

ZOOLOGY

Zoo Turned Loose in City Would Not be So Dangerous

WHAT would happen if a zoo's entire collection of several thousand wild animals were suddenly set free in the midst of a metropolitan city?

Except for the hysterical frenzy of the population when the news became current, nothing much would happen, says Edmund Heller, director of the Milwaukee Washington Park Zoo.

The great man-eating tigers and lions would be the first to make for the bushes and trees. Unless they were cornered, they would probably not attack human beings, declared Mr. Heller. Even wild lions, he explained, have to be run down by hunters on horseback before they will give battle. Lions which have been in a zoo are certainly even more cautious.

If they were annoyed or cornered, of course, they would be the most dangerous of adversaries, Mr. Heller says, but the instinct of caution, without which they would have long ago been exterminated, would prevent them from seeking out as prey a creature whose killing power they have long had good reason to fear. The beasts always prefer escape and hiding to combat.

The fact that the animals have become accustomed to being fed by their keepers, according to the zoo director, would make it improbable that they would seek out any living prey for food. Those animals raised from infancy in the zoo would be almost too stupid for this, and would be more likely to wander around until they found a butcher shop.

If the time of the year were October or November, suggested Mr. Heller, the buck deer and buffalo might very well be dangerous. That time of the year is their breeding season, and they will look for and gore a member of their own species. Failing in finding one, they may attack and kill even their own keeper, not to speak of a bystander. At other times they will eat out of the keeper's hand.

Male elephants also are dangerous during the breeding season, and are chained down during that time. They kill from sheer affection, Mr. Heller asserted. That is why circuses no longer carry male elephants.

But the rest of the animals would be

quite harmless. This is not an absolute guarantee, however, Mr. Heller emphasized, since animals, like people, are subject to moods and the most peaceful of them may attack and kill, seemingly without provocation, due to some internal stimulus.

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PSYCHOLOGY

Mental Tests Given to Primitive African Children

THE EXPERIENCE of giving mental tests to 50 Sousous children, primitive West-African Negro youngsters in the isolated all-native village of Koba, French Guinea, was described to the New York Branch of the American Psychological Association, in a report by Drs. Elaine F. Kinder, psychologist of New York, Solomon Machover, of Bellevue Psychiatric Hospital and Henry W. Nissen, of Yale University.

The tests were given with the aid of an interpreter who had been previously trained in the technique. All sorts of difficulties were encountered, but chief amongst them was that the children, although apparently of normal brightness, simply could not comprehend what they were to do with many of the tests. These children have had very little contact with the culture of modern civilization, and the experimenters conclude that this isolation accounts for the fact that they did well on some tests, but could not even attempt others. None of the tests used were dependent upon the use of language.

In order to arrive at some sort of estimate of intelligence quotient, or the children's "brightness for their age," it was necessary to guess at the chronological age of the youngsters. No records were kept by the tribe, and although the tribal chief and the parents were questioned, they could not help much. Consequently, a combined estimate by the examiner, the interpreter, and a white mechanic attached to the laboratory was used.

The difference between the scores made by these primitive children and Negro children in the United States is to be accounted for by the vast differences between the life and culture of America and of Africa, the investigators conclude. This is confirmed by the fact that the test quotients of the younger children were consistently higher than those of the older ones.

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CHEMISTRY

New Anesthetic Made From Natural Gas Compounds

CYCLOPROPANE, a gaseous anesthetic which is becoming popular in some hospitals because its use is not followed by nausea and also because it is relatively safe from explosion, has been prepared cheaply from certain constituents of natural gas, by three Purdue University chemists, Dr. H. B. Hass, E. T. McBee, and G. E. Hinds. At the meeting of the American Chemical Society they reported on the process by which they have lowered its cost to a fraction of what it used to be.

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Seeds of the kapok, a relative of the cotton plant, are expected to gain in use as stock feed, since the toxic principle of cotton seed is not present in kapok seed.



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