

THE LATE MR GEORGE WOMBWELL.

On Friday, Feb. 26, Mr George Wombwell, nephew of the founder of the famous travelling menagerie, passed away in his sleep at the house of his daughter, Mrs Valentine, Winchester-road, Lower Edmonton, in the ninety-first year of his age. The cause of death was returned at the inquest as senile decay and heart failure. This son of Zachary Wombwell, when about ten years old, was adopted by his uncle, and lived with the old gentleman till his death in 1850, when he had three menageries on the road. Of these one was bequeathed to his widow, and after her retirement it passed into the hands of the Fairgrieves, and was sold in Edinburgh in 1872; the second went to his niece, afterwards Mrs Edmonds, and is now represented by Mr E. H. Bostock's collection; and the third to his nephew, whose experiences as a showman on his own account were spread over about five years, as the following paragraph which appeared, under the heading "Wombwell's Menagerie," in the *Times* of April 30, 1855, will show

On Friday, April 27, the whole of the collection, vans, wild beasts, cages, and other effects, part of the once celebrated Wombwell's menagerie, and lately known as George Wombwell's Show, was sold by auction, and fetched a mere trifle. The sale took place at the Nova Scotia Gardens, Hackney, where last exhibited. The vans, five in number, nearly new, and in good order, fetched from £7 to £10 each, not the original price of the springs. The beasts were a jaguar, a leopard and leopardess, a nylgau, a hyena, a jackal, six monkeys, an alpine wolf, a racoon, baboon, civet cat, some birds, a Russian bear, two beautiful Esquimaux dogs, and, with the tilts, paintings harness, and usual paraphernalia, did not realise £200. The beasts, which were in very fine condition, scarcely found bidders. Bruin fetched £3. 15s., the monkeys, which were choice sorts, from 5s. to 10s., and two Esquimaux dogs 6s. and 4s. each.

On May 1 a letter to the editor, from "A Son-in-law of Mrs Wombwell" was printed, admitting the facts of the case, but pointing out that the paragraph was likely to convey the false impression that "the famed Wombwell's menagerie is extinct." It stated that the establishment was maintained in its integrity, and that the widow of the founder was then travelling

with it in Devonshire, and concluded with the remark that the sale alluded to "referred to a small menagerie latterly the property of a nephew of the late Mr Wombwell."

His unfortunate circumstances were attributed to heavy losses of menagerie stock from disease, and it is evident from the list given in the *Times* that the collection had dwindled down to something very small. From this blow he never recovered; all that is known of him is that he gained his living as a bandsman till he went to live with a married daughter at Lower Edmonton. Last October he was compelled to enter the Edmonton Infirmary, and when his circumstances were made known Mr E. H. Bostock guaranteed the poor old man 10s. a week for life, and as his case had attracted the notice of the Rev. T. Horne, the chaplain of the Showmen's Guild, there is reason to hope that his last days were passed in comparative comfort.

A good deal was written last autumn about the animals, more or less famous, which had lived in George Wombwell's menagerie. Amongst these was supposed to have been the gorilla exhibited as a black chimpanzee, the carcass of which passed into Waterton's possession and the portrait of which, drawn by Wolf from an early photograph, now hangs in the meeting-room of the Zoological Society. It is quite true that Mr George Wombwell had an anthropoid ape, which Waterton in his *Essays* (third series, p. 53) described, and the carcass of which he obtained. But the gorilla the subject of the picture was, beyond doubt, Jenny, which he saw in Scarborough in the autumn of 1855, and of which he wrote (*ib.* p. 65): "Her eyes are beautiful, but there is no white in them; and her ears are as small in proportion as those of a negress." Waterton, "through the courtesy of Mrs Wombwell and the kindness of Miss Blight," was enabled to pay four long visits to this "harmless and amusing young creature," which soon afterwards died, and he received the carcass at Walton Hall at the close of February, 1856. When Waterton saw the young gorilla Mr George Wombwell's collection had been dispersed for some months. Miss Blight became Mrs Fairgrieve, and Mr Alexander Fairgrieve lent A. D. Bartlett a daguerreotype portrait of the animal, which was exhibited by Dr Sclater at the scientific meeting of the Zoological Society on May 19, 1906. The skin was stuffed by Waterton, and on seeing it at Walton in 1861 Bartlett recognised it as a young gorilla.

American Bison Calf.—

The small herd of American bison in the Zoological Gardens, for which the society is indebted to its president, the Duke of Bedford, has just been increased by the birth of a calf, the first born there since 1891. The entries in

