

William T. Hornaday the Maker of Zoos

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WILLIAM T. HORNADAY knows more about wild animals than anybody else in America, and probably more than anybody else in the world.

The speaker pointed to a powerfully set, clear-eyed, bearded man who was superintending the removal of some wolves from one den to another at the New York Zoological park.

"Yes," continued the speaker, "he is the greatest wild animal man in this country. He knows the mind and the temper of tigers and wolves better than you or I know the mind and temper of our children. He has spent his life studying wild beasts in their native jungles, shooting them to get their skeletons for museums, collecting them alive, training them and writing about them. He has built up more zoos and zoological museums, I suppose, than any other living American."

William T. Hornaday is an example of the success which comes from lifelong devotion to a steady purpose. In boyhood he determined to know more about wild animals than other people; now he stands at the top of his profession. He is the director of the New York Zoological park, and he is known to zoologists all over the world.

He was born forty-nine years ago in what were then the backwoods of Indiana. "I belong to that rare and disappearing species known as the native American," he says, "and I was farm bred and farm reared. My father and brothers were keen sportsmen, good shots and ardent lovers of nature and I inherited the same tastes. I can't remember the time when I didn't love to be among wild animals. Fortunately, my boyhood was spent in places where animal life was abundant—in the forests of central Indiana and the prairies of Iowa. Those forests and prairies have since been eaten up by the march of civilization and one has to go farther afield to find wild life nowadays."

Mr. Hornaday was educated in Iowa colleges and there read Audubon and learned that it was possible to make a livelihood out of those practical natural history studies which he loved. On leaving college he went to an establishment which supplies museums and zoological gardens with their specimens and will even turn out an entire museum or zoological garden to order as calmly as a grocer sells a pound of butter. At this establishment Mr. Hornaday received a thorough practical training as a collecting naturalist and taxidermist preparatory to being sent "on the road," for the great animal dealers send out travelers all over the world to find all kinds of zoological specimens, from elephants to bats, just as manufacturing firms send out their drummers to hunt up trade.

Mr. Hornaday was sent to Florida to collect zoological specimens. He won his spurs there while still a beardless youth by discovering and sending up north the first specimen of the Florida crocodile which ever came out of the country. That crocodile is now one of the treasured possessions of the National Museum at Washington.

Mr. Hornaday, with a companion, tracked the crocodile to a creek running out of the Everglades. They hid in the early morning near the beast's home and, after waiting for hours, managed to get a shot at him. Mr. Hornaday sent a bullet through its eye, which, contrary to the general belief of hunters, did not kill it, but simply made it crazy. It had its strength left but could not see and did not know what to do. Wallowing in the blood-tinged water of the creek, champing its jaws and thrashing its tail in frantic impotency, the crocodile was a ghastly sight, but it clung to life so tenaciously that seven bullets had to be fired into its thick hide before it finally gave up the ghost.

Having begun to make his reputation by this Florida trip Mr. Hornaday was sent off to Cuba, where he hobnobbed with both the Spaniards and the Cubans during the insurrection of 1875, and then to South America. In 1876 he was sent to the East Indies on his greatest trip, to spend two years roaming at will through the jungles of India, Ceylon, the Malay Peninsula and Borneo.

It was on this trip that Mr. Hornaday made for himself a reputation among big game hunters. Few men have shot so many ferocious beasts as he did during those two years. Elephants, Indian bleon, tigers, leopards, crocodiles, orang-outangs, chimpanzees, gibbons and bears fell to his gun by the score, to say nothing of hundreds of antelopes, oxen deer, gazelles, monkeys and such like small fry. His bag of orang-outangs alone numbered forty-three.

During these two years he had adventures enough to provide material for half a dozen boys' books had he cared to write them. Many a time he narrowly escaped death from the wild beasts which he hunted. He lived on terms of intimacy with the headhunters of Borneo, and formed such a high opinion of their manners and morals that he now holds them up as the superiors of civilized man.

When he is asked which of his many exciting adventures during those two years he regards as being his "closest shave," Mr. Hornaday usually tells how he was



WILLIAM T. HORNADAY IN THE UNIFORM OF THE NEW YORK ZOO.

charged by a huge old female elephant in an Indian forest belonging to the rajah of Kulunyd.

While tramping through the jungle he came upon a herd of elephants which included this female and her smooth, shiny calf, about three feet high. "I never saw a more demure and cute animal than that absurd little elephant," said Hornaday, "and I fairly ached to steal up and grab hold of his trunk and have a tussel with him."

But he had to keep quiet because the rajah, who owned the forest, had only permitted him to shoot male elephants. Lying hidden in the dense undergrowth, he watched the herd for over half an hour. Presently the baby elephant wandered off and Mr. Hornaday tried to creep noiselessly through the jungle after it. But he was heard and before he could realize his peril, the branches which screened the herd parted suddenly and the huge old female was upon him.

It was a terrible moment and Mr. Hornaday always waxes eloquent in describing it.

"She had sufficient distance to get under full headway," he says, "and although my breath stopped and my heart stood still with sheer fright, I yet realized she was the grandest living object I ever saw—and the most terrible. Her head was held high and her trunk curled up under her mouth, to be uncoiled when within reach of me, I suppose. Her ears seemed to stand out straight from her head with the tips curled forward and the strides of her massive legs were enormous.

"Luckily she came on in dead silence, or I should have been frightened out of my wits. As it was, I felt as if I was going to be run over by a locomotive. I knew it was useless folly to run, for in a few strides she would have been upon me.

"When I saw her coming I stood up quickly and faced her, threw my gun up to my shoulder and fired both barrels at the base of her coiled-up trunk, in the direction of the brain. She was within fifteen paces of me when I fired, but the thundering report, the smoke and two zinc balls crashing into her skull close to her brain stopped her charge. She sheered off suddenly and rushed into the forest, trumpeting shrilly once or twice. Directly, there was a grand crash and a rush in the thicket as the herd broke away and started off, and that was the last we saw or cared to see of it.

"Then I had time to reflect on what might have been had my caps failed to explode or my powder been damp.

"Once, when walking on a railway track in a snowstorm, I was very nearly run over by a locomotive coming down a grade in muffled silence, and my sensations then were precisely the same as when that old female elephant came charging down that grassy slope. The approach of the powerful machine and the living monster seemed exactly alike."

lowed her bloody trail, and came suddenly within twenty feet of her before they knew it.

"She saw us first," Mr. Hornaday said. "She wheeled around and came charging at us, dragging her hindquarters after her. Her jaws were wide set and her eyes glistened fiercely, while her angry growls told us that she was desperate and meant mischief. My beater shouted a warning and then vanished, but I stood still until she got within ten feet of me, and then fired at the center of a yellow crescent on her breast. That shot finished her."

When on the sea coast of Selangore, East Indies, Mr. Hornaday did a new "stunt" as a fisherman, which gained for him some local reputation. With a hook and line he caught a crocodile twelve feet long and weighing 415 pounds. Needless to say, it was not an ordinary hook and line. The hook was a piece of tough green wood, ten inches long and sharpened at both ends, so affixed to the line that it would be swallowed point foremost, but at the slightest tug would fix itself crosswise in the crocodile's interior. The line was made of tough green bark, which could defy even a crocodile's sharp teeth, and the bait was the body of a sting ray.

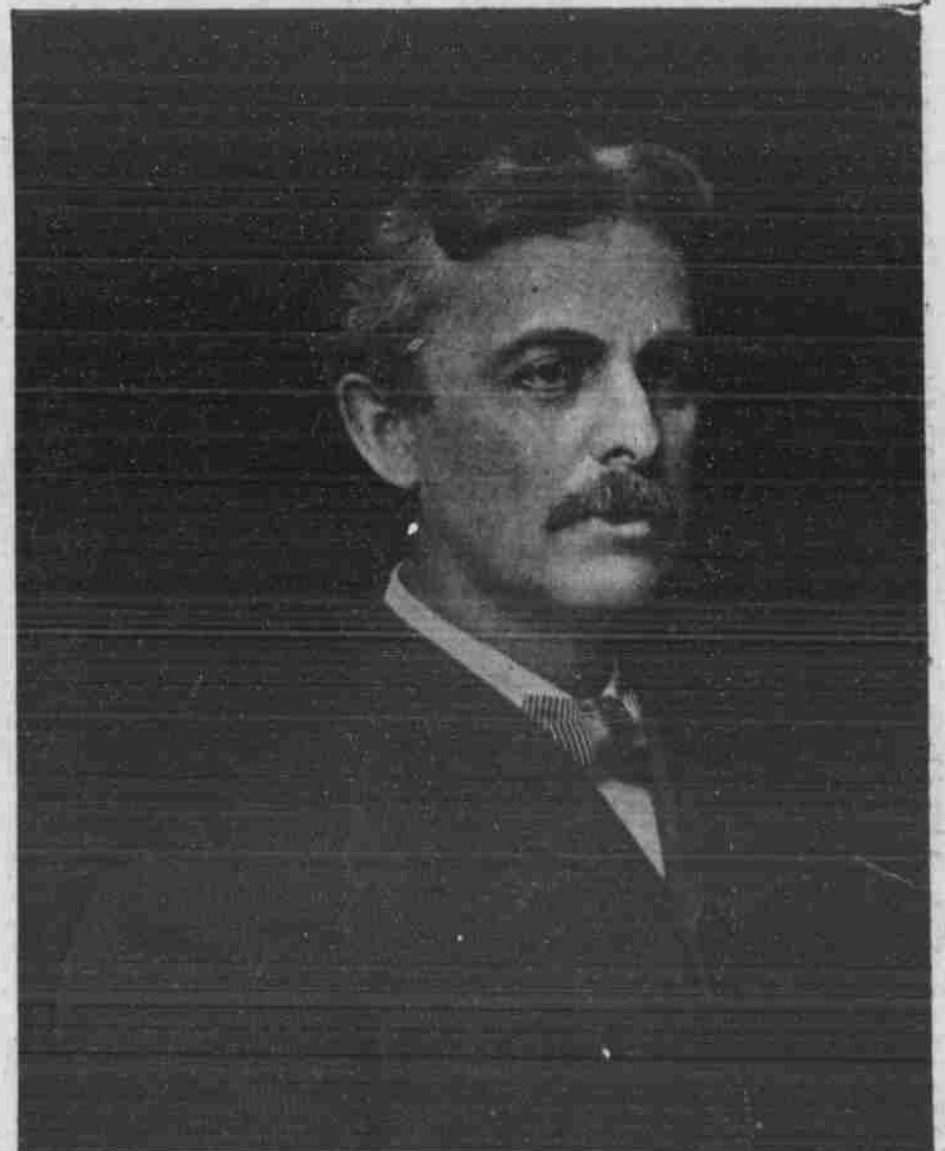
Naturally there was trouble when the crocodile found himself hooked. He rushed to and fro in the narrow, muddy creek in which he had been caught, plunged violently, thrashing the water into huge waves, and nearly upset the small canoe from which Mr. Hornaday was fishing. The creek was alive with other crocodiles, and the fisherman would have had but a small chance of life had he been overturned into it. Luckily, he was not. Presently the crocodile gave up the fight and suffered himself to be dragged towards shore by a number of willing natives. He tried in vain to escape by diving, until at last a well-aimed bullet cut his spinal marrow and ended his sufferings. Few fishermen have ever made a bigger catch.

But it is not as a hunter of big game that Mr. Hornaday is chiefly known. As a trainer of wild animals, and a writer on animal subjects, he is a recognized expert.

"No, we don't have much serious trouble with the animals," he replied, the other day, to an inquiry put to him at the Bronx zoo of New York. "They rarely, or never, escape. There has only been one bad accident from an escaped animal at this institution.

"Do you see these two fingers?" indicating the third finger and little finger of his left hand. "They are as useless to me as if they were amputated. An escaped bear bit through them. That is one of the unpleasant little things liable to happen to a man in my line of work."

Mr. Hornaday thinks nothing of going into a tiger's cage to inquire about the poor beast's toothache, or in the den of a lioness to see if she is treating her cubs properly. He is a man of iron nerve and indomitable will. There is not an animal among the thousands under his charge which does not on occasion recognize his mastery.



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