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Wild Beast Shows in the North.

THE Corporation Accounts of Newcastle inform us how our forefathers were entertained at times at the expense of the public purse. The Mayor and his Brethren provided the people with occasional recreation. The rulers of Rome found it expedient to feed and amuse their subjects; and "Bread and the Circus" was a popular cry on the Tiber. We know not whether the burgesses of the Tyne called aloud for clowns and horse-riders; but in the month of October, 1562, the Common Council gave 6s. 8d. to the bearward of Lord Monteagle for a public exhibition of Bruin; in 1566, "a player for playing with his Hobie Horse in the Frithe before Mr. Mayor and his Brethren," had 3s. 4d.; and the sum of 10s. was "geven in rewarde by Mr. Maior," in 1576, "to him that had the Lyon." "Waits" and "players" were repeatedly remunerated out of the town purse. Travelling actors looked to the authorities for encouragement; and "shows" as well as theatres went from town to town. The sensation produced in the cathedral city on the Wear, in the year preceding the rebellion of the Earls, by the arrival of the Æthiopian Serpent, may be inferred from the fact that the event was made historical by the parish register! The parochial penman of the period has left a "memorandum" in the books of St. Nicholas, "that a certain Italian brought into the cittie of Durham, the 11th day of June, in the year above sayd (1568), a very great, strange, and monstrous serpent, in length sixteene feete, in quantitie and dimentions greater than a great horse; which was taken and killed by speciall pollicie in Æthiopia within the Turkes dominions. But before it was killed it had devoured (as it is credibly thought) more than 1,000 p'sons, and destroyed a whole country!"

It is more than probable that this rival of the Lambton Worm made its way in 1568 to Newcastle, where the Bear had been exhibited in 1560, and the Lion was shown in 1576. Wild beasts, not so abundant in those old days, travelled singly and alone. Locomotive menageries had not come into existence; and records of the earlier peregrinations of foreign animals are rare. There were no newspapers; and parish registrars, with the solitary exception of the Durham clerk, passed them by unnoticed. "When seen, make a note of," was not a proverb of bygone generations. But broadsheets came at last; and the late Mr. Hodgson Hinde, a diligent reader of old journals, gleaned from newspaper columns of the last century some particulars of wandering exhibitions, and founded upon his sheaf a paper for the *Archæologia Æliana*. The fruits of his researches are at our elbow; we cull from his pages what relates to Wild Beasts; and several extracts of our own, from the file of the *Newcastle Chronicle* and other sources, we add; with all which materials we move onward to the end of our article.

In the reign of George II., when collections of imported birds and beasts were on view throughout England, there was an exhibition in Newcastle. It came in the year 1732. "Amongst the Birds," says the graphic proprietor of the menagerie, "is the Grand Cassowar, having no tongue, and feeding on raw onions, carrots, and pebble stones. The next, having the appearance of a crown upon his head, is called the King of the Vavvovs. The third is the Cockatore from the Island of Zelone; the fourth a Macao or Bird of Paradise; the fifth a Vulture of tremendous size. Now as to the beasts. There is a Great Asian Tiger, a handsome Leopard, a large Panther, a beautiful Amongoos, a young Mountain Monster, a Pos-

some with a false belly where her young ones in danger retire from savage beasts; and a Civit Cat affording the choicest perfumes."

With the next menagerie, which appeared in 1734, came a Great Camel; and in 1847, the town was visited by a Rhinoceros. Newcastle had a visit in 1750 from an enterprising exhibitor, who had become the proprietor, not only of a Mummy and a Porpoise, but also of a Mermaid—"the two latter alive!" What creature it was—"a man or a fish"—that passed for a mermaid in the middle of the last century, the researches of the most patient local historian would hardly suffice to decide. Exhibitions of all kinds, Learned Dogs, Fire Eaters, &c., &c., became so frequent by the time the eighteenth century was passing its meridian, that Mr. Hodgson Hinde ceases to pursue the subject further. One or two extracts, however, we may give from the file of the *Newcastle Chronicle*.

In 1770, the Wild Beasts, "a noble collection of living extraordinary productions," were shown "at Mr. Dowson's, the Pack Horse, Foot of the Side." The voice of the showman is in our ears as we read the printed report of Twelfth Day in the above year:—"The magnanimous Lion is that surprising animal that got the Country Squire under him in the year 1766, when exhibited to the public in London, facing Temple Bar, and kept the Gentleman in that position near a quarter of an hour without doing him the least prejudice, as was mentioned in many of the London newspapers. The Royal Oriental Tiger is a most noble and beautiful creature, prodigious large, and his body variegated with a great number of ornamented stripes. The Leopard is likewise an extraordinary beautiful animal. The Panther strikes every spectator at the first view by the many embellished spots which adorn his body. The Hyena is false and voracious; the Wolf ravenous and savage. There is, besides the above, a number of very extraordinary living productions," which "will be for the inspection of the curious only a few days," and "then proceed for Sunderland."

Not till ten years afterwards (if we pass over, parenthetically, the Baiting of the Bull on the Town Moor in 1774,) do we read of the exhibition of any wild beasts in Newcastle. There was then, in the month of August, 1780, a Zebra on view at the Burnt House in the Side; and "a prodigy like this never made its appearance amongst us before."

The "Grand Cassowar" revisited Newcastle in the same year, "six feet high, and weighing above 200lbs." The place of exhibition was on that occasion the premises of Mr. Hayes, "opposite the Turk's Head in the Bigg Market." Ladies and gentlemen, 1s.; tradesmen, 6d. The proprietor, Mr. Pidcock, was also prepared to carry the rare bird to the house of any nobleman or gentleman, and show it for a guinea to not more than four-and-twenty persons: above that number, one shilling each. Lines "written extempore by a gentleman in Edinburgh" ac-

companied the Cassowar on its rounds. "On Arab's waste and Æthiop's burning sand," began the poet; and then, after expatiating on elephants and other monsters, he wound up with—

Yet each brute seen on this terraqueous ball,
The beauteous Cassowar exceeds them all!

It was on the 18th of November, 1780, that Pidcock issued his first advertisement. The following week, the flight of the migratory bird from the Bigg Market to the Sandhill was announced; with an intimation that it was to be seen for a week, "at Mrs. Bolton's, next door to the Half Moon," and would then cross the Tyne, and go south.

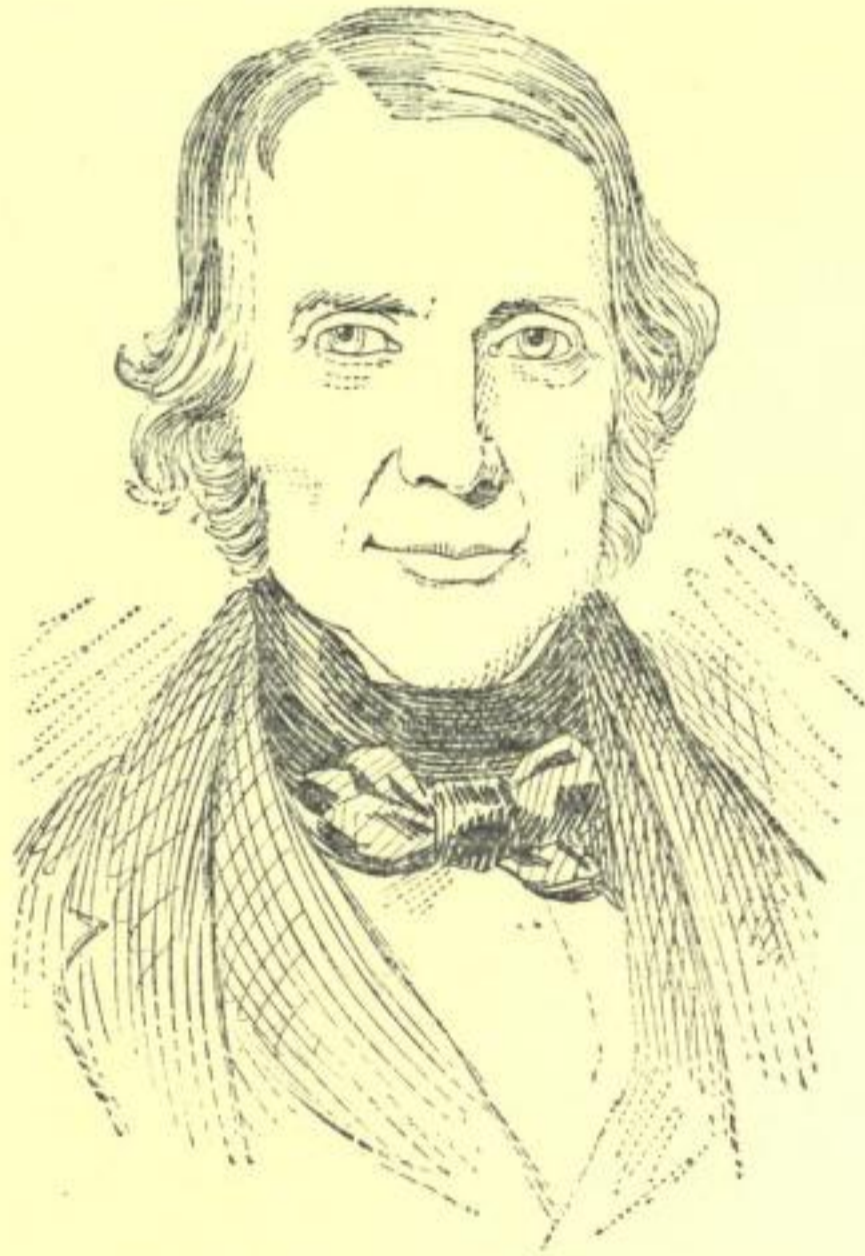
Before the century ran out, we meet with the first mention, so far as we know, of an elephant in Newcastle. Pidcock was at the White Cross with his menagerie in 1799, containing "a stupendous male elephant, the largest ever seen in Great Britain." Its intelligence was described as being in excess of the fancy of man to conceive. "The sagacity of this animal is absolutely beyond anything the human imagination can suggest." And proportionate, we may be sure, would be the wonder of the patrons of Pidcock.

Pollitoe and Wombwell came in the next century; but we halt at 1800. We have seen how a serpent was thought worthy of record in a parish register before the time of the Spanish Armada. Two hundred years later the unparalleled prodigy of a zebra, summoning the inhabitants of Newcastle to the Burnt House in the Side, won a paragraph from the local newspapers. Still later, the "Siamese Elephant, Miss D'Jeck," walked from Edinburgh to Newcastle. On her arrival, as may be read in Sykes, "she proceeded by Pilgrim and Mosley Street to the Theatre," which was then in the latter thoroughfare. "The stage door,"—(now, with the whole old theatre, gone)—"had been increased for her ingress," and on the 25th of August, 1830, she was "exhibiting her wonderful performances" in an arena over whose site Grey Street now runs. JAMES CLEPHAN (the late).

Wombwell's Menagerie.

George Wombwell was a native of Braintree, Essex, but in early life he went to London. When a boy, little George showed great fondness for keeping singing birds, pigeons, rabbits, dogs, and other pets. Much of his time was devoted to breeding and rearing them, and he made himself intimately acquainted with their natures, instincts, and habits. But the circumstance which led to his becoming the proprietor of a caravan of wild beasts was purely accidental. A shoemaker by trade, and keeping a shop in Compton Street, Soho, where he not only sold boots and shoes, but dealt in birds, he happened one day to pay a visit to the London Docks, when he saw one of the first boa constrictors ever imported into England. These reptiles had then no great

favour with showmen, as much from fear as ignorance of the art of managing them, and their marketable value was therefore not very great. They took Wombwell's fancy, and, after cogitating for a while, he ventured to offer seventy-five pounds for a pair. They were sold to him for that sum, and in the course of three weeks he realised considerably more by their exhibition, in Piccadilly, near St. James's Church—a circumstance which he always declared made him partial to the serpent tribe, as they had been the means of first opening his path to fame and fortune.



Mr. George Wombwell

Stimulated by the success thus achieved, he became a regular showman. At Bartlemy Fair, the most famous in England, at Glasgow Fair, the most famous in Scotland, and at Donnybrook Fair, the most famous in Ireland, Wombwell's Menagerie, if absent, would have been felt as a blighting blank. At the great suburban fairs of Camberwell, Croydon, and Greenwich, it was always a first rate attraction—crowded from morning till night. York, Darlington, Durham, Newcastle, Morpeth, Alnwick, and Berwick were on his regular route northwards to Scotland, where he was fully as great a favourite as in South Britain. There was not a provincial town of any note in the kingdom which had not a periodical visit. Wombwell so calculated his journeys as to be present at all the great horse races—Newmarket, Epsom, Ascot, Doncaster, Goodwood, &c., in England, as well as at Kelso, Musselburgh, Ayr, &c., in Scotland, and at the Curragh of Kildare, Limerick, Cork, &c., in Ireland. In order to compass this, he by and by divided his huge menagerie into three, each sufficiently

extensive to excite wonderment, and so he accomplished the feat of making himself, as it were, ubiquitous.

It is not on record when or where the unfortunate events happened, but it is known that George Wombwell's nephew, William Wombwell, was killed by an elephant, and that his niece, Miss Helen Blight, was fatally injured by a tigress.

Mr. Wombwell amassed a handsome independence, but could never be prevailed upon to retire to the enjoyment of ease and affluence. He died, as he had lived, in harness. His death took place at Northallerton, Yorkshire, in November, 1850, at the age of seventy-three years, and he was buried at Highgate Cemetery, London. It is stated that Wombwell left very singular directions with regard to his funeral. Amongst them was one that his coffin should be made, without nails, of a portion of the timber of the Royal George, which he had purchased about fourteen years previously, and had kept ever since for that purpose.



The menageries were continued by Mrs. Wombwell for some time after her husband's death. In 1866 she transferred the collection she travelled with to Mr. Alexander Fairgrieve, of Edinburgh, who had married Miss Blight, a niece of Mrs. Wombwell's. The Fairgieves travelled with the show for a few years, eventually, however, selling off the collection, and retiring to Edinburgh, where they still reside.

Another of the Wombwell shows was continued for many years by Mrs. Edmonds, niece of Mr. George Wombwell. Accustomed to travelling, she was loth to seek that retirement and rest due to advancing years, and, for some time, refused to take the advice of her friends and dispose of the collection. It was a long time before she could make up her mind; at last, however, she gave her consent for its disposal, the sale taking place in Liverpool, and realising several thousands of pounds.

Three collections are yet travelling under the name of Wombwell—one, that of James Edmonds, son of Mrs. Edmonds; another, that of Mrs. Bostock, a younger sister of Mrs. Edmonds; the third, that of Edward Bostock, son of Mrs. Bostock. All three have at various times visited the North of England.

Manders and Macomo.

Some twenty years ago, while Manders's menagerie was located at Sunderland, a scene of considerable alarm and excitement occurred at one of the exhibitions. Macomo, a native of Africa and a noted lion-tamer, was putting the animals through the customary performance, when Wallace—not to be confounded with another lion of the same name belonging to Mr. George Wombwell—suddenly became enraged and sprang at Macomo, pinning him against the side of the cage. The keepers immediately rushed to the rescue and succeeded in beating the animal off, but not before Macomo had been severely crushed and bitten. Wallace, which was bred in Mrs. Edmonds's menagerie, died at Warrington, in February, 1875, at the age of 12 or 13 years. The animal was afterwards stuffed by Mr. William Yellowly, of South Shields (to whom we are indebted for photographs of Mr. and Mrs. Wombwell), and is now in the Sunderland Museum. Some 18 or 19 years ago, when the menagerie again visited Sunderland, Macomo died at the Palatine Hotel of fever. Mr. Manders himself died about six months after Macomo, when his menagerie was dispersed.

A Revengeful Elephant.

Schopenhauer, the great German philosopher, discusses, in his "The World as Will and Idea," the question of the irrational intellect as manifested in brutes, as distinct from rational knowledge as manifested by man. The following passage is translated from that work:—

In the most favoured individuals of the highest species of the brutes there certainly sometimes appears, always to our astonishment, a faint trace of reflection, reason, the comprehension of words, of thought, purpose, and deliberation. The most striking indications of this kind are afforded by the elephant, whose highly developed intelligence is heightened and supported by an experience of a lifetime which sometimes extends to two hundred years. He has often given unmistakable signs, recorded in well-known anecdotes, of premeditation, which, in the case of brutes, always astonished us more than anything else. Such, for instance, is the story of the tailor on whom an elephant revenged himself for pricking him with a needle. I wish, however, to rescue from oblivion a parallel case to this, because it has the advantage of being authenticated by judicial investigation. On the 27th of August, 1830, there was held, at Morpeth, in England, a coroner's inquest on the keeper, Baptist Bernhard, who was killed by his elephant. It appeared from the evidence that two years before he had offended the elephant grossly, and now, without any occasion, but on a favourable opportunity, the elephant had seized him and had crushed him. (See the *Spectator* and other English papers of that day.)

This reference to an incident which took place so far away from the locality of the narrator, and so close to our own doors, has led us to investigate the matter. Turning to the files of the *Newcastle Chronicle* for 1830, under date September 4th, we find a full account of the unfortunate affair. There is a slight difference as to the name of the elephant's victim: in the one account he is called "Baptiste," and in the other "Baptist Bernhard." It is possible that the latter was his correct cognomen, and the former the name by which he was known to the public. The statements are, in other respects, identical. Here is the story as recorded in the *Newcastle Chronicle*:—

An inquest was held at Joseph Henderson's, Phoenix Inn, Morpeth, on the 27th ult., before Thomas Adams Russell, Esq., coroner, on view of the body of a man named — Baptiste, one of the attendants of the performing elephant belonging to M. Lewis Huguet. Baptiste, and three other attendants, had put the elephant into the coach-house of the inn, on the Tuesday evening preceding, when she appeared quite tractable and docile. On the Wednesday morning, between six and seven o'clock, he went into the coach-house to get something, as he was in the habit of attending upon the elephant. M. Huguet and Mr. Henderson, the landlord, were both present, and Mr. Henderson hearing M. Huguet call out, he looked round and saw Baptiste lying below the elephant, which held him with her proboscis. M. Huguet, the proprietor, immediately rushed in, and by means of a hooked iron instrument, used for the governance of the animal, he caught the elephant by the ear, turned her round, and dragged her down upon her knees. Henderson then rushed in and extricated Baptiste, who was much injured about the head, and had some of his ribs broken. Mr. Clark and Mr. Shute, surgeons, immediately attended, and Mr. McIntyre and his partner were sent expressly from Newcastle, by M. Huguet, who manifested the greatest solicitude for Baptiste, and spared no pains or expense for his recovery, but he died on the following morning. Baptiste was about 26 years of age, and belonged to the city of Venice. Verdict—Died from wounds and bruises received from the trunk of an elephant; deodand, 5s. Two of the attendants had slept with the elephant on the night preceding, as some of them were in the constant habit of doing, and they did not observe anything the matter with the animal. M. Huguet and Mr. Yates attended the inquest, and were greatly affected by the unfortunate and unexpected occurrence. M. H. stated that the elephant was about seven years of age, that she had travelled through all the principal cities and towns of France, Germany, Prussia, England, Ireland, and Scotland, &c.; that she was mild and tractable, and had never on any previous occasion injured any person in the slightest degree, or manifested any disposition to do so. It was also stated that, about four years ago, Baptiste had accidentally run a fork into the elephant's cheek, which she had never forgotten, and has been shy with him ever since.

A deodand was a fine imposed upon a personal chattel which was the immediate and accidental occasion of the death of a reasonable creature, and was, by the law of England, forfeited to the Crown, in order that it might be applied to pious purposes, or given to God, as the term implies. Blackstone asserts that deodands were "designed in the blind days of popery, as an expiation for the souls of such as were snatched away by sudden death; in the same manner as the apparel of a stranger who was found dead was applied to purchase masses for the good of his soul." The law of deodand was abolished by statute 9 and 10 Victoria, c. 62.