

## MISCELLANEOUS.

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### THE ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, CALCUTTA.

By B.

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As the Zoological Gardens in Calcutta have now advanced to a stage of preparation in which they well deserve a visit from the public, although they are yet far from complete, especially as to their stock of animals, we propose to give some brief account of them and their contents, so as to assist visitors in their wanderings through the gardens. But, as a preliminary warning, we beg to remind the intending visitor of the great size of the gardens, which will probably surprize him ; for the total area exceeds thirty-six acres, and the roads and footpaths are above three miles in length, and to get a satisfactory view of all the animals, birds, &c., now on the premises, it takes an hour and a half, as the writer of this article knows from experience in going round the gardens with friends. Therefore those who can afford it are advised to go round the gardens in their carriages, for which there is an extra payment of 1 rupee to non-members, whereas members can always go into the gardens in their carriages. We think that it would not be a bad speculation if some adventurous individual would set up bath-chairs and perambulators in the gardens, as is done in the London Zoo and in most foreign cities where there are zoological collections. There have been many days in the hot weather when a bath-chair would have been as welcome as a bath to the writer of this article.

To those, who go to the gardens to use the skating-rink and who care not for the animals, the only instruction needed is to turn to the left after entering the gate where payment is taken, and make their way southward to the Rink which they cannot fail to find. Moreover, as the payment of a rupee for the use of the Rink and the skates has to be made at the entrance-gate, the intelligent native who receives payment, may also be asked to point out the position of the Rink. We regret to say that the Rink (after the fashion of other Rinks) is not yet quite smooth and in perfect working order, but every day that it is in use it is likely to improve.

The Rink is, however, but a casual adjunct to the attractions of the gardens, as are also the boats which will be found on the ornamental water near the Restaurant, the way to which is indicated in many places by conspicuous placards erected by the able *entrepreneur* of the refreshment-rooms. But, leaving aside all these extra and casual attractions, let us turn to the real objects of our article which is to instruct the visitor how to see the Zoological Gardens.

Almost immediately in front of the gate of entrance and payment, there is a large circular building, with a pinnacle surmounted by a

weather-cock, to which the visitor should first direct his steps. This building contains some beautiful birds, such as gold and silver pheasants, the monal, pea-fowl and several specimens of the domestic breeds of English poultry. Many of these birds are a little troublesome, as they decline to shew themselves to visitors as much as they might do, but there is one silver pheasant in perfect beauty and plumage, who seems perfectly to know that he is the admired of all admirers.

Having walked round the building containing these birds, the visitor should strike off by the main road to the north of the entrance-gate, and after passing two or three small cages containing white Abyssinian rats, civet cats, &c., he will arrive at the small bear den, in which he will find a school of five young black bears, of which three are the common black bears of Bengal and two are hill-bears. The one with the worst temper is a recent arrival from Burmah. From this bear-pit, the path leads directly on to some brick-built dens which at present contain three handsome leopards, and adjoining these there are to be found two full-grown common Bengal black bears, of very morose and discontented character. These must not be mistaken for the two grand Himalayan black bears, which the visitor will find in a conspicuous den with a lofty thatched roof about fifty yards to the south. These Himalayan bears are magnificent animals presented by Lord Northbrook, which have long been the main stay and principal attraction of the gardens. We hope that the present Viceroy will try to eclipse the munificence of his predecessor by the presentation of some even more valuable animals.

But we must ask the visitor to turn back for a minute and look at the Carnivora House which is just approaching completion and was occupied this morning by one large Bengal tiger and one hyæna. We hope that, before this paper sees the light, three more full-grown tigers may find themselves in this building, and that, in the course of the cold weather, all the remaining dens may be worthily filled. The cost of this handsome and appropriate building, which was designed by Mr. Sills, C. E. has been nearly Rs. 40,000, and the very difficult work has been carried out by the Public Works Department with greater rapidity than any other public building of equal cost and dimensions hitherto erected by the Department in Bengal.

After leaving the Carnivora House the visitor should go on to the rhinoceros pit, which is unfortunately without a rhinoceros at present, but some fine fat hog-deer will be found in it. There are several rich native gentlemen each of whom owns rhinoceros, but for some unaccountable reason they cannot be induced to shew sufficient public spirit to make even a temporary loan of the animal to the gardens. When asked, they all make the same excuse, that the ladies of their family cannot part with it.

From the rhinoceros pit, it is but an easy step to the building which contains the Restaurant, where we would advise our visitor to stop and refresh himself, as he has not got half way round the garden yet. In the room adjoining the Restaurant there is to be an aquarium on a small scale for which the materials are being prepared by Messrs. Osler & Co., and Messrs. Mackintosh Burn & Co. Next to the aquarium there is an aviary full of some hundred birds of divers sorts from the lordly toucan or hornbill to the common mynah and volunteer sparrow, but time and space are wanting to give any-

thing like a list of all these feathered beauties. Beyond the aviary is a small room which is to be reserved for ladies and children, who wish to rest themselves during their peregrination of the gardens.

After quitting the above building, from which point of view the visitor may have admired the pelicans and the Muscovy ducks on the islands in the ornamental lake (and the pleasure-boats are also to be found and hired at this spot), he must cross a small wooden bridge over the ornamental water by a path which leads him to the band-stand where it is hoped that in a short time a band will be playing on one or more days during the week. South of the band-stand the visitor will find another ornamental fowl-house containing a good collection of partridges and some aquatic birds and several specimens of the beautiful Polyplectron pea-fowl. To the west of this house is a paddock containing neelghai, but they are about to be removed to another place where they will be better seen. To the south-west of the house is a paddock containing hog-deer, emus, and cranes of several sorts. Beyond them is the other pit where the insatiable "Peggy," brought from Scinde by Mr. Blandford still sits up and begs for fish from the visitors. Still going southward the visitor comes to a small enclosure labelled mouse-deer, but the keepers have a bad habit of keeping the paddock locked so as to exclude visitors from the sight of these beautiful creatures. Next, the visitor reaches a dwarf hut where he will find a man with one or more ourang-outangs on his lap, or on his shoulders. These ourang-outangs are alone well worth a visit to the gardens. Close to them are several boxes and perches with monkeys of different sorts, and under an adjacent tamarind tree will be found a large hexagonal house which until recently contained the hoolooks and some twenty other monkeys of sorts who dwell together in unity, but as we write, these monkeys are being transferred from this house to a new and much finer brick building near the entrance. The visitor pursuing his way will next come to a paddock containing some very fine sambur deer and one *bara singha* deer, and close to these comes a metna or gyal calf, and beyond them several antelope and gazelles. In the paddocks to the visitor's right hand (still going south) there are some of the most beautiful spotted deer that can be seen, but owing to the *gurran*-stick railing and the jungle, visitors seem seldom to notice these graceful creatures. With these spotted deer there are to be seen four fine *sarus* or crimson-headed cranes, which are nearly 5 feet in height, and with them there is a pair of the elegant demoiselle cranes.

The visitor should now make his way to an unpretending thatched building to his left, in which he will find a collection of small quadrupeds of a most varied and interesting character. There are porcupines of a very rare sort from China, and also the common Bengal porcupines. There is a sort of racoon-faced dog just imported from China by Captain Gardner of the *Hindoostan*, which is extremely rare and valuable. There is a quaint little Bengali hedgehog, a young leopard, two jackals, an Albino jackal, (since dead) a beautiful bay-cat, two exquisite Raffles squirrels, a tame English rabbit, guinea pigs, civet cats, a grave-digger, a red creature with a long snout called a kotamundi, but unfortunately minus his tail, an ant-eater, and two beautiful but ill-tempered fishing cats. All this happy family lives under one humble roof, but by necessity each creature lives in a separate apartment.

We must ask the visitor to turn again to the south, and if he will enter the old stable he will find a fine male kangaroo, and a flourishing young wallaby received from the Australian Acclimatization Society. Going still further on, he will find a black bear from China whose pedestrian powers, as he ceaselessly paces his den from morn to night, have acquired for him the name of Weston. Still further south, or in an adjoining cage, the visitor will find a tapir just imported from China by Captain Gardner, which is a very rare and valuable specimen.

The visitor must now turn northward, and he will pass a cage containing some specimens of rather fine, but gloomy eagles and owls. Next he comes to the Rink, and finally, especially if he has young people with him, he should go to the new monkey-house, a handsome red and white brick-building in which the hoolooks and many other sorts of interesting monkeys will be found. To those who are fond of watching the endless tricks and antics of monkeys, these creatures will afford unfailing amusement.

The reader will, we hope, be satisfied from this cursory description of the gardens that, instead of there being nothing to be seen, which complaint was recently made to the writer by a visitor whose liver was slightly deranged, there is so much to be seen that the writer has failed to give anything like a complete description of the gardens and their contents. If, however, this paper induces any one to go and see the gardens for himself, his object will have been fully gained. With the permission of the Editors of the *Magazine*, we hope to furnish them, for their next Number, with a list of all the animals, &c., with the names of the donors, and with a ground plan of the gardens.

As it is necessary to move the animals and birds occasionally, the above article cannot be strictly correct as to each particular creature, but it will serve as a general outline of the arrangements now existing.

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