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## LIFE AMONG THE ANIMALS

### Zoo Curator Talks About His Job

**H**OLDING an interesting position in Wellington is a man who has been, among other things, accountant, snake-farmer and broadcaster. He has hunted big game, now he looks after them; he dropped the dull routine of ledgers, went abroad to study veterinary science, and returned to become curator of the Wellington Zoo. He is C. J. Cutler. Visitors to the zoo sometimes see him strolling about. But they do not recognise in him a man who has to be veterinarian diagnostician, bacteriologist, dietician, and sometimes surgeon. Here is his story.

When he was nine he took an interest in horses—a purely altruistic interest. Living near the Ellerslie racecourse he concerned himself with horse ailments, and with animals in a private zoo not far from his home. There he met another boy who had developed a passable lion-taming act. For it, however, he had to have an assistant, so young Cutler volunteered. Only once. His part of the turn was to sit under a stool while a lion hurdled it.

#### Call of the Wild

Though he became a qualified accountant at 18, he preferred the open spaces so, scraping up enough money, he went to the United States to study veterinary science and zoology. In Mexico and California he hunted pumas and coyotes, not with rifle but movie camera. Killing, he says, is not a bit interesting. He got together an interesting private collection of films—30 or 40, each about 400 feet long—of animals in their natural haunts. He worked in zoos in California, Australia and Singapore and, while in California, broadcast regularly in the veterinary session over KFI Los Angeles. He has been at the Wellington Zoo for the last seven years.

It was natural to ask Mr. Cutler if zoo keepers used any special knack in dealing with wild animals. He answered this simply. Either a man can handle beasts or he can't. For some time he worked on a snake farm in Brazil. Of the large staff only a few could handle such amiable little things as Russell's viper, and other poisonous specimens, with impunity, but he found it easy to induce the snake to discharge its poison into the traditional champagne glass. Others had to stage a sort of wrestling match and take extraordinary precautions against being bitten. He had the lucky knack.

#### Hold That Tiger!

As far as animals were concerned, he told us, it was largely a matter of approach. Some keepers can pat a tiger or hold a tiger cub; others dare not go near them. Animals soon get to know the timbre of a man's voice.

This prompted a question as to whether animals could understand what man said: No. He was sure they could not. But they could certainly tell whether a man was patient or impatient, in a good temper or a bad one. He quoted



**This is what he  
dreamed about**

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