera tauro similem, cornibus ita in se flexis ut non sint utilia pugnae" (*ibid.*, VIII, 15 (16), 40). This *βόναος* is also described in Ps.-Aristotle, *H.A.*, IX, 630a, 19 ff., and mentioned by Aristotle (*H.A.*, II, 500a, 1). I think that the Pæonian bulls of Pausanias, though in X, 13, 1-2, he calls them *βλωβες*, were *bonasi*, and that these may be identified with the musk-ox (*Ovibos moschus*).

² Plutarch, *De Sollertia Animalium*, 25. After telling tales of fishes (*scari* and *anthiæ*) coming to the assistance of members of their kind that were in danger, one of the characters in the Dialogue goes on: "And yet we do not know of any land-animal—bear or boar or lioness or leopard—that will help another of its kind in danger. Animals of

The son and successor of Marcus Aurelius, the Emperor Commodus (A.D. 180-92), was incapable and uninterested in the serious work of government, but was passionately fond of the sports of the amphitheatre. He was himself an ardent *venator* in the sense of a killer of wild animals in public or private arenas, and, as a slayer of beasts, he took the title of the Roman Hercules. He collected rare animals for slaughter at Rome, and Dio, who witnessed his performances, describes him as killing elephants (3 are mentioned altogether), hippopotami (6 are mentioned altogether, 5 on one occasion), rhinoceroses, a giraffe, a tiger, and, on one day, 100 bears. Herodian, a contemporary, adds lions and leopards to the list, and mentions the emergence of a hundred lions into the arena from below ground. (Nearly two centuries later, Ammianus Marcellinus wrote that Commodus killed, with different kinds of weapons, a hundred lions let loose at once in the arena, without needing to give any of them a second shot or blow.) According to Herodian, the Emperor shot ostriches with crescent-shaped arrows meant to decapitate the birds, the headless bodies continuing to run as though nothing had happened. This last detail is correct; the same phenomenon may be observed in ducks and geese in like circumstances. Dio tells how the Emperor, having decapitated an ostrich with a sword, came to where the senators (Dio among them) were sitting in the amphitheatre, and held up the head of the bird in his left hand, and his blood-stained sword in his right, saying nothing, but smiling and nodding, to make them feel that this was what he would do to them.

Pertinax, the successor of the murdered Commodus, was himself murdered, after reigning for less than three months, by the Prætorian Guard, who sold the imperial authority to a senator, Didius Julianus, and he in his turn fell, after reigning sixty-six days, before the governor of Pannonia, Septimius

one kind will get together in the arena and will move round it together; yet one animal will not think of helping another—rather, they bound away in flight as far as they can from one that is wounded and dying." My experience leads me to think that such action denotes abject fear.

Hist. Aug.,
Commodus, 8,
5; Dio (Epit.),
LXXII, 15, 5;
Dessau, *Inscr.*
Lat. Sel., 400
Dio (Epitome),
LXXII, 10, 3;
18, 1; 19, 1
Herodian, I, 15
3-6
Ammianus
Marcellinus,
XXXI, 10, 19

lion named Acinaces (Scimetar), which (so says Dio) was his table-companion and slept in his room. The greater part of his short reign was spent away from Italy. He made senators pay for *venationes* and chariot-races in the cities where he stayed, and was himself a keen *venator*. But there is little evidence as to the animals exhibited at Rome in this reign. It has already been noticed that Dio mentions a zebra among the animals killed in the amphitheatre early in Caracalla's time; the others there recorded are an elephant, a rhinoceros, and a tiger. On a medal struck by this Emperor is represented the device of the wrecked ship, with animals engraved below—elk, one-horned rhinoceros, elephant, lion, ostrich, an antelope, and what appears to be a fox (see p. 82).

Elagabalus (A.D. 218–22), a fantastic, effeminate, and vicious youth, is represented in the *Historia Augusta* as having a taste for keeping animals and employing them in childish amusements and very disagreeable practical jokes. On this more will be said in chapter VIII below. Here it may be noticed that some of the statements in the account of this Emperor in the *Historia Augusta* would, if trustworthy, do great credit to the animal-trainers of the time. Elagabalus is said to have driven in harness lions, tigers, and even stags. Breaking stags to harness (which had been done under Domitian: see p. 78 above) is particularly difficult. Again, if the Emperor used really to play the practical joke of turning his tame lions, leopards, and bears at night into the rooms of drunken sleeping guests, this would be a still more remarkable proof of the skill of his trainers (*mansuetudinarii*). For though the animals had been deprived of teeth and claws (*exarmati*), that would not have prevented them from doing harm if they had not been perfectly trained. Another point which may be noticed here is, that the Emperor's zoological collection is represented in the *Historia Augusta* as being largely drawn from the region of the Nile. After a mention of the Emperor's Egyptian snakes, his hippopotami, his crocodiles, and his rhinoceros, it is added that he had all Egyptian things suitable for exhibition. If the rhinoceros was really of African origin (and not

Ibid., LXXVII,
9–10

Ibid., LXXVII,
6, 2

Coins,
Morellius,
Leipsic, 1695

Hist. Aug.,
Elagabalus,
28, 2

Ibid., 25, 1;
cf. 21, 1

Ibid., 28, 3

an Indian animal imported through Egypt), it was of the two-horned variety.

As regards the exhibition of animals at public shows in the time of Elagabalus, we learn from Dio that at the Games which celebrated the Emperor's marriage, among the many beasts killed, were an elephant and 51 tigers. Whether the elephant fell in a fight against three or four tigers our authority does not say. Such a struggle would, however, suggest itself to any Persian but the 51 tigers must have met other deaths. This is by far the greatest number of tigers of which we have definite record as appearing at the Roman shows (see p. 77 above), and Dio believed it to be unprecedented. Possibly the Eastern campaigns of Septimius Severus (who, it will be remembered, exhibited 10 tigers on one occasion) had somehow made it easier for the Romans to obtain this animal from the Persian plateau.

Alexander Severus (A.D. 222–35) was a most respectable young man, who did his best to be a model Emperor. He was regular in attending the public spectacles, and (so it is said) had a plan, which was not carried out, for distributing the Roman Games throughout the year at regular monthly intervals. Perhaps the intention was to effect an economy with as little offence as possible to public opinion. The Emperor is said to have disapproved of showing much favour to actors, or charioteers, or *venatores*. His own interest in animals was, it is recorded, chiefly an interest in the birds which he kept in his aviaries (see p. 101, n. 1). The document given in the *Historia Augusta*, containing a statement that the Emperor in his Persian war captured 30 elephants from the enemy and led 18 of them in his triumph at Rome (A.D. 233), is probably spurious. But it is likely that some elephants of the Indian kind reached Rome in this way. In the Life of Gordian III in the *Historia Augusta*, it is implied that 10 elephants which Alexander Severus had sent to Rome were there in 248.

After the death of Alexander Severus, the Empire sank into a troubled half-century of civil war and barbarian invasion,

Dio, LXXIX,
9, 2

Hist. Aug.,
Severus
Alexander, 37,
1; 43, 4

Ibid., 41, 6–7

Ibid., 56, 3

Hist. Aug.,
Gordian³ Tres,
33, 1, 2

from which it emerged under Diocletian. How far the disturbances of the time interfered with the supply of animals for the Roman shows, cannot be told. A few scraps of very doubtful information on our subject may be mentioned.

Historia Augusta, loc. cit.

In a list of animals said to have been intended for Gordian III's Persian triumph (a triumph that was never celebrated) and to have been exhibited by Gordian's murderer and successor, Philip the Arabian, at the Secular Games of A.D. 248 the items are: 32 elephants (of which, it is said, Gordian III had sent 12—that is, had sent them from the East as spoils of his Persian war—and Alexander Severus had sent 10), 10 elk, 10 tigers, 60 tame lions, 30 tame *leopardi* (maneless lions; App. I, pp. 186-7), 10 hyenas (*belbi, id est hyænae*), 6 hippopotami, a rhinoceros, 10 *argoleontes* (wild lions; or perhaps *archileontes*, "lions of exceptional size," should be read). A medal of Gordian's seems to show an impalla antelope.

Loisel, Vol. I, f. p. 108

Hist. Aug., Gallieni, 12, 3-5

Passing by an anecdote of bull-fighting under Gallienus (the Emperor crowning a *venator* for the remarkable feat of failing ten times to strike a bull), and a story of the same Emperor letting off with a fright a man whom he had condemned to the beasts for selling his wife sham jewellery (from the lion's den emerged, not the lion, but a capon), we may come to the list, perhaps fictitious, of the animals said to have formed part of the triumphal procession of Aurelian, the conqueror of Zenobia of Palmyra, in A.D. 274. The list includes 20 elephants, 200 tamed animals of different sorts from Africa and "Palestine" (distributed after the triumph to private citizens in order to save the Treasury the cost of their keep), 4 tigers, giraffes, elk, and "other such animals" (*cetera talia*), which may have been added to the imperial collection.

Hist. Aug., Aurelian, 33, 4

Ibid., 33, 3

The author of the Life of Aurelian in the *Historia Augusta* asserts it as well attested (*ut multi memoria tradiderunt*), that in this triumph the Emperor rode to the Capitol in a chariot which had once belonged to a King of the Goths (whom he had defeated), and that the chariot was drawn by four "stags"

(*cervi*), which had been taken along with the chariot. These stags were sacrificed to Jupiter Optimus Maximus. The Goths lived at this time in the country to the north-west of the Black Sea, and a trade-route to the Baltic ran through their land. It has been suggested that these *cervi* were reindeer which the King of the Goths had obtained from the North, but they are more likely to have been Red deer stags, which are very difficult to train.

It is related in the *Historia Augusta* that Aurelian, before he was Emperor, and when he was serving on an embassy to the Persian king, was given an elephant by the Persians, and thus became the only Roman citizen, below imperial rank, to own an animal of this kind, though even he surrendered his elephant to the Emperor then reigning. This story illustrates the fact that the elephant continued to be regarded as an imperial animal (*nulli servire paratum privato*, as Juvenal had written).

Hist. Aug., Aurelian, 5, 6

In A.D. 281 the Emperor Probus celebrated a triumph and gave *ludi* at which *herbatica animalia* and *bestiæ dentatæ* were shown. The information in the *Historia Augusta* about the animals exhibited on this occasion may be given for what it is worth. On one day, there were turned into the Circus Maximus (which had been planted to look like a forest) 1,000 (?) ostriches, 1,000 (?) stags, and 1,000 (?) boars, and then *dammæ* (gazelles or fallow deer?), ibexes, wild sheep, and other grass-eating beasts. Those spectators who wished to appropriate any of these animals were allowed to do so. On another day, 100 maned lions (*iubati leones*) were let loose in the amphitheatre, and after them 100 African *leopardi* (not leopards but maneless lions; see Appendix I, pp. 186-7), and 100 *leopardi* from Syria, and then 100 lionesses with 300 bears.

Hist. Aug., Probus, 19

It is added that the show of maned lions was not a great success, because they were killed as they came out of *postica*, from which they did not emerge with the dash (*impetus*) of beasts coming out of *caveæ*. Many of them would not charge at all and had to be shot with arrows.

This might be interpreted in one or other of two ways.

not far from the Prænestine Gate. There may have been two or more *vivaria* in that neighbourhood. In late imperial times there was certainly a repository for wild beasts on that side of the city (*ἀμφὶ πόλιν Πενεστρίναν, ἐπὶ μοῖραν τοῦ περιβόλου ἢν Ῥωμαῖοι βιβάριον καλοῦσι*). It was in an enclosure formed by a wall built on to the city wall, in a poor and thinly inhabited district near the Prænestine Gate; thus it could receive long trains of animals at any time, day or night, without causing inconvenience, and the broad road through the city gate direct to the Colosseum facilitated the speedy carriage of stock to the arena. The exact position is nowhere defined, but the explorations of Paolo Maffei, the account in Procopius, and the contour of the city walls as built by Aurelian, enable us to place it with tolerable accuracy, and to deduce its form, structure and special purpose.

Paolo Maffei in the *Giornale dei Litterati* says "The remains of an old wall with some big windows, which formed a square to the right of the Porta Maggiore, belonged to the *vivarium*, indeed until recently (*circa* 1712) it kept that name. In a small subterranean chamber used as a prison there were found in 1547 three very fine pictures of all sorts of strange animals; and Panvinius mentions a similar find in a cell¹ under the Via Tiburtina; which proved that the *vivarium* was extensive." But the explanation may be that these were the keepers' rooms of different *vivaria*.

The whole coincides with the detailed account in Procopius and elucidates the obscurities. That the *vivarium* was to the right of the Porta Maggiore (the former Prænestine Gate) and that it was rectangular are particularly interesting facts. About 70 yards beyond the gate on that side the wall takes a right-angled turn; consequently the outer weaker walls enclosed a space 70 yards wide and if to the next bastion about 440 yards long.

Procopius says that the ground here was flat, and had been enclosed by the Romans of old, as a depot for the ferocious beasts used in the amphitheatre. That it was narrow is proved by the fact that Belisarius, after allowing the Goths to break and climb

¹ Probably the keeper's room.

Procopius, *Hist. Bell., Goth.*, I, 22-3

Giornale dei Litterati d'Italia, Venezia, XII, c. 4, p. 103. Pictured by Fogli del Sadeler and Domenico de Rossi Grævius, *De Antiq. Roman.* Panvinius, *De ludis circ.*, lib. 6, cap. 6

Procopius, *loc. cit.*

CHAPTER XII

STOCKYARDS FOR THE BEASTS

THE animals destined for the arena were kept in remote parts of the city from fear of the danger and terror that followed their not infrequent escapes. St. Chrysostom says that the *vivaria* where the beasts are kept shut up in cages are far from the senate-house, law-courts and palace, lest the beasts breaking out should put anyone in danger. And again, "Just as the wild beasts that break out of their cages spread panic through cities" (*καθάπερ θηρία χαλεπὰ ἀπὸ γαλευγρίας φηγόντα τὰς πόλεις θορυβοῦσιν*). Tertullian says: "How often have wild beasts escaped from their cages and devoured men in the middle of cities." In a chronicle we find:

Mense Martio exsiluit elephas e stabulo noctu et interficit multos, alios vero debilitavit.

The risk was indeed great, if the fear was excessive. As Libanius says, "When a long-starved ravenous creature finds itself at liberty, the mere sight of it spreads panic—everyone seeks shelter and shuts fast his door."

The chief enclosure for wild animals at Rome was outside the Prænestine Gate; Domitian had an exercise school for *bestiarii* on the Cælian Hill. Between the site of the Prætorian Camp and the rampart of Servius there was discovered a votive tablet, of the year A.D. 239, on which is recorded a keeper of the *vivarium* of the prætorian and urban cohorts. This was the *vivarium* attached to the prætorians' own amphitheatre, the *amphitheatrum castrense*, which lay on the eastern side of Rome,

St. Chrysostom, *59th Homily*

Id. *Hom. in Matth.*, 28, 5

Tertullian, *Ad Martyres*, 5

Paul. Diac., *Historia Miscella*, Book XVI, 23rd year of Justinian

Libanius *Or., Artemis*, 14 (Vol. I, p. 309, ed. Förster)

Dessau, *Inscr. Lat. Sel.*, 2091

the outer wall, armed his sortie party with swords only—the immense slaughter proves that the enclosure was extensive. It was a large rectangular yard surrounded by high walls, its flat floor unrelieved by any amenity; in no respect, then, a zoological garden, but eminently suitable for its specific purpose.

From this depot the beasts were brought to the amphitheatre in the night preceding the show. Box-cages for lions, or leopards need not be large for so short a passage as that from the *vivarium* to the arena, and several might be packed on a single waggon; many recent arrivals, however, would be sent down in their heavy travelling dens, two to a waggon, for these carnivora are the easiest to move. Bears require much stronger and heavier boxes; deer and bulls occupy cumbersome cases, and each elk, hippopotamus or rhinoceros makes a load very difficult to handle. We must consider, too, the great herds of tame cattle that were driven in for "padding"; and the delay when special "properties," such as growing trees, were taken down (to appear in all their freshness on the morrow as a forest), and it will be easy for us to picture the bustle and activity, the seeming confusion, that marked the night before the show, and made the purlieu of the Colosseum a rendezvous for the curious sightseer and therefore for people of ill-repute, who were a mine of wealth to tapsters and brothel-keepers. The work began at sundown and had to be finished before 6 a.m. when the animal shows commenced. They finished before midday, the afternoons were always devoted to the far more important gladiatorial combats—the amusement of the cultured classes.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SHOWS IN THE ARENA

IT would be a waste of time to repeat the account of "turns" described under the reign wherein each began. So, after I have discussed the important question of how animals who had done their "turns" were recaptured, my task will end with a full description of that lighter class of entertainment towards which there was an ever-growing tendency.

My readers have perhaps marvelled at the huge numbers of animals shown and slain—numbers much underestimated if we consider the vast majority of unrecorded exhibitions, but always too many for the occasion in question. In the words of Dio, "anyone who cared to record their number would find his task a burden, without being able in all probability to present the truth: for all such matters are regularly exaggerated in a spirit of boastfulness." He speaks of those slain.

Dio, XLII,
22, 4

Evidently many of the animals that entered the arena left it alive: the victor in a contest was not always killed; the lion in Statius (p. 79), for example, had many victories to his credit. Nor can one eliminate the difficulty by the mere statement that it was a tame lion. Such a beast—full of the blood lust—would be as dangerous for the moment as the savage creature fresh from the wilds, probably more so, from having no fear of the light and the shouting crowds.

A regular system of recapture must have existed; that it should have been in force is natural. Imagine a broiling August day in Rome—the crowded seats—the blood-soaked arena and

APPENDIX II

THE DATE OF CALPURNIUS

THIS is a battle of the dons, those of the seventeenth century believed him to have written under Carinus (A.D. 283) the modern for philological reasons place him in the reign of Nero.

On the evidence of the seventh eclogue I have no hesitation in placing him at the later date. The animals and the entertainment were altogether foreign to the usual shows of that ruler, and none of the former has received even a passing reference from writers of his time. Nero, we know, killed off hundreds of carnivora, even hazarded against them the Pretorian Guard—in this show all is peace. The single lion is dismissed in a single word and even that little is doubtful—the word may be a gloss: “Martichoram” (line 59). Martichora (Persian Mard-khora, man-eater), the fabulous beast described by Ctesias (400 B.C.), often spoken of, never before seen, this lion-like creature with a spiked tail, this eater of men, to appear in a show under Nero without a victim! The thing is unthinkable. But it would figure as a most appropriate gift to Aurelian from his friends at the Persian court. The other animals were worthy of any show at any time, but doubly wonderful in the time of Nero. The hippopotamus alone had appeared previously in Rome. Slowly one by one the others came before the Roman public, often much lauded, but no word of them occurs under Nero. The variable hares attracted Martial’s pen, the elk first appeared in the reign of Commodus. Pliny had heard of it, knew that its legs were stiff and that it had an elongated upper lip, but makes no mention of its broad distinctive antlers. It was a native of Scandinavia, he says, and had never been seen in Rome. Although his description is decisive, it is a difficulty that he calls it *achlis* (*Alces machlis*) and he has just described the *alces*, “elk,” as “similem iuvenco, ni proceritas aurium et cervicis distinguat.” The scientific term *Alces machlis* assumes that he is speaking of the same beast, perhaps at an earlier stage of growth, but this is doubtful. It may be added that Pausanias in the next century speaks as if he had not seen elk, although he had seen two-horned rhinoceroses and other rarities of Rome. There were also the gnu from Africa, the dwarf-zebu from Asia

Pausanias, IX,
21, 4, gives
Ctesias’ account
of this beast.

Pliny, VIII,
15(16), 39

Pausanias, IX,
21, 3

Minor, the bison and aurochs, none of which is mentioned by any writer on the Neronian shows. Nor do they find even a passing phrase for Rome’s unique marvel that no one could miss, nor, seeing, fail to praise.

THE POLAR BEAR

This animal may be deduced from the passage. “Nec solum nobis silvestria cernere monstra Contigit; æquoreos ego cum certantibus ursis Spectavi vitulos . . .” *Eclogue*, VII, 43-6

This is the only reference to bears associated with seals in the whole history of the entertainments and is in itself most valuable evidence that these were not ordinary bears, for bears had appeared in hundreds from early days, and seals were numerous on the coast of Italy. Bears do so well without baths that the provision of a tank for them in zoological gardens is exceptional, but the polar bears’ pool is always an attraction. The seal is their chief prey, and they stalk it cat-like on the ice or as stealthily from the water.

The bold *negotiator ursorum* (bear dealer) who picked up these treasures, possibly on the Baltic, would be aware of their habits; seals were easily obtained, and what better show could he suggest than a few seals in a large and ornate pool, as prey for the hungry bears? What a delightful study in varied natation, with the certainty of a noisy fight, and bloodshed when one brought its prey ashore!

No writer mentions them. Pliny did not so much as suspect the existence of the great white bear from the frozen north. He writes with knowledge and at length on bears in general, without a hint of one that swims: he knew their habit of hibernation, how they emerged from hidden caverns ill, unkempt and wasted in the spring, and passes on without comparing them with the fierce, thick-coated snow-white monarch that braved the fury of an Arctic winter. That thick snowy white pelt would have sold for fancy prices in the Capitol, but there is no record of it.

The polar bear remained unknown until the beginning of the third century, at the end of which, if our surmise be correct, it appeared in the Roman arena.

It seems to be mentioned by “Oppian,” a reliable authority, and his text introduces another animal still more wonderful, the walrus, which, so far as we know, never reached Rome alive.

φώκην δὲ βλοσυρὴν καὶ ἐπὶ χθονὶ χαιρήσασαι
ἄρκτοι πεφρίκται καὶ ἐς μόθον ἀντιώσασαι
δάμνανται

“Oppian,” *Ital.*
V, 38, 40
(Loeb
translation)

“Before the dread-eyed seal the maned bears on the land tremble and, when they meet them in battle, they are vanquished.”

Calpurnius is generally considered to have lived under Nero but this detailed explanation proves, I think, that he is antedated. The show came late in the history of Rome, the exact date is not material.