



a manual put out by an Indian publishing house, which purported to teach would-be trainers the "elephant language." It was pure nonsense. Indian keepers, to impress onlookers, indulged in a spate of gibberish and claimed that the elephant understood it.

"But," said Mr. Cutler, "I knew a man employed at the Sydney Zoo who listened carefully to an Indian's queer home-made words and simply copied his voice pitch or intonation. He could not pronounce a word the Indian used, but he got the same obedience from the animal."

"How do you appoint men as keepers?"

"Thinking of joining us? No? We simply give them a try-out on a temporary basis and see how the animals take to them—in a purely aesthetic sense, of course. If they are suitable they become permanent members of the staff."

Animal Fads

Some of Wellington's zoo animals are temperamental. The female sun bear will not touch her meals until she has had a quarter-of-an-hour's wrestling fun with her keeper. And one brown bear declined to take a bite until he was joined in his pit by his pet rabbit—for company's sake. Now he has a mate of suitable age and temperament. Keepers soon get to know their charges' likes and dislikes. There is a fifteen-months-old tiger cub which has the greatest regard for a certain keeper. But he can't feed her; the man on the regular run in her section must do that.

Something brought the conversation back to snakes. There are good reasons why New Zealand should have none—they breed very freely and would become a menace to native life. Their importation is absolutely prohibited. No doubt they would dispose of rats and mice, but they would probably attack birds as well. Mr. Cutler was sure, though, that they could be safely kept in a zoo and confessed that he would like to be able to offer such an interesting exhibit to the public. Incidentally, Wellington Zoo has the only camel in the Dominion and when that dies it will be the end of the species here.

The animal death-rate in Wellington is the second or third lowest in the



C. J. CUTLER at his microscope and (at top) the tiger-cub which is temperamental at meal-times

world and Mr. Cutler is proud of that. Including the birds, which some zoos omit from the published statistics, it is about 2¼ per cent. The lowest rate in the world is at San Diego—2.15 per cent. Some even quite reputable zoos rise to 12 per cent., mainly because they go in for rare types of animals, which are perhaps too far from their natural conditions. At Wellington an aquarium for tropical fish has been established as a sideline.

"Could a severe earthquake have a double danger at the zoo?"

The answer will calm the fears of householders near by who, imagining a tremor and seeing an opossum in the vegetable garden, conclude the worst. It is an emphatic No. The iron bars of the cages are sunk deeply in concrete and it would take a terrific shake to do any damage to a cage.

We asked Mr. Cutler if he had had any experience of circus menageries. He smiled. He explained that a zoo curator and his staff looked on a circus outfit in the way an opera singer regards the vaudeville stage. Zoo men are specialists.

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