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My Animal Friendships

The Adventures of Timmy the Rat, Chuey the Cheetah, Robin Parker the Mongoose, Mr. Penguin, Jane the Elephant, and Mrs. Spider

Told by

CHERRY KEARTON

AUTHOR OF

"MY HAPPY CHIMPANZEE"

"MY HAPPY FAMILY," "MY DOG SIMBA"

"MY FRIEND TOTO," ETC., ETC.

WITH 20 PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR



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My Animal Friendships

INTRODUCTION

IN two of my books I have described a young friend of mine named Peter Turner, who was also a friend of Mary the Chimpanzee and of Tommy the Terrier. In this book Peter—much to his disappointment—will not appear, chiefly because many of these stories belong to the days when he was a baby; nevertheless, Peter must be mentioned in this Introduction because he is responsible for my writing the book.

“I say, Uncle Cherry,” he said to me one day, “I do wish you ’d write about a lot more of your animals. You see, lots of people think you can do all sorts of things with chimpanzees because they are so jolly like *us* and so frightfully clever,

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but that you couldn't do them with anything else. *I* know that you've made friends with elephants and spiders and cheetahs and things, only it's jolly difficult to get chaps to believe it. Last term I told the fellows at school about that rat that used to come and knock on your door to call you in the morning, and they all thought I was sprucing. But if you told those stories yourself . . .”

There is quite a lot in what Peter says. I've no doubt that many people do think that apes are altogether apart from the rest of the animal kingdom in intelligence, and that while it seems quite possible that Mary, my chimpanzee, could have called me to dinner when she was told to do so, it would seem incredible that an elephant should do the same sort of thing, or that a spider could so clearly distinguish between two people that it would come out to play with one and remain underground at the approach of the other.

Yet not only are these things possible, but they have actually happened.

It is all a matter of friendship, and friendship

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between a man—or a woman—and animals is a much easier thing than many people imagine. Anyone can achieve it—provided that the attempt is made in the right way. Animals vary in intelligence according to their species, but all have a marvellous intuition in distinguishing friends from enemies. The simplest example of this, of course, is that almost every animal, when called, can tell at once whether it is going to be petted or scolded. We have most of us seen a cat enter a room containing five or six people, rub its back against the legs of some and entirely ignore others; and invariably it is found that the people whom the cat ignores are those who do not like animals, or at any rate do not like cats.

If you want to make friends with animals, you must in the first place realise that they are your fellow-creatures, and that though you have been given dominion over them you must not abuse your power: you must not lock them into small cages, teach them tricks by pain and hunger,

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or keep them for your own amusement regardless of their comfort and happiness. You have not only to avoid actual cruelty, you have definitely to consider the animals' comfort, just as you would consider that of your guests. They are much more your guests than your prisoners, and you have no right either to deprive them of all independence or to make them unhappy.

If you approach the matter in this way, and if you use infinite care, patience and friendly thought, it is quite possible to learn to understand an animal's thoughts and also to enable the animal to read your thoughts. It is possible to exchange ideas with an animal, to give it a sense of your comradeship, to invite and receive its confidences. Not only can this be done with the more intelligent animals, but it is possible with all animals, with birds and even with insects. The stories in this book will show how animals respond to overtures of friendship, and what a wonderful thing is the friendship that an animal can give in return.

INTRODUCTION

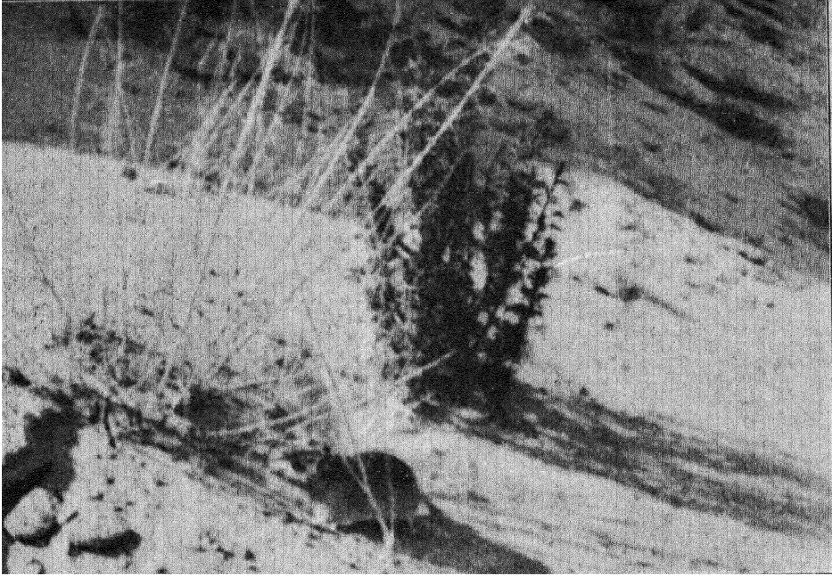
To make the matter clear from the beginning, I will start with the story of the rat which induced several incredulous small boys to accuse young Peter Turner of “sprucing.”

CHAPTER ONE

THE VANITY OF TIMMY THE RAT

IN homes which they have burrowed for themselves in the sand of the Algerian deserts, live many small animals : lizards, long-tailed jerboas with kangaroo-like legs, and rats. The rats suffer less than the others from shyness, and often they can be seen at the entrance of their burrows, nibbling at some morsel of food dropped from a passing caravan, and looking out on the world.

That was how I first saw Timmy. He was smaller than an English rat, light brown in colour, and with a rather chubby, jolly expression which appealed to me from the first. I don't quite know why, but the moment I saw him I thought of the white rabbit in *Alice in Wonderland* : I suppose it was because of the way that he looked at me and then sat up and stroked his whiskers.



That was how I first saw Timmy

THE VANITY OF TIMMY THE RAT

I had no idea at that moment that Timmy and I would ever have more than a bowing acquaintance ; but just after I had passed the burrow, two Arab boys came running after me with the little rat in their hands. They had caught him, they said, and they explained at great length how clever they had been about it. For one franc, they declared, he could be mine ; and, thinking that at any rate the little creature would be better off in my hands than in theirs, I concluded the deal.

Having my camera and several other things to carry, I put him into my pocket and then forgot all about him. But when I got back to camp and felt for my tobacco pouch, I remembered.

The sudden change in his surroundings didn't seem to have upset him at all : indeed, he had gone snugly to sleep in my pocket. I took him out and set him on the ground at my feet, wondering whether he would at once run off to search for his home or start making a new one.

But not a bit of it. House-hunting was a minor

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consideration, for, as I very soon realised, the one matter that came before all others with Timmy was his personal appearance. He was a vain little creature and tremendously proud—not, I must admit, without good reason—of his whiskers. They had got ruffled in my pocket, or he thought they had, and almost before he was fully awake he was sitting up and carefully stroking them with his paw, first on one side and then on the other, till the curl went out of the tip of them and they achieved their full length of an inch from either cheek.

Then he looked up at me, and of course I paid him the compliment he expected.

“Very nice,” I said. “In twenty years of travelling I have never met a rat with such beautiful whiskers.”

And immediately he decided that I was the right sort of person, knowing a good whisker when I saw one. Instead of looking for a lodging he clambered up my left leg, hesitated a moment as the light caught the buckle of my belt, and then

THE VANITY OF TIMMY THE RAT

continued his way up till he could perch on my shoulder. Again he attended to his whiskers and then he sat up and sniffed into my ear, commiserating with me, I suppose, on the unhappy fact that my moustache was of the kind that drooped.

Really, Timmy was a delightful companion, and I soon came to regard him as the best value for fourpence that I had ever obtained. As long as we remained in Algeria, he adopted my right-hand side-pocket as his especial home, and there he would lie, whether I rode or walked and also when I laid my clothes beside me at night.

When the time came for me to go back to England, I did not want to be parted from little Timmy, and eventually I decided that he should accompany me.

He managed the journey very comfortably, staying all the time in my pocket, and only having one adventure. That was at Marseilles, while I was going through the Customs. When my luggage was being examined, I happened to put my hand

MY ANIMAL FRIENDSHIPS

into my pocket, and as Timmy was awake I began to stroke him. A French Customs officer saw my hand go into my pocket, and through the cloth he could trace the stealthy movements of my fingers. It was his nature and business to be suspicious, and I suppose he thought that I was trying to conceal some dutiable article in the lining. He followed me to the railway station, and there insisted that I should show him what was in my pocket. I laughed at that : I couldn't help laughing, but I am afraid my merriment rather annoyed him. He told me at great length and with some vehemence that I had no chance of escape, and that to insult him and the uniform of France would only make matters worse for me. So I stopped laughing, and suggested that he should put a hand carefully into my pocket. He did ; and his face as he drew out Timmy, holding him by one leg and the tail, was a beautiful thing to see. Fortunately I managed to catch Timmy as he was indignantly dropped a moment later, so no harm was done.

When we arrived at my house in Surrey,

THE VANITY OF TIMMY THE RAT

Timmy seemed to realise that his travels were over, and that at last he could safely see about finding for himself a permanent residence. There 's a good deal of difference between the temperatures of Algeria and London, and Timmy liked warmth. Hot sand remained his ideal abode, but as that didn't seem to be available he wandered through my house until he discovered the pipe that led through the drying cupboard to the hot-water tap in the bathroom. I discovered him lying close to this, very snug and comfortable but apparently finding the floor-boards a trifle hard. So I cut a piece of material from an old camel-hair dressing-gown and watched to see what he would do with it. He took it at once to the bathroom, tore it into small pieces, and heaped these round the hot-water pipe with a little cleared space in the middle. Then he was happy, with a nice little room of his own, complete with central heating.

There he slept at night, in great comfort, all the months he stayed with me. But he wasn't lazy, and he liked to run about and enjoy himself during

MY ANIMAL FRIENDSHIPS

the day. Often I would take him with me when I went into the City. He travelled then in his favourite pocket, and more than once I noticed a look first of surprise and then of alarm on the face of my immediate neighbour when Timmy wriggled or shifted his position in the crowded omnibus. Of course, the bus wouldn't long have remained crowded if Timmy had come out to explore !

At dinner time he would sit on the table beside my plate, waiting eagerly for a chance to get a share of my green vegetables. These attracted him more than anything else, and often I had difficulty in preventing him from helping himself.

Sometimes I would play a game with him. I would get a saucer of treacle, and when I saw Timmy creeping forward to nibble at the vegetables I would dip a spoon into the treacle and hold it so that a sticky drop came on to his beautiful whiskers ! Then he would sit back, his dinner and everything of that sort quite forgotten in his anxiety to get the whiskers clean again. His front paws would

THE VANITY OF TIMMY THE RAT

busily stroke the fine whiskers, while with his hind leg he would beat a tattoo on the table to express his annoyance. He used to pretend to be *very* annoyed over this, but really I was doing him a good turn, and he knew it, for I gave him an additional opportunity to titivate, and that always filled him with pride and satisfaction. But of course, while a joke was a joke and could be taken in good part, it mustn't go too far; and if I again took hold of the treacle spoon, Timmy would at once draw back and, with a very long tattoo of quick, short beats, he would tell me that that sort of thing really couldn't be allowed.

Our real games, however, were in the evening. I would set him down on the rug before the fire and give him the evening newspaper. He never hesitated for an instant about what to do with it: there was only one game to be played, and that would keep us both amused for hours. (What a lot of trouble and even tears would be saved if children knew as definitely what they wanted to play at as Timmy did!) He would tear the

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newspaper into bits about the size of postage stamps, holding it with his paws and tearing with his teeth. Then he would scrape all the little pieces of paper together and heap them up into a pile, and begin to burrow a hole in one side of it. After a few moments he would completely disappear inside the little paper pyramid. Then, when he was hidden, I would sharply clap my hands, and at the sound he would leap through the top of the pile, about a foot into the air !

After that, of course, whiskers and personal appearance would have to be attended to, but as soon as all was straight he would once again form the paper pyramid and hide inside it till I gave the signal for the upward leap. Perhaps he had been used to playing a game of somewhat the same sort in his Algerian home : burrowing into the sand and then suddenly leaping through the surface. But here he was not merely amusing himself, but playing with me ; for he would never jump till I clapped my hands, however long I might keep him waiting. It was an example of

THE VANITY OF TIMMY THE RAT

the wonderful way in which animals fit themselves into friendship with mankind.

I have said that Timmy wasn't a sluggard, and certainly he didn't like being left to sleep late in the morning. When the sun shone in at the bathroom window, he would come away from the hot-water pipe and out of his little nest—which at the coming of winter had been considerably enlarged and improved with the aid of a handkerchief and a neck-tie stolen from my dressing-room—and run along the passage to my bedroom door. Then he would sit back on his hind legs and give a little rat-tat-tat against the woodwork to rouse me. The noise wasn't very loud, and if I was asleep he would sometimes have to go on steadily for five minutes or more before I got out of bed.

Then, at last, I would open the door and Timmy would come hopping into the room. He would sniff at my toes as if to say "Good morning!" and then creep into my bed and snuggle down.

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Very nice, of course! No one would mind getting up in the morning if it only meant moving from one bed to another. But eventually the time would come when another minute's delay meant lateness for breakfast; and then I would pick Timmy up and take him back to the bathroom.

“Time to dress, old chap,” I would say, and while I got out my shaving tackle, Timmy would sit up, wash his little face, and give his beautiful whiskers their morning comb.

CHAPTER TWO

CHUEY, THE FROLICSOME CHEETAH

DURING one of my journeys through Africa I took charge of a friend's house during his absence; and not merely of his house, but also of his estate and its occupants. It was rather a big undertaking, for, in addition to a number of native servants, there were two dogs, a young hyena, a lynx and a cheetah!

It might have been rather a task for me to keep all these animals entertained and happy, but fortunately I had with me an invaluable assistant—my chimpanzee, Toto, some of whose adventures I have described elsewhere.*

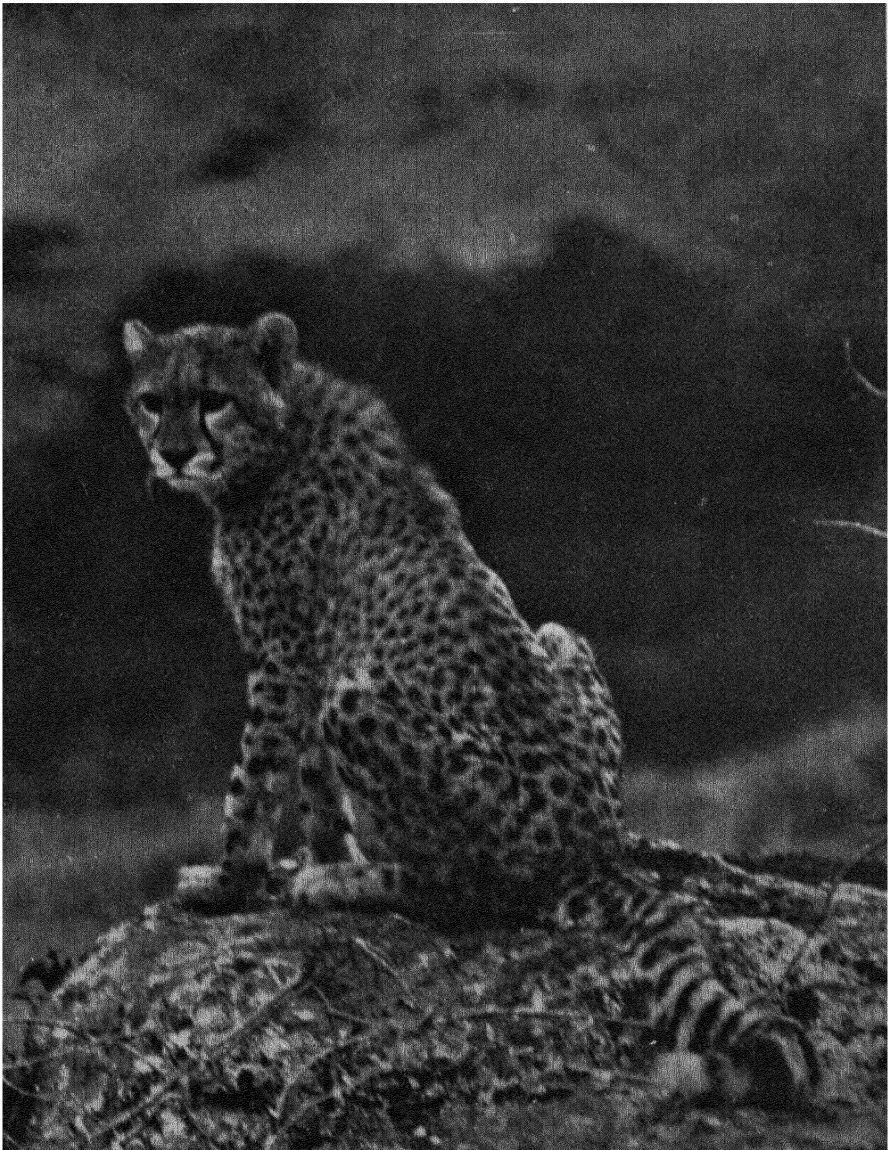
I began the first morning by trying to make friends with the cheetah, a beautiful creature whose name was Chuey. My friend was himself

* See *My Friend Toto*.

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a lover of animals, and he knew how to treat them. He hadn't, of course, the mistaken impression common to so many people that a cheetah is a particularly dangerous animal, like his relative the leopard, who is easily roused to attack a man. Cheetahs are docile beasts, and the restraint that has to be put upon them in a garden is not so much for the safety of men as for the protection of themselves: if they were allowed to wander at will they would go into open country where some passing sportsman would find them easy prey.

My friend had met this difficulty by an ingenious arrangement which gave Chuey the maximum of liberty while at the same time keeping him under control when no one was about to see that he did not get into mischief. A wire about sixty feet long was pegged at either end to the ground between two trees; on this wire was slipped a ring, and to the ring was attached a twelve-foot chain fastened to the cheetah's collar. As Chuey moved, the ring slid along the wire,



A beautiful creature whose name was Chuey

CHUEY, THE FROLICSOME CHEETAH

so that he could roam at will, even while secured, over a piece of ground some sixty feet long by twenty-four feet wide. And in the heat of the day he could lie in the shade of one or other of the trees.

When I went to make his acquaintance he was lying, half-asleep, under the nearer tree, but at the sight of me, a stranger, he got up and growled. As I approached he retreated, and I knew better than to press unwanted attentions on him, or for that matter on any animal. Instead, I sat down on the ground, close to the wire, so that he could take stock of me at his leisure and realise that, after all, I was really quite harmless.

I sat on the ground near him for three mornings before he got over his shyness. Then, as he no longer growled at the sight of me, I came closer ; and on the fifth day I put out a hand and gently stroked his head, to be rewarded with an answering purr.

The next thing, now that I had got on to friendly terms with him, was to introduce Toto.

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But Chuey thought that quite a different matter, and he went at once to the far end of his chain and bared his teeth.

That meant that I had to begin my overtures all over again, with a good deal of patience, bringing Toto to sit beside me on the ground, and gradually coming closer. Another four days passed, and then Chuey accepted the friendship of us both ; and not only accepted it, but welcomed it, asking us to come and play with him. The games that these two animals from the African forest played together in that garden were amazing. Of course, they would never have shared their games in the days when Toto swung in the tree-tops and Chuey roamed on the ground seeking his dinner : but here they frolicked just like two children.

My friend had said that there was no need to keep Chuey on his chain when I was with him, provided that he learnt to come when I called ; and this he very soon did. Then for several hours each day Chuey was given his liberty, and he was even allowed to come into the house.



Chuey and Toto played together just like two children

CHUEY, THE FROLICSOME CHEETAH

Toto, too, I knew I could trust, and consequently I was often able to sit with the cheetah like a living hearthrug at my feet, while Toto sat on a stool. I liked those times, but the two animals soon got bored. Then Chuey would get up and turn towards the door. Toto would follow, and the two would go out together, through an open window and into the garden. Chuey would lead the way into some high grass and call for a game of hide and seek. The grass grew long enough to cover the cheetah's back, so that all Toto could see of him was the tuft of white hairs at the tip of his tail. Even to see this he would have to stand up, and then he would plunge through the grass, only to find that Chuey had moved. Then he would take another look, and off he would go again.

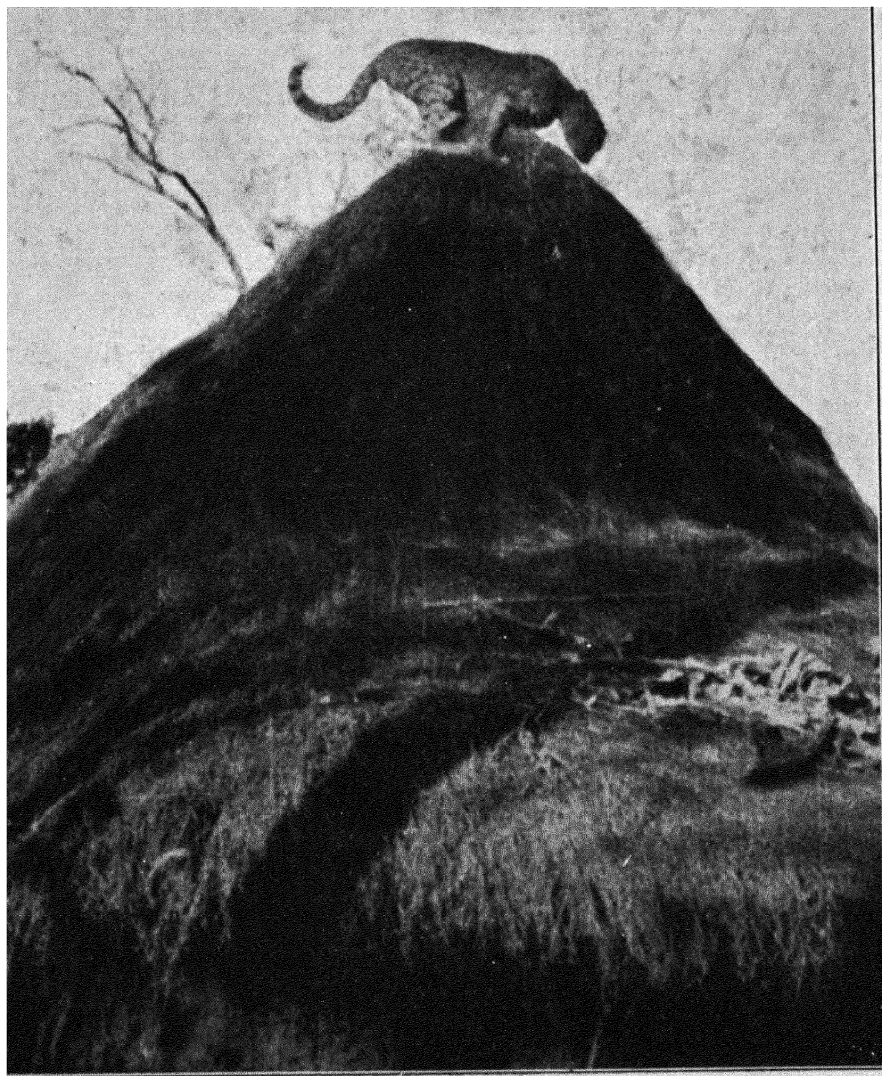
After a while the sides would be changed, and Chuey would turn and try to catch Toto; and then the game would become a general scrimmage, each animal trying to surprise the other. Sometimes Toto would tear down a branch

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from a tree and hold it in front of him, thinking, I suppose, that it hid him; but it didn't, for quite a lot of chimpanzee showed between the branches and beyond them.

This game would last for hours until both were exhausted, when they would join me beside a spring in a little valley and take much-needed refreshment.

The natives found this friendship very hard to understand. Once when Chuey was very excited during a game he suddenly raced across the grass to a native hut and, in one leap, sprang on to its roof. Then he began to pull at the grass thatch as if he meant to destroy it. Not unnaturally, the native inside took to his heels till he reached a safe distance; and by the time he turned to look back Toto had joined Chuey on the roof, and the two were cheerfully engaged in a wrestling match. The bout was good to watch and quite exciting, but the native, even apart from anxiety about his home, didn't seem to understand it. Cheetahs he knew, and chimpanzees he knew,



Chuey sprang on to the roof of a native hut

CHUEY, THE FROLICSOME CHEETAH

but for these two wild creatures to play like brothers was beyond his comprehension.

We didn't, of course, spend the whole day playing with Chuey. Other friends claimed our attention. Toto had games with the two dogs and both games and fights with the hyena, whom he rather delighted to tease. Sometimes I fed the hyena in an outhouse, and then Toto would creep up and try to steal the meal—not because he wanted it himself, but out of sheer mischief. The hyena, of course, objected. One day Toto trotted off to the kitchen and returned with a broom. Then he stood in front of the hyena and pushed the head of the broom into his face. Of course the hyena turned aside—and when he looked back again, the dinner was gone!

That was a good ruse the first time it was played; but Toto, very pleased with himself for having thought of it, tried it again, and wasn't so successful, because the hyena fought the broom, knocked off its head, and held on to his meal while Toto chased him with the stick.

MY ANIMAL FRIENDSHIPS

But that sort of scrimmage was only when 'Toto was in a particularly mischievous mood ; at other times these two animals played happy games in the garden, Toto's chief delight being to ride proudly on the hyena's back.

I expected to have a good deal of trouble with the lynx, because it is often supposed that this beautiful grey cat is untamable. The lynx was kept in the yard, on a chain, and I imagine it would have been considered the action of a madman to release him. But then I have spent a good deal of my life in taking chains off animals.

I decided that homely surroundings might have a softening influence on the lynx's temperament, and therefore I led him indoors, sat down comfortably, slipped off the chain, and began very softly to make a noise that was half purr, half croon.

The lynx didn't fly at me. He walked round the room, making himself at home, and then stood at my feet and looked up at my face. I looked back at him, and went on purring . . .



The lynx was like a great cat

CHUEY, THE FROLICSOME CHEETAH

Well, that really is all. I told the story to my friend when he returned, and he listened eagerly, imagining, I suppose, that I was leading up to some exciting tale of how the lynx attacked me and I fought my way to freedom with my bare hands. That certainly didn't happen. Perhaps by good fortune I really did succeed in speaking the lynx language; or perhaps the lynx liked me because he saw that I wasn't afraid of him. In any case, he began to purr in reply, and then he sprang on to my knee, lay like a great cat, and let me stroke his head. And after that, of course, I never had any trouble with him, and often he would lie sleeping at my feet in the evenings.

All this time Toto, playing alternately with the cheetah and the hyena or the two dogs, was learning a great deal about wrestling and hiding and dodging. He was learning strategy, and it stood him in good stead on more than one occasion. Once he found a piece of skin and brought it into the garden, daring Chuey to come and take it from him. Chuey was willing enough to have a

MY ANIMAL FRIENDSHIPS

try, but unfortunately he was on his chain. He ran to and fro, while Toto, tantalisingly waving the skin, kept just out of reach. So then Chuey stopped and began jumping about. Toto, a little uncertain as to whether or not a new game was beginning, dropped the skin and came forward. Then—one sudden bound, and Chuey had the skin in his teeth.

That trick may not have been quite fair, but Toto didn't mind. He thought that he'd soon get the skin back, and so no doubt he would have done, since he was free while the cheetah was chained, had not I decided, in the interests of sport, to set Chuey free.

Then began a game that lasted for an hour, and I very much doubt whether either Chuey or Toto, happy as they were, enjoyed playing it more than I enjoyed watching it. The chimpanzee obviously said to himself: "All right, if you are going to use tricks, so am I," and the dodges the little chap tried, one after the other, were too funny for words. But whatever he did, he



Toto had games with the dogs

CHUEY, THE FROLICSOME CHEETAH

couldn't distract Chuey's attention from the skin.

So at last Toto became very artful indeed. He pretended to get tired. He let his interest in the game slacken off, apparently, and then he lay down as if he hadn't the energy to go on playing. Chuey came towards him and lay down two yards away, with the skin between his paws, telling Toto, no doubt, that he was a "slacker." Toto rolled on to his back, looking thoroughly bored. *He* didn't want to play any more for a silly bit of skin! Of course not! Much better fun to lie down and rest, and roll on the grass. Much better fun —

And then suddenly, with a quick movement, he rolled over and over towards Chuey, grasped the skin with a long arm and made off with it!

Chuey, of course, was after him in a minute, but this time Toto meant to keep what he had won. He ran for the trees. First he came to thorn bushes, but cheetahs can climb them, so he went on. Then he reached a taller tree, and

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in a second he was high among its branches, looking down and waving the skin tauntingly. It was his victory, that time, and Chuey gave up the struggle.

When evening came, Chuey would go quietly to his chain and wait for the clasp to be fastened. He was a contented, affectionate creature, and since the chain was long enough to cause him no discomfort he did not object to it. I would fasten it and pat him on the head.

Then in the morning I would go out before breakfast to say "Good morning," and as often as not Toto would accompany me. One morning, directly I reached the garden, I stopped short, staring at the place where Chuey should have been awaiting me. He was nowhere to be seen. Going closer, I found that the chain had been broken close to the runner that moved along the wire: I suppose something or somebody must have given him a bad scare in the night, so that he became frantic and broke the chain in his struggles. But I had no idea where he had gone.

CHUEY, THE FROLICSOME CHEETAH

Of course, I immediately organised a search, for I was afraid lest he should have leapt the low fence that bounded the estate and gone out where he might be shot in the open country. All that day we hunted without result. On the second morning I saw Toto setting off with one of the dogs, and at first I imagined that they were starting one of their usual games. Then I saw that instead of running excitedly after one another, as they usually did, they were moving forward, just like two scouts, the dog with his nose to the ground and Toto standing up every few yards to look around.

Feeling rather hopeless by now of my chance of ever seeing Chuey again, I thought it worth while to follow the animals' lead, and I went after them, right across the estate and along one slope of a valley that was thick with long grass. Suddenly I saw Toto jumping excitedly up and down, and, hurrying to the spot, I found poor Chuey, with the chain which he had dragged behind him for thirty hours firmly caught in a tree stump.

Poor creature! It was a joy to set him free,

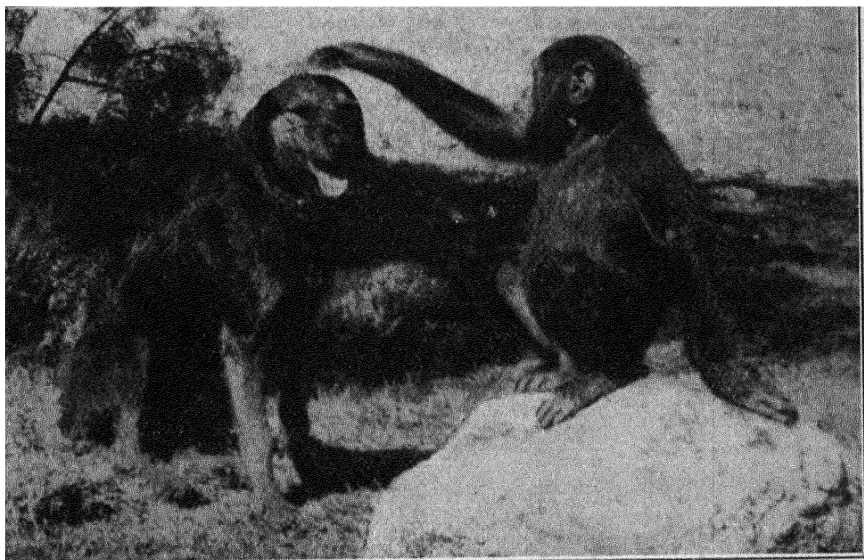
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and a still greater joy to see the delight with which the thirsty animal lapped up the water which we quickly brought him.

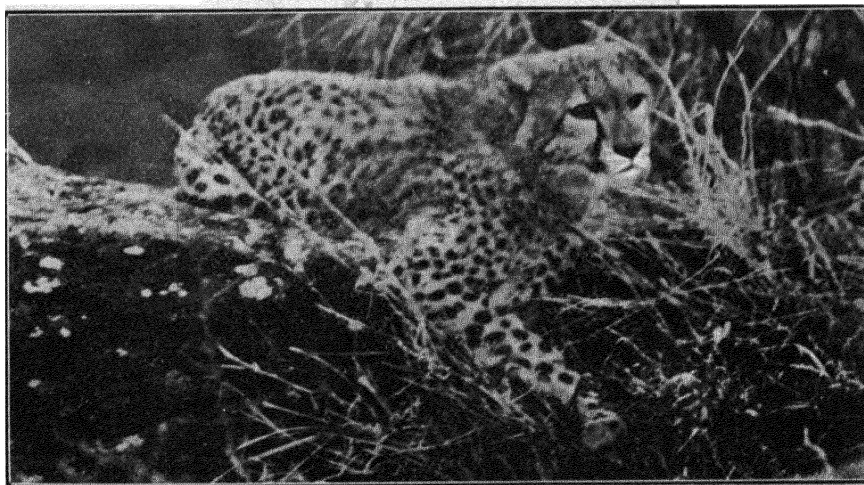
Not long after this adventure I had to return to England. Toto said farewell to his friends the dogs. I stroked the lynx, took Toto for a last romp with the hyena, and then went to say "Good bye" to Chuey. But somehow I couldn't bring myself to a farewell. Chuey was happy, gambolling around and calling to Toto for a game. I felt—and I think I am right—that he would have understood if I had tried to say "Good bye" and that it was kinder to leave that unsaid. So he and Toto had their last game, and then, patting Chuey's head and leaving him purring, I walked away, imagining, of course, that I should never see him again.

But there I was wrong.

Life had many adventures for him after that, and during the next twelve months he moved from place to place over Africa, learning, I trust, to love the several masters into whose hands he fell.



Toto said farewell to the dogs



I left him purring

CHUEY, THE FROLICSOME CHEETAH

It was more than a year later that I went one day to the London Zoo to see a chimpanzee named Sally who, after some months in my garden, was there receiving a temporary lodging. A keeper took me along the narrow passage between the cages of various animals, past lions sleeping off the effect of their dinners, the puma, soft footed and purring, the wild cats and the cheetahs. I was talking to the keeper as he walked ahead of me, when suddenly I saw a cheetah in the cage on my left scramble to his feet and come to the bars. He was quivering with excitement, grunting and rubbing his nose against the side of the cage. I looked down at him and knew him at once. "Chuey!" I cried; and of course I spent the next half hour in his cage, stroking his head while he purred his delight.

CHAPTER THREE

THE INQUISITIVE MONGOOSE

IT takes two to make a friendship, just as much as a quarrel; and this is true of friendships between men and animals as well as of those between human beings. If you take the trouble to understand an animal, you will find that you are not only learning natural history, but you are also achieving a wider understanding and a better state of feeling towards life in general; for is not understanding and love of *all* your fellow-creatures the basis of Christianity, of ethics, of all that makes life worth while? "Go to the ant . . ." There is a great deal that animals can teach you.

It is because of that that I am hopeful that this book will induce some people to enlarge their outlook on the keeping of animals. There is

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no better friend than a dog, and most homes are made more homely by the presence of a cat. But why should one's relations with animals stop there? If your surroundings — and your neighbours! — permit, keep a baby bear, a chimpanzee, a small monkey, or a squirrel.

The number of such animals kept in English gardens is daily increasing, although many people who have no proper reason for such an idea still imagine that the keeping of a pet of that kind would involve far too much trouble.

Well, if you want to keep and study an interesting wild animal, and yet run no real risk of being overwhelmed with trouble and work, keep a mongoose. There are few creatures that make such good companions and yet are so easy to keep, for the mongoose has few fads in the matter of food (and indeed could support himself if necessary on what he would find in an average garden), is not too particular where he sleeps, and is very easily made happy, provided that he has a fair amount of ground to run about in. And

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once you have shown that you mean well by him, he will soon settle down as one of your family.

The mongoose that I kept for some years I originally called "Parker," because of his unbridled curiosity. He always wanted to explore, and as my garden was full of bushes and boulders, little valleys and trees, he had plenty of scope for his hobby. But we didn't always call him Parker, because when we felt particularly affectionate towards him (as indeed we often did) that, being a surname, seemed a trifle formal; and then we added a Christian name and called him Robin. Most of our animals have more than one name: Tommy, the fox-terrier, has two others in fairly general use. But our friend Robin Parker is known to readers of one of my other books,* who may also be reading this one; and therefore, to avoid confusion, he will here be called by his Christian name alone.

When he first arrived, we put him down in the

* See *My Happy Family*.

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large studio which stands by itself just in front of the house, and which was the home of Mary the chimpanzee, Tommy, and, from time to time, various other animals. In one corner of the studio was standing a heavy pile of wooden poles and planks ; and the mongoose, being rather uncertain for the moment of his new surroundings, at once ran there for shelter.

He was very shy and rather frightened, and although at first I could see his little nose and his beady eyes in the space between two of the poles, he retreated as I approached, and finally he appeared to decide that it was safest to stay in his second line of defence, somewhere right at the back of the wood-stack. I called to him, clicked my fingers enticingly, and at last set down a tempting plate of food. But nothing would induce him to come into the open.

To have pulled down the stack of planks would have been a good deal more than one man's work, and eventually, after a day of ineffectual efforts, I had to leave him. But before I went I

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placed a meal a foot beyond the foremost plank. I was hopeful that he would get over his shyness in the night, so that I might find him playing in the studio when I returned.

But in the morning, although the plate was empty, there was still no sign of the shy mongoose.

He did not appear all that day, and when, the next morning, I again found an empty plate, I began to wonder whether the food I had so carefully prepared was nourishing only the rats and mice, while the mongoose had crept away through some hole under the wall and then had escaped through the garden into open country.

However, on the fourth morning I got to the studio rather earlier than usual, and to my delight I surprised the mongoose in the act of clearing the last crumb of his breakfast. I stopped at once, so as not to startle or frighten him, and as he was at heart a very friendly little fellow, he did not run away but stood quietly watching me.

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That moment, I knew, would be the turning-point between friendship and continued shyness. If he was convinced that he had nothing to fear, we should get on well together. So, resisting the temptation to go closer, I sat down on the floor and returned his stare.

After a while I began to make little friendly noises and to scratch on the floor with my fingernail. He did not seem disturbed. Indeed, after ten minutes he looked down at his plate, noticed a spot on it that was not licked clean and, in front of me, set to work on it.

Then I knew that he had accepted me, and was prepared to make friends.

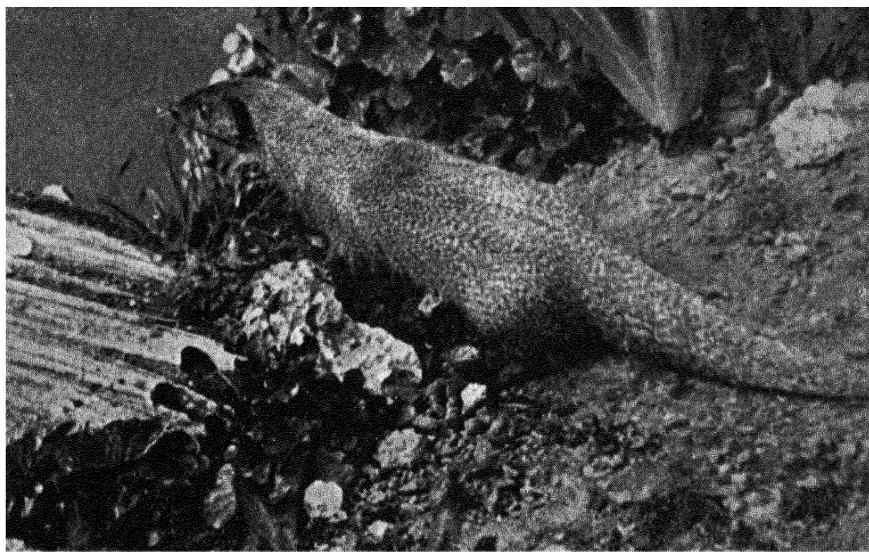
To cement the bond I took from my pocket my pipe, which I had been in the act of filling when I entered the studio, and put it on the ground in front of me. He looked at it and up at me. Then his curiosity got the better of him, and, creeping up to the pipe, he began to pull the tobacco out of the bowl.

Robin never could resist the temptation to

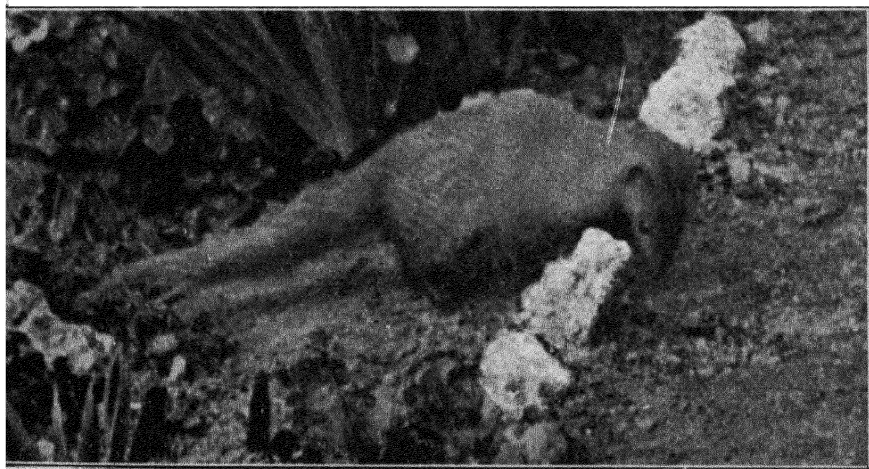
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empty things. Once he found the gardener's coat; in a very few minutes he had pulled everything out of the pockets and all the tobacco out of the pouch. Curiosity was always his weakness and, as I shall shortly relate, it led him into a great deal of trouble, although it certainly also brought him much enjoyment.

He won his name "Parker" directly he left the studio. As soon as we felt that he had grasped that my wife and I were his friends, and that he had come to a new and not objectionable home, we opened the door of the studio and let him run out to see the delights of the garden. He ran to the doorway, stopped and looked out. Quite a lot of exciting things were within his view: a thrilling bed of Michaelmas daisies, a heap of stones where slugs would lurk for a certainty, and in the distance another flower-bed and a stretch of lawn—just the place for a rat-hunt. So off he went on what was no doubt intended as a voyage of exploration, although it wasn't that for long. Exploring the distance



He ran out to see the delights of the garden



The very first stone attracted his attention

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could wait : there was so much to do near at hand.

The very first stone attracted his attention, and he walked all round it, sniffing excitedly. Then he put his little paw into a crevice and drew out a slug.

That early success, of course, put an end for that day to the craze for exploring : what mongoose would trouble about exploration when there were obvious chances of successful hunting? He had just finished a very good dinner, but that didn't matter. It was the chase he loved, and off he went to the daisies, alert for possible rats or mice.

Fond as he was of putting his little nose into places where it had no business to go, there was nothing that ever appealed to him so much as hunting. However much food I might provide, he always preferred what he had caught. Slugs were his principle quarry, but he hunted rats and mice whenever he got a chance and he was extremely partial to frogs—or rather to the heads of frogs.

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Rats and mice didn't often escape when he started on their trail; but he was beaten every time when he stalked a water-rat. There were many of these, living in the banks of the lake, and they would often sit on the bank to nibble at blades of grass, see Robin in the distance and be seen by him, and then turn and dive for home.

I could almost hear Robin saying then: "Ah ha! A rat!" and off he would go, full of confidence every time, at top speed; and then the rat, which he had thought to be like any other rat, an easy victim, would disappear into the lake, leaving Robin unable to follow, absolutely dumbfounded, and not a little annoyed. This sort of thing would happen two or three times every week, but after a year of it Robin was just as much surprised and just as much put out as he was the first time. "Hang it all," he seemed to be saying, "a rat is a rat, and it ought to behave like one!"

Sometimes he would try to catch butterflies—another difficult prey, though not so impossible as the water-rats. That was usually in the sloping

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field adjoining my garden, where the grass grew long enough to cover his body. The grass rather confused him, for he couldn't see where he was going, and every few feet he had to make a little jump into the air for a hasty look forward before he came to ground again. Then, having seen a butterfly hovering some yards in front, he would creep in that direction till he thought he was near enough for a spring, when up he went, striking out at where he imagined the butterfly would be with his paw, in the rather fruitless hope of crippling it. Of course, the butterfly by that time had generally moved on to a tempting poppy some yards distant; but even if it hadn't, its chances of escaping from Robin's blind jump and thrust would have been considerable—and of that I was glad, for though as a gardener I rejoiced in the successful onslaught on slugs, I could not so happily spare the butterflies, which make the country joyous.

Strange to say, the sparrows never interested Robin. He would lie down on the wooden verandah,

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where the sparrows and a tame robin came to feed, and he would snooze quietly within six feet of them. Nor did he bother about the moorhens, who used to swim to the bank and cluck at him cheekily, as if daring him to come and see if they were not even more difficult to catch than water-rats. He was not with me in the days of Mr. Penguin, and perhaps that was as well, for he had the freedom of the garden, and it would have been impossible to stop him from raiding Mr. Penguin's apartment if he had wanted to do so.

His lack of interest in the sparrows and his namesake the robin always surprised me, for the mongoose in his wild state lives partly on small birds as well as on snakes, mice and rats. Perhaps he thought them too easy a prey to be worth bothering about ; or perhaps he couldn't bring himself to take advantage of their innocence, and so destroy their faith in him.

Fortunately, too, he did not raid the chicken-runs of my neighbours. Once he was accused of this, but it was so much against his general

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habits that I daringly put him into the run with three chickens to prove my point ; and he bore me out by leaving them to their own devices while he paid attention to a rat-hole. And yet, of all the delicacies which we gave him and which he found for himself, there was nothing that pleased him so much as the raw neck-bones of a chicken !

Robin's daily round, of course, was by no means all work and hunting. On getting up in the morning, my first duty was to go across the garden to the studio to take breakfast to Mary the chimpanzee. She was ready enough for it, and so was Tommy the terrier for his, and for the run that followed ; but Robin was never in any hurry, because this was one of the times when he was allowed to share in our family life.

As soon as I opened the studio door, he would give my hand a little sniff by way of greeting and then run out, across the lawn, up the steps to the verandah, into the house (I used to leave the door open specially for him), up the stairs and

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into the bedroom. There, like a child greeting his mother in the morning, he would climb into my wife's bed and snuggle under the bedclothes.

There he would stay, very warm and comfortable and happy, till I returned. Then I would say : " Now then, Robin, come along," and turn him out.

Every morning, when this happened, he would sit up on the bed and swear at me ; and then he would go obediently down to the dining-room. Half an hour later we would find him there, sitting before the fire in the winter or under the grand piano in summer, and he would look up at me and seem to be saying : " Oh, yes, you can turn me out of the bed because you are bigger than I am ; but I don't care. I've found a much better place down here."

Robin loved to sit in front of the fire in winter, especially when he had got wet in the rain outside. Then he would come in and take the central position on the hearth-rug, sitting upright with his two little paws outstretched sideways, till

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the front of him was dry and comfortable, and then turning round in the same attitude to dry his back, propping himself up with his long bushy tail.

Coming as he did from Africa, he very much appreciated warmth, and when he was cold and there wasn't a fire he would nose his way under an old coat or a rug. But of all nestling places, the one he preferred was inside my wife's coat while she was wearing it. He would climb in at the front and work his way round till he could lie across the small of her back, with his head on one hip and his hind toes on the other, and his long tail somewhere in front.

His tail, as his photographs show, was normally long and narrow; but when he became excited, hunting or playing, it would spread out till it was about four inches in diameter.

When we sat down to breakfast he would climb on to my knee. We would give him a saucer of milk or a bowl of bread-and-milk, sometimes an egg—he preferred them raw—and on very special

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occasions the chicken-neck which I have already mentioned. He was good at breakfast-time, as a rule, and also when, together with Mary, he would join us at tea ; but when his appetite got the better of his manners, his sin was usually stealing other people's eggs or helping himself to butter. Often he would sit so quietly that we almost forgot he was present ; and then, if no one seemed to be looking, a little arm would come tentatively forward towards the butter dish, and, if still no notice was taken, a greasy paw would go up, a minute later, to be licked. (Of course, this was very, very wrong ; but on more than one occasion my wife caught my eye, signalled what was happening, and then, by mutual agreement, we fussed over coffee-pots and bacon dishes till the crime was finished and the traces of it properly cleared away.)

After breakfast Robin would want a game. Sometimes it would be hide-and-seek, either in the house or in the garden : he would run to the flower-beds and hide behind a clump of Michaelmas

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daisies, peeping out from time to time to make sure that we were coming to look for him. Then, when we got near, he would wait till the thrill became unbearable, and at last spring away to the next clump and wait for us to follow.

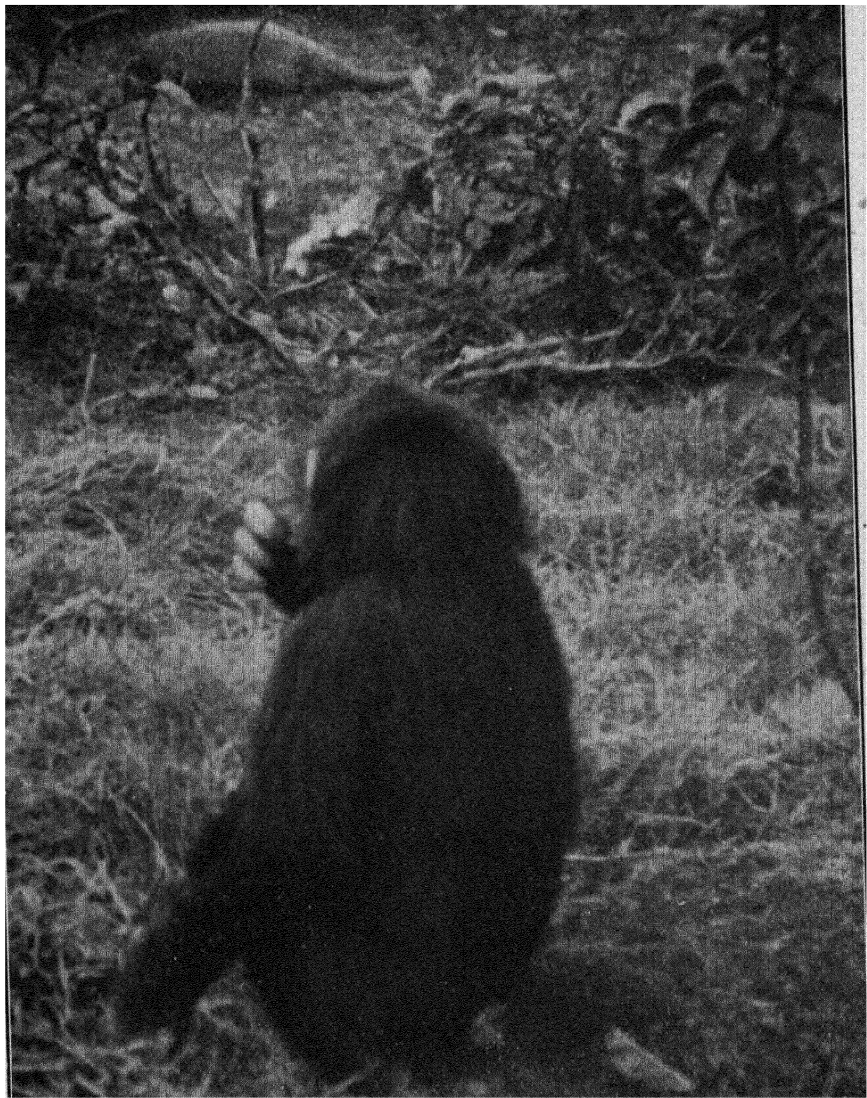
He loved, too, to be tickled, lying on his back like a cat, with paws in the air, and enjoying himself to the full. Often he wanted games when no one was free to play with him. There was a great deal of work for us to do in the garden, the house and the studio, apart from my ordinary tasks, and sometimes it wasn't possible to pay Robin all the attention he desired. Then he would become insistent. If my wife was tying up the chrysanthemums, he would suddenly appear beside her, make a funny little grunting noise, run round the bush, jump into the air and try to strike her arm : then he would stand back and look up, as much as to say : " Come on, it 's your turn now," and run round the bush again, looking back to see if she were following him.

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It was tempting, of course, to leave one's work on those occasions, and sometimes we did ; but not always. When we were obdurate Robin would run away, and a little later we would find him playing with Mary.

He was very fond of Mary. A native in East Africa, as I have related, couldn't understand the games of Chuey and Toto. I, in my turn, was surprised at the extraordinary affection between a mongoose, a chimpanzee and an English fox-terrier in my garden. Yet there it was. Those three played together, exactly like children, except when Mary took the rôle of mother, which she did when Robin showed that he was feeling particularly lonesome. Then she would pick him up in her arms, hold him very nearly in the way that a mother holds a baby, and pet him till, nestling in the warmth of her fur, he was happy again.

Then, at last, he would wriggle out of her arms and run off : and Mary would watch him affectionately, getting more and more interested, until at last she couldn't stand being a mother any



Mary got more and more interested

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longer and would run and join him like a child again.

When Robin first came to me, before the days of Tommy, I used to have an old sheep-dog, and it was with him that Robin first learnt to play. A little later, when the sheep-dog was replaced by Tommy, then very puppyish and energetic, the games became friskier. Mary would discover an old rag and run off with it, then Tommy would catch the trailing end of the rag, and the stage would be set for a grand tug-of-war. Or else Robin and Tommy would start a playful fight, and Mary would come into the middle of it and grapple either or both of the others, catching an arm or a leg or a tail or a head, whatever was nearest, so that the duel turned into a general scrimmage.

One day when the three animals were playing in the garden, Tommy wandered off by himself, nosing about the flower-bed until by chance he discovered a wasps' nest in the ground. Of course, the sight of the wasps constantly going in and

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out attracted the dog's attention, with the result that his nose went too close and got stung. His yelps attracted Mary's attention, and she came running across the lawn to see what was the matter. Tommy looked up for a moment from rubbing his nose to tell her, and then she couldn't resist trying to prove his tale. The proof was forthcoming, in the shape of a sting on the end of her finger, and Mary joined Tommy in the search for cooling grass.

Meanwhile, Robin was left alone, deserted by both his playmates, and, of course, he very soon guessed that there was something worth inquiring about. He in his turn appeared on the scene, learnt the sad story, and, undismayed but full of curiosity, went to have a look for himself, and started scratching to make the hole bigger.

This third attack was a little too much for the wasps, and they (I suppose) sounded the alarm, with the result that a whole army came out of the nest. By all the laws of justice Tommy, as the originator of the raid, ought to have borne the

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brunt of the attack ; but by this time he had retired to a safe place by the bank of the lake. Failing him, Mary, as the second attacker, perhaps deserved punishment ; but she had gone back to the studio to work, with the aid of an old hairpin, on what she apparently thought was a splinter in her finger. Consequently the comparatively innocent Robin was left alone on the field of battle, and the sortie took full advantage of his lack of support. The wasps settled down on to his ears and head and gave him punishment.

Poor Robin, heavily outnumbered as he was, made no serious attempt at a fight, but quickly beat a retreat across the lawn, running on his hind legs while he tried to fight a desperate rear-guard action with his little front paws.

Alas ! It was three saddened little animals that I put to bed that night !

But this sort of incident was soon forgotten, and its lessons were never learnt. It couldn't cure Robin of his fatal curiosity, and anything new had always to be explored. Coat-sleeves, for instance,

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always attracted him and, wondering what could be at the farther end of those long dark tunnels, he would set to work to find out. If the sleeve were big enough, he would crawl half-way up it, and then, losing his nerve, he would try the safer method of pushing up one of his little arms.

Another thing that absolutely fascinated him was the ink-pot. He soon learnt its mysteries and discovered that this curious dark water, though not good to drink, was excellent for making pretty patterns on carpets. If no one was about, he would clamber first on to a chair, up to the writing-desk, then push the lid off the ink-well, and dip in his paw.

After this had happened three or four times we made a rule of always leaving a nice white sheet of paper invitingly on the desk, in the hope of saving the carpet; and sometimes the ruse succeeded, with the result that we would come in half an hour later to find Robin, like a small child with a new and messy game, entirely absorbed in making his paw-prints.

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Once I received an urgent request on the telephone to come and remove Robin from a neighbouring house. The message clearly implied that this was a matter of life and death, but whether for Robin or for my neighbour I did not know till I arrived and was greeted by an indignant gentleman who had spent a hectic morning over financial calculations (I should think from his fury that they must have been connected with an income tax return), and then after leaving the room for dinner had returned to find his careful work entirely obliterated by Robin's inky finger-prints !

That was the direful result of one of Robin's expeditions outside the garden fence. He often trespassed abroad, and as he grew older he went farther and farther afield, until it grew to be a not infrequent thing for him to stay away from home for two or three nights at a time. At first this caused us a great deal of uneasiness, and once or twice we even sat up for him till the early hours of the morning. But after a while we decided that he was able to take care of himself,

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although in that subsequent events proved us to be wrong.

The trouble was that the mongoose, creeping along in the dusk, was more than once mistaken for a fox, the sworn enemy of farmers in my part of the country as in all others. Robin had several hair-raising adventures through this mistake, and one in particular.

He had gone out by himself one day on a rat-hunt, and our last view of him was when he was jumping in the long grass of an adjacent field, in his efforts to see something worth chasing.

Neither that night nor the next morning did he return, and then the baker casually informed us that a fox had been seen half a mile away in the early hours of the morning, and that, as foxes had been particularly mischievous in the local chicken runs for some time past, an S.O.S. had been circulated, with the result that some forty men and boys had turned out in pursuit.

We wondered at the time whether the "fox" could possibly be Robin, and felt a certain amount

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of anxiety. However, the hunt was unsuccessful, and the next news that reached us was that a small but mysterious animal, believed to bear some resemblance to our mongoose, was at bay under the shelter at the tram terminus.

We hurried, of course, to see and if need be to rescue. We found a considerable crowd of spectators just dispersing, and learnt that some enterprising sportsman had brought his dog to the tram shelter just before our arrival, and that the dog had at once shown a lot of excitement and had set to work scraping away the earth on one side, so as to be able to squeeze into the narrow space between the wooden foundations of the shelter and the ground. The crowd, naturally, at once went round to that side to enjoy the fun, and the unknown animal very wisely took the providential chance of safety, slipped under the edge of the shelter on the opposite side from the dog, and disappeared into the adjoining cabbage patch.

As to the animal—well, it might have been a

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ferret or it might have been a weasel, but Bill James swore it was an otter and two telegraph-boys (delaying after the manner of telegraph boys) were certain it was a fox ; but, nevertheless, as soon as I mentioned that Robin was missing from his home everyone present (including Bill James and both the telegraph boys) was certain that it was a mongoose.

Feeling by now rather seriously alarmed, we searched the cabbage patch and satisfied ourselves that Robin—if it really was Robin—was well away into the comparative safety of the fields. Then, as there was nothing more to be done at the moment, we went home, hoping against hope that our mongoose would have sought the only shelter that was really safe for him. But he wasn't there, and there was nothing for it but to sit as patiently as we could and await further news.

This came before very long. A friend, who had heard of the disappearance, telephoned to say that she was certain that Robin was hiding under her potting-shed : or if it wasn't Robin it was

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some other animal whom we, as notorious animal lovers, ought to rescue immediately, as she was having difficulty in restraining her dogs.

As may be imagined, we lost no time in getting to our friend's house. By the time we arrived, one of the dogs had broken loose and was already half-way under the shed. This time the sheltering animal would have had no back-door exit, for the potting-shed was enclosed on three sides by a brick wall. The dog, to his grievous disappointment, was chivvied off, and in case of accidents I made sure that he and his brother were securely tied up.

Then I lay flat on the ground, in front of the hole which the dog had conveniently enlarged, and tried to peer under the shed. It was too dark to see anything but a form that moved and might have been that of Robin, but might equally well have belonged to almost any other small creature. So I called for a spade and started to finish the dog's work ; and three minutes later poor Robin was lying in my wife's arms,

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utterly exhausted and with his heart still beating furiously from sheer terror.

He lay still in her arms, looking from one to the other in his joy at finding us. But it was some hours before he completely recovered from his fright, and that night, for the only time in his life, we let him sleep, rolled in an eider-down, beside our bed.

CHAPTER FOUR

MR. PENGUIN REFUSES TO PLAY

FROM the stories I have so far told it should be clear, I think, that animal friendships are not very difficult to make, although it is a task that needs tact and infinite patience, good temper and constant willingness in face of discouragement.

The work will begin the moment you decide to keep an animal, whether it be a dog or a leopard. In the first place you will have to provide it with proper surroundings—those to which its breed is accustomed—as far as you can. A wild animal must have comparatively wild surroundings, and it does not affect the question that it may have been born in captivity, for it will still have the inherited instincts of its race. If you choose a dog, you are entitled to regard a kennel and a garden

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as its natural home, though you must remember that its instincts will urge it to run on forays, and you must enable it to wander off without you, smelling at rat-holes or scratching up buried treasure. But if you keep a lion-cub you must provide it with warmth, open land, and preferably some thick undergrowth. You must not keep a mongoose in a bushless field, nor bears without trees, nor a penguin without a pond.

But while you try to imitate the animal's natural surroundings, even altering your garden to make it a little more like the African forest or the Indian jungle, you must remember that the animal is not in its native climate, and you must therefore adapt its surroundings to compensate for that.

A chimpanzee, for instance, would undoubtedly die of pneumonia if it slept uncovered in the open on one of our cold, misty mornings. Therefore, although chimpanzees live naturally in trees, you would have to provide yours with a habitation. Yet chimpanzees are accustomed to build nests

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in the branches out of reach of their enemies, and you will not be on the road to friendship if you expect your chimpanzee to sleep in a soap box on the kitchen floor. You will do far better if you give him a room with a high shelf, lean a bough from the floor to the edge of the shelf, and then scatter on the wood a number of small branches and pieces of grass with (again the compromise) a blanket or two if the weather is cold. You will then find that he will climb the bough at night, make his own bed or nest, and sleep comfortably.

You will have to face the same kind of problem in the matter of food, and you will probably have to solve it, in many cases, with the same kind of compromise. The cat's meat man may provide nourishment for your lion-cub, but he will not help your ape. Nor is it any use serving nuts to a cheetah. You want as far as possible to get the food to which the animal, or its breed, is accustomed ; and if that is quite unobtainable you must supply the next best thing, taking the animal

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into your confidence, refraining from forcing on him what he does not like, and discovering at last what he does like and what is good for him.

Then you will have a fair chance of success ; but it doesn't follow that success will come. Try as we may, with all patience and willingness, we shall sometimes fail, usually because of some exceptional obstinacy on the part of the animal, or because of ingrained fear, or because our inexperience of that particular animal leads us to mistakes.

All this is by way of prologue to the story of one of my own failures. I essayed a hard task in a limited time, and I failed. Yet I don't regret either the work or the time that I spent, because I did get to the first beginnings of friendship, and certainly my knowledge of animal life was considerably increased by the experiment.

I tried to make friends with a penguin. It was a thing that I had long wanted to do—ever since, in fact, I sailed, in a small fishing-boat

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through the worst storm I have known, to a small island thirty-five miles south of Cape Town. Landing there after a terrible voyage, I speedily forgot all previous difficulties and dangers in the joy of watching the innumerable penguins, black-coated with white fronts, like stumpy old men in evening-dress, as they waddled to and fro among the rocks and shingle, working, playing, and always chattering.

They looked so intent, so preoccupied, and at the same time so much more like city magnates than like philosophers, that I badly wanted to know what they were thinking about. And since the only way really to understand an animal or bird is to have it in your own garden, where you should be able to make it feel at ease, I there and then decided that one day a penguin should come and stay with me.

Consequently I was delighted when the chance came to me to take charge of one, though it was disappointing to learn that I was only to have it for two weeks. I knew even then that that wasn't

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nearly long enough, and my opinion was certainly to be confirmed as the days went by.

Still, I cheerfully began my preparations for the penguin's comfort. These had to be rather elaborate. The difference between the native surroundings of a penguin and those which, at first thought, it seemed that my garden could provide were pretty considerable.

One essential thing I had, however, and that was water, for, as readers of *My Happy Family* will remember, there is in my garden a lake. At the corner of this nearest to my house, runs a little backwater which some former inhabitant used for driving a mill. It is about eight feet wide and normally rather shallow, but by means of a dam I managed to make it considerably deeper. The backwater bends in front of the house almost at right angles, and I marked off about twelve feet along each arm as the penguin's playground. That space I fenced with wire netting so that my visitor should not swim into the open lake and come to grief among the reeds.

MR. PENGUIN REFUSES TO PLAY

I continued the fence over a flower-bed, and across a path and a stretch of lawn to meet the stream again. On the path I laid down a heap of shingle, and I built a mound of larger stones half in and half out of the water.

So much for the penguin's garden. His house presented greater difficulties. On the islands south of Cape Town where they nest, these black-footed penguins make shallow burrows in which they put their eggs, but apart from that they live in the open. Here that would be impossible. Shade was needed, and for that my visitor must have a house or hutch. I hadn't much time at my disposal for all these preparations, and the best thing I could manage was a sugar-box well lined with straw; but I hoped that the attractions of the garden would make up for deficiencies in the house.

Really, that little bit of garden and lake was very pleasant, and I felt confident that the penguin would at once feel at home.

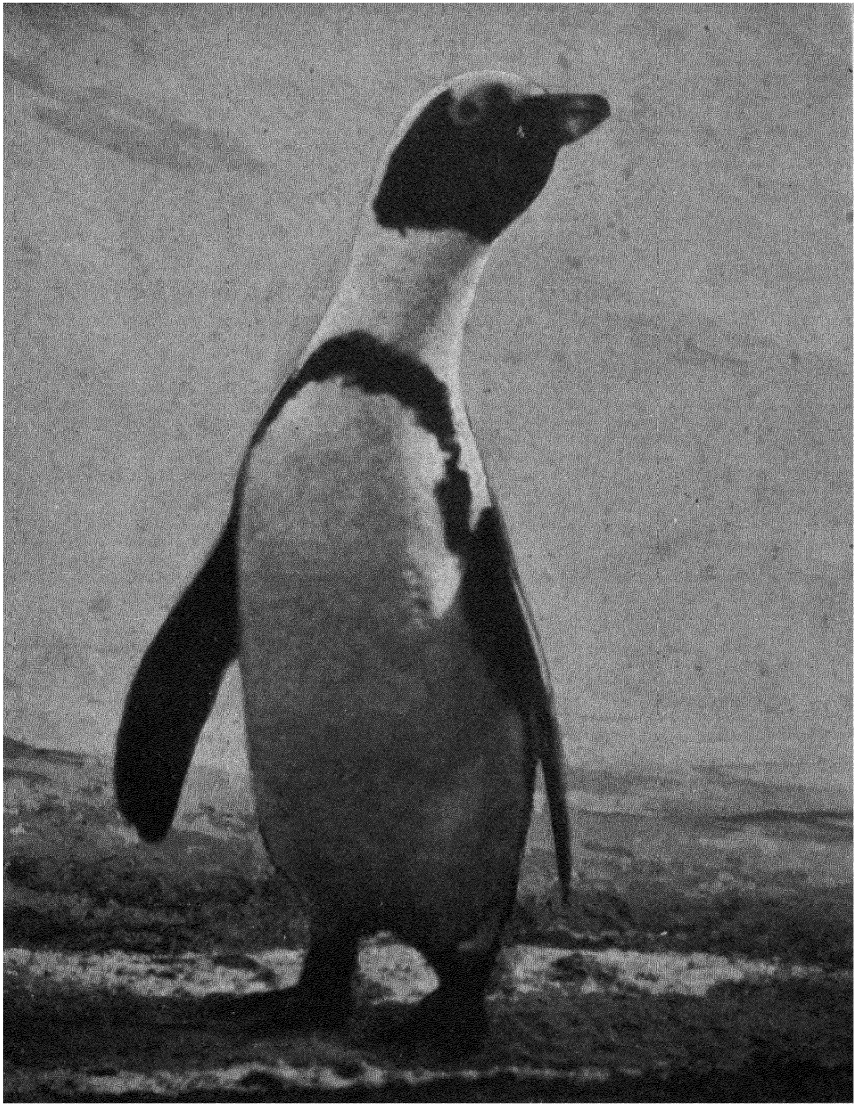
MY ANIMAL FRIENDSHIPS

But there were difficulties that I had overlooked, and these began immediately on his arrival.

He came, unromantically enough, in a wooden crate. It did not look even as comfortable as the one I had prepared for him, but various porters had obeyed their instructions to keep it the right way up, and the penguin appeared to be quite satisfied. Indeed, when I opened the door, after setting the crate down within the netted enclosure, he did not want to come out.

Kneeling down, I peered inside. The penguin was huddled into a far corner, looking out at me with startled eyes. He stood about sixteen inches high, and was a very handsome creature in spite of the fact that the moulting season had begun.

In my own mind I had planned to call him "Squeak," after the most famous member of his family; but when at last he condescended, after I had called him repeatedly, to appear out of the crate, I knew at once that such an undignified name was impossible. He walked out like a prince, and I felt that I was meant to understand



Mr. Penguin looked inquiringly around

MR. PENGUIN REFUSES TO PLAY

that he was honouring me by his presence. So from that moment I set aside my inclination towards familiarity and called him "Mr. Penguin."

He walked to the edge of the backwater and silently considered it, while I stood anxiously awaiting his verdict. Fortunately, he seemed to think that it would do. Then he examined the shingle beach, pushing two or three stones aside to see what was beneath them, tested the wire with his bill, and trod on the stones.

All this seemed to pass muster: "Good enough of its kind," he seemed to be saying. But then he looked inquiringly around, and I gathered that he missed something. Of course! I had planned to provide him with a house, but in the excitement of his arrival I had forgotten to bring it out.

I started to fetch it, leaving Mr. Penguin looking as if he thought me a remarkably poor host. But on the way it occurred to me that since the sugar-box wasn't much of a thing to look at and could have done with a coat of paint, my

MY ANIMAL FRIENDSHIPS

guest might be a little better pleased if I left him the crate to which he had grown accustomed during his journey. So I moved this into a shady corner of his garden, and apologetically suggested that Mr. Penguin should make himself at home.

He looked up at me with scorn,* but nevertheless he walked towards the crate and went inside, sitting right at the back where I couldn't see him. I let him rest for a while, and then called to him to come out. But he wouldn't move, and I put my hand towards him, with the idea that he would then see how friendly were my intentions. A second later I was shaking my hand in agony, for he had given me a nip that was almost as painful as a dog bite.

That didn't seem a particularly good beginning, but I made excuses for Mr. Penguin, telling myself that he was doubtless tired after his journey. Probably he was hungry too, and I went to get him some dinner.

* See Frontispiece.

MR. PENGUIN REFUSES TO PLAY

It was in the matter of food that I found my greatest difficulty. A penguin lives on fish, and is accustomed to eat only what he has caught. If you set down beside him a steak of cod, he would hardly even sniff at it; he must dive into the water, swim after his prey, and catch it.

Living as I then did in the heart of Kent, it was impossible to procure living fish from the sea, and freshwater fish, even if I had had them in sufficient quantity, were useless. Consequently I started by ordering a quantity of fresh herrings and letting one slip into the water at each meal. But that didn't do at all. As the dead fish sank below the surface, Mr. Penguin hardly deigned to give it a look: that wasn't at all the kind of thing he fancied.

After two days I began to feel desperate—and what Mr. Penguin must have felt, amidst the ravages of hunger, you can hardly imagine. But, fortunately, a new plan occurred to me just in time. What was wanted, I knew, was for these dead fish to enter the water with the appearance

MY ANIMAL FRIENDSHIPS

of living fish, swimming for their lives while Mr. Penguin chased them. Somehow or other that had to be contrived, and therefore I took a plateful of fish to the far side of the lake to see how it could be done. After some experiments I taught myself the knack of throwing the fish into the water with a peculiar jerk of the wrist, which gave them more or less the appearance, when they reached the water, of swimming.

Then I went back to the penguin and did the trick in front of him. He dived in at once, and a minute later he was thoroughly enjoying his dinner.

One other difficulty had to be surmounted in this matter of food, and that was that a good many of the herrings were too large for Mr. Penguin to tackle. That, too, occasioned a great deal of careful thought, but eventually it was got over by cutting the fish diagonally so that each large herring would look like two smaller ones, each with a pointed head. The contriving of artificial heads was essential, because Mr. Penguin

MR. PENGUIN REFUSES TO PLAY

was particular, and he knew the shape, at any rate, of a fish ; moreover, it was head first that he would always eat his capture, and if, swimming after his prey, he caught it first at the tail or side, he would toss it up and catch it again so that the head came straight into his bill.

Once he was satisfied with his food, it was great fun to watch him taking it. He was remarkably quick in the water, and the fish, if it had been alive, wouldn't have had much chance of escape, even in the open lake. Often Mr. Penguin was standing on the bank when I threw the fish, but instantly he would dive in, and then he could swim six feet or more and catch it before it had sunk more than twelve inches below the surface. In swimming he propelled himself, not like a duck with his webbed feet, but entirely by means of his flappers.

He thoroughly enjoyed his pool, and often after diving and eating his meal he would come to the surface and look round with a " Honk ! Honk !" just as if he were a bather at the seaside

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telling everyone how refreshing the water was and calling to them to come and join in the fun.

But although he now seemed to be getting a good deal of pleasure out of life, he was, I am sorry to say, distinctly "stand-offish." He never seemed to be able to forget his dignity ; or possibly he was merely shy. In either case he was not a creature that made friends easily, either with me or with the other creatures in my garden.

The moorhens that lived on the lake were the first to issue their invitations, coming close to his fence and peering through, so that it was clear that they wanted him to come and play with them. But Mr. Penguin wasn't interested in moorhens.

There was a kingfisher, too, who was accustomed to use a tree-stump as a diving-board. The tree-stump had been enclosed, of necessity, in Mr. Penguin's garden, and I think it was because of this that the kingfisher was regarded with greater interest. Mr. Penguin certainly paid attention

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to him—but it wasn't very friendly attention : indeed, he seemed to be wondering what action he could take against this intruder into what he obviously regarded as his private park.

Then Tommy, my terrier, came along, full of high spirits, and simply shouting to Mr. Penguin to come and have a game. As he got no answer, he stuck his nose to the fence, close to where Mr. Penguin was standing ; and then he did get an answer, and a painful one—a sharp peck from Mr. Penguin's bill, which sent him hurriedly to rub the injured spot into the soft mould of a flower-bed.

He came again, of course—nothing can ever quench Tommy's ardour for a game—but now he kept at a safer distance and barked a foot away from the wires. But Mr. Penguin would still have nothing to do with him, and at last Tommy gave it up in disgust and wandered off to the warmer welcome which he knew he could get from Mary, my chimpanzee.

Perhaps Mary—wonderful creature that she

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was—would have been more successful with Mr. Penguin, but I wouldn't let her try. The fence would have proved no obstacle to her, and as curiosity was very strong in her, she would certainly have tried to make a closer examination of this very strange creature, the like of which she had never seen before. Then she in her turn would have received a painful peck.

I don't think Mr. Penguin's bill would have done her any serious damage, but unfortunately she would certainly have wanted to retaliate, and if she had done so there wouldn't have been much left of Mr. Penguin. Mary was amazingly strong : indeed in a tug-of-war she was quite as strong as I, though less than a third of my size. So Mary had to content herself with the account which, perhaps, Tommy and the moorhens and the kingfisher tried to give her of the unfriendly visitor.

I wasn't discouraged by the failure of Tommy and his friends, although my garden has always been a peaceful spot where all kinds of animals are

MR. PENGUIN REFUSES TO PLAY

happy together. But I was disappointed to find that the task of getting Mr. Penguin to welcome me and to trust me was going to take far longer than I had imagined ; and it grew more and more unlikely as the days went by that I should succeed in establishing friendly relations with him before the time came for him to leave me.

Still, I did my best, proving to him that even when he bit me—as he did more than once—I did not regard it as a sign of unfriendliness, and that, while he had nothing to fear from me, I was always ready to do what I could to make him comfortable and happy.

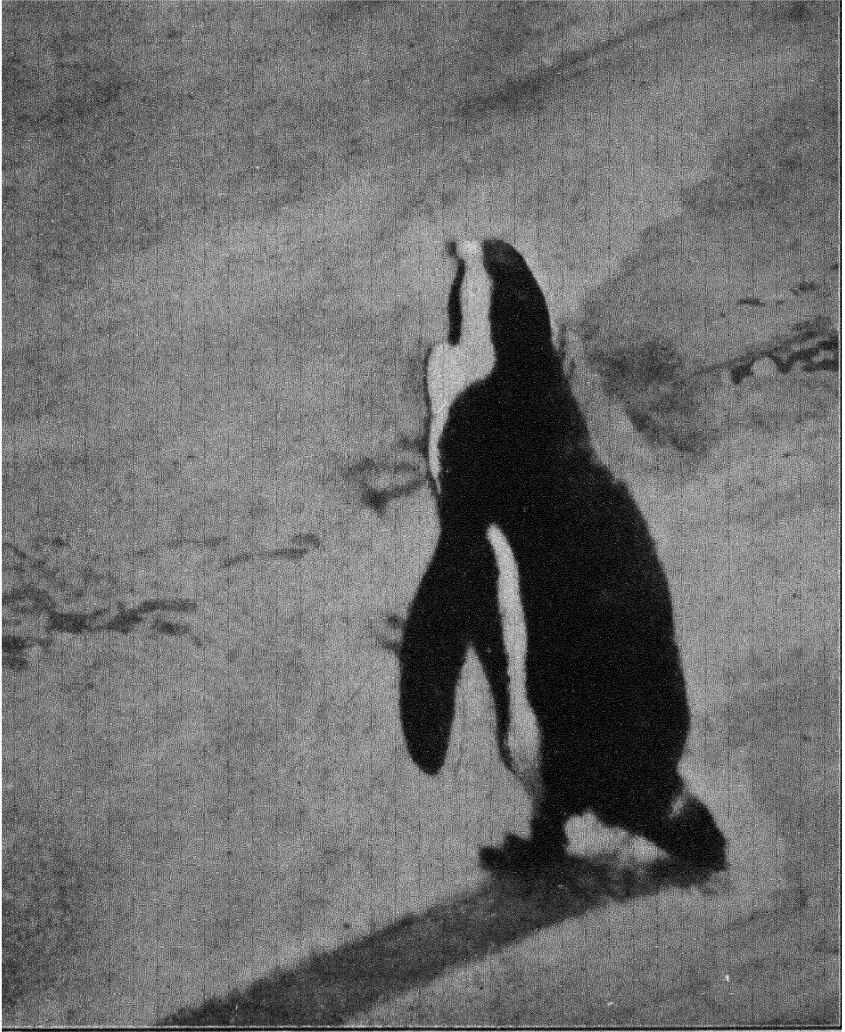
After some days of these persistent efforts, I found that I could walk into his enclosure without much alarming him. That was the first step. He still retired into his house when I came near it, sat far within it, and when I caught him without warning in the open he turned his back on me ; but I persevered, and at last I was rewarded, when I had sat quietly outside for half an hour, by his getting up and coming to the door to look at me.

MY ANIMAL FRIENDSHIPS

Of course, he wasn't quite so shy at dinner time, and at last I decided, rather against my will, to take advantage of this. Instead of throwing the herring at once into the water, I delayed for a minute or two, hoping to draw some comment from him. The first time I did this he merely looked at me with majestic displeasure and stood waiting on the bank. But the second time he actually came up to me and pecked at my legs as a reminder.

From that moment we got on rather better. I suppose that to Mr. Penguin the discovery that he could both bite my hand and peck my legs without my retaliating was fairly convincing proof of my friendly intentions; and the next day he unbent to the extent of following me half-way round his garden, giving me impatient pecks all the time.

I wanted more than that, of course, and I used to sit down outside his house, holding out my hand towards him, so that he became familiar with it and ceased to regard it as a sign of



He turned his back on me

MR. PENGUIN REFUSES TO PLAY

danger. And at last the great day came when, he having ventured to his door, I dared to stroke his head.

I expected him to snap viciously and then waddle away. But he didn't. He simply stood there, receiving my homage with a royal spirit of benevolence.

The next day, much encouraged, I tried the same thing again, but this time I was unlucky. Perhaps there had been something wrong with the breakfast, or perhaps the birds had awakened him too early in the morning. Anyhow, Mr. Penguin was out of temper, and my finger bore the results.

Still, I persevered, and on one other occasion my attempts at stroking were successful. In another fortnight I think Mr. Penguin and I would have begun to understand one another, for there was certainly a decided change already in his general attitude towards me. He had fits of ill-humour, but he no longer disliked me ; indeed, I once found him looking out for me on my arrival

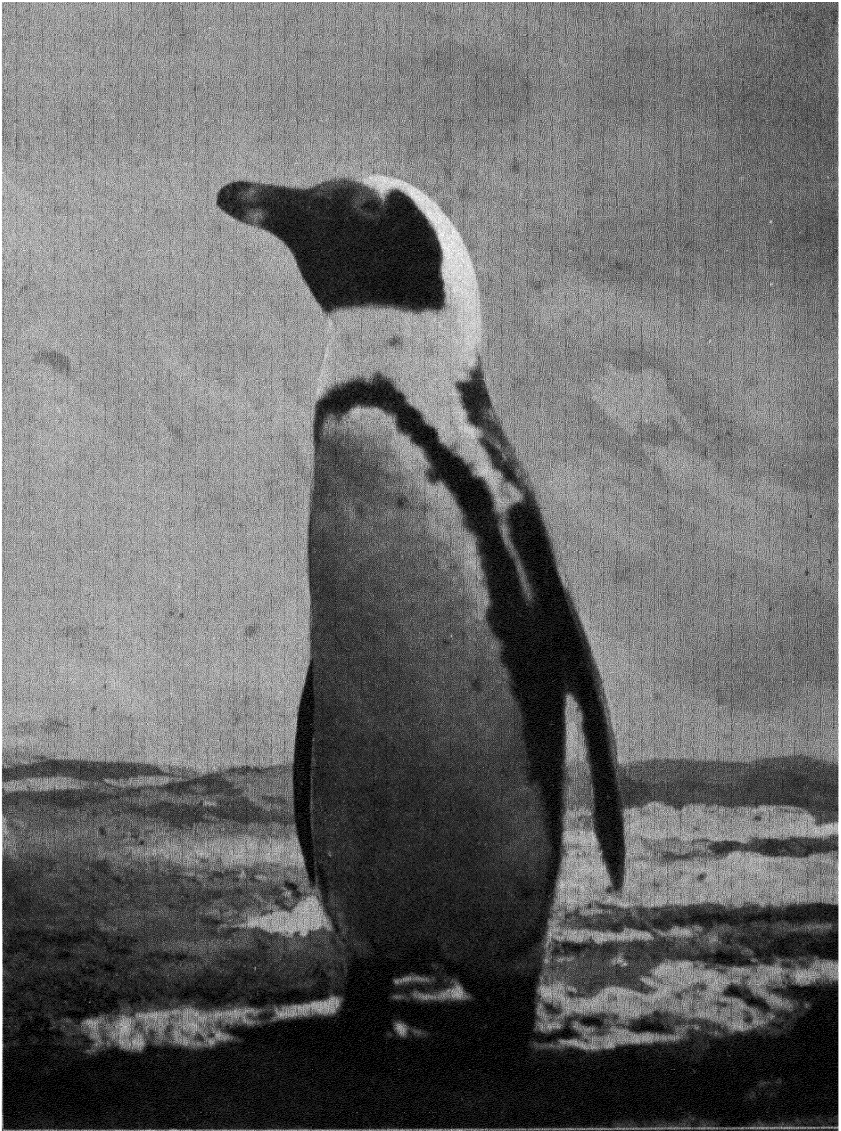
MY ANIMAL FRIENDSHIPS

in the morning, and then he waddled across his garden to greet me.

But unfortunately that further fortnight was not available, for the time of Mr. Penguin's short visit had come to an end. I said "Good-bye" to him with regret, partly because of my failure, and partly because I had begun to realise that, behind his shyness and in spite of his occasional bad temper, there was a distinct personality and a likeable one at that. After all, circumstances were a bit hard on Mr. Penguin. All his surroundings were utterly foreign to him, he was visited by creatures that no other penguin has ever seen, and he had no companion with whom he could discuss his fears.

One day I shall try again. Then I shall have two penguins instead of one, for after all I can hardly expect so regal a personage apart from his kind to be other than a trifle distant.

Also I shall give myself plenty of time.



He waddled across his garden to greet me

MR. PENGUIN REFUSES TO PLAY

And then, profiting by the lessons Mr. Penguin has taught me, I believe I shall succeed in reaching the proper plane of friendship.

CHAPTER FIVE

JANE, THE MOTHERLY ELEPHANT

IN Africa one has to be rather careful about elephants.

You can stand within twenty feet of them with a fair amount of safety, provided that you are screened with foliage or grass and provided—especially—that the wind is blowing from them to you and not from you to them. But if you are careless enough to show yourself unduly, or to make a noise, or if the wind should suddenly change its direction—why, then, if you are a wise man you will very rapidly ascend to the top of a stout tree and stay there.

I have learnt this from personal and—as I go into the jungle unarmed—not very pleasant experience; and on one occasion, through selecting in my haste a tree of doubtful strength,

JANE, THE MOTHERLY ELEPHANT

I came near to being brought to the ground and trampled underfoot. That was shortly before I went to India, and consequently it took me some time to get used to the different state of things as regards elephants in that country.

In India, while it is quite possible to encounter a wild and dangerous elephant in the jungle, the majority of the elephants that one meets are staid creatures, peacefully employed by men in commercial or other operations. They are beasts of burden, and not even rebellious.

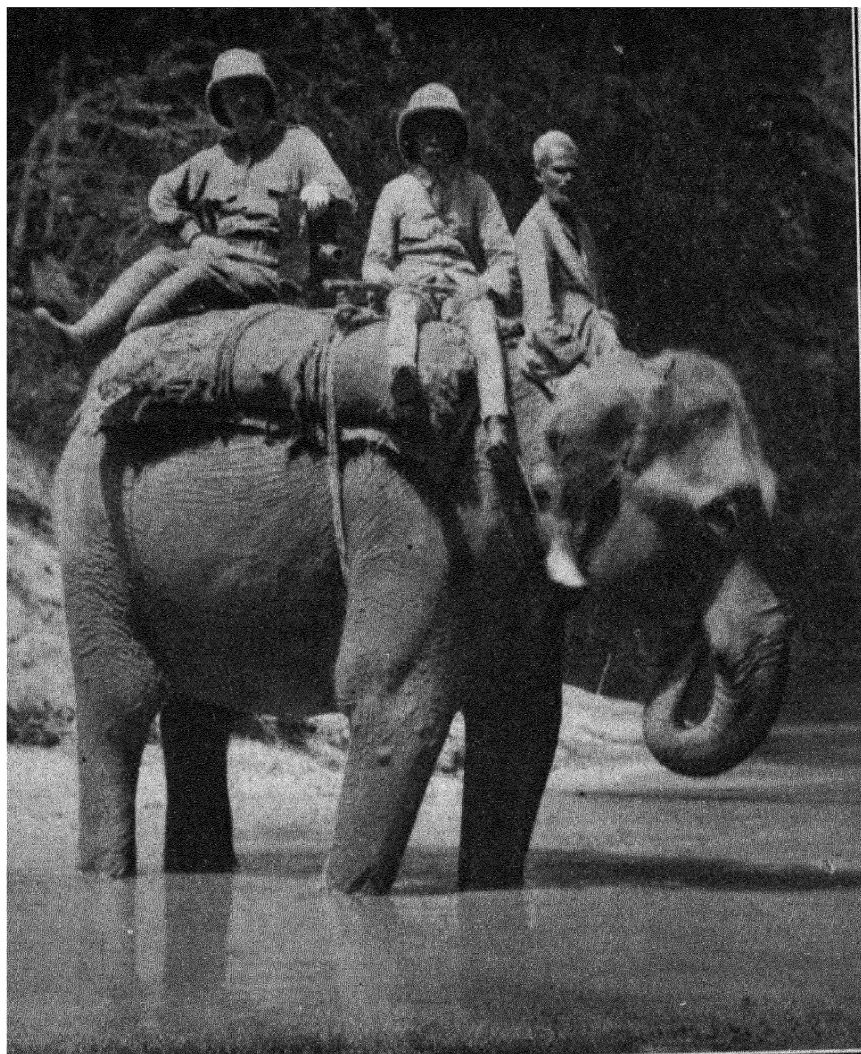
It took me quite a little time after I got to India to get the proper point of view, and to be able to stand in front of an elephant without thinking about trees. I had come to photograph wild creatures in the jungle, and a friendly Maharajah lent me for the expedition a magnificent elephant which I eventually christened "Jane" because her real name was beyond my powers of pronunciation. I was taken sixty miles to the jungle, where Jane was standing ready to carry me, and she waved her trunk in a way which,

MY ANIMAL FRIENDSHIPS

in Africa, I have always regarded as a signal of danger. I looked around. Everybody within sight was quite unconcerned, so I concluded that, whatever African elephants might do, from the Indian elephant this was merely a sign of welcome.

As a matter of fact, that was exactly what it was. As I have said in the Introduction to this book, animals always know when they are among friends, and Jane took a liking to me from the first. I soon got over my first apprehension, and then I learnt that not only was Jane perfectly friendly, but her attitude towards me was actually motherly.

With difficulty I clambered on to her back, and then I began the most uncomfortable of all voyages, compared to which a sail in a storm at sea is positively delightful. A ride on elephant-back across country is simply a series of jolts, during which you sit sideways on a pad and hold on for dear life, never knowing in which direction the next jolt will throw you.



I began a most uncomfortable journey

JANE, THE MOTHERLY ELEPHANT

As we went through the jungle, I saw a low branch hanging across our path, and I must confess that I rather hoped that it would sweep me off the elephant's back, so that I could return to the ground without discredit. But it didn't. Jane put up her trunk and carefully removed it. This happened again and again, and gradually the idea entered my jolted brain that Jane was not merely protecting herself but protecting us. Many of the branches hung so that she could have passed safely under them, although we should have been struck. Jane must have known that, for she gauged the height of branches with a wonderful exactitude, leaving untouched those that cleared our heads by a couple of inches.

After that I began to think a little better of her, and although I realised that this clearing of branches was only a trick that her driver had taught her, I gave her credit for her intelligence and carefulness.

But my real friendship with Jane began after I went out by myself, on foot. I was half a mile

MY ANIMAL FRIENDSHIPS

from the camp, watching a dozen butterflies all trying to feed at once on a single plant, when suddenly, although I had heard nothing, I became aware of a huge dark form in the bush beside me. This wasn't in camp, it was in the jungle, and I knew instinctively what that dark form meant. Consequently I did not wait to see—or to feel!—more, but set out to break the world's record in tree climbing. From the upper branches I looked down on to an elephant's shoulders.

An hour or so later the way was free for me to descend, and I returned to camp, with the rather pleasant feeling that I had had an adventure and a thrilling escape. But the next day exactly the same thing happened. This time I was intently watching some ants busy on a small bush, when I heard the breaking of a branch and found myself gazing at an elephant. Once more I climbed a tree—and then, looking down, it struck me that there was something about that elephant's back which was familiar. It wasn't merely that I had had the same view of it the day before ;

JANE, THE MOTHERLY ELEPHANT

no, I had seen it often, and at close quarters. Surely, this wasn't a wild elephant after all!

I climbed down, and Jane and I looked at one another. I was feeling rather foolish, and afraid that Jane would laugh at me. But there wasn't a twinkle in her eye: only a look of kindly reproach. I patted the side of her head, and she waved her trunk. (You will remember that Kipling described the Mother Jaguar as "graciously waving her tail": Jane was always gracious in the way she waved her trunk.) Then I wondered why she had come to seek me, and whether by any chance I could ride her home. The drivers say "But-but" to an elephant when they want it to go down on all fours: so I said "But-but" to Jane, and to my delight she immediately knelt for me to climb on to her back. Then she carried me to camp.

Now, was that an accident? Do you believe that on each of those two successive days, half an hour after I had left the camp alone, Jane came to the place where I was studying Nature,

MY ANIMAL FRIENDSHIPS

simply by chance? No! Jane, I am sure, followed me, though I do not know by what means she tracked me. But I do know *why* she followed me. She was, as I have said, not merely friendly, but motherly. Having at the start carried me through the jungle on her back, she didn't like the idea of my wandering alone. And in that, I suppose, she was right, for farther within that jungle tigers roamed . . .

After that I was quite satisfied to let Jane take charge of me. Having got to a certain stage of understanding, Jane and I made a sort of compact. I wasn't any more to wander by myself; but, on the other hand, I was to ride Jane alone, without her native driver.

She would rub her big head against me in the morning, as a sign of greeting, then up I would climb, and off we would go together to see the mysteries of the jungle. She was a perfect companion, wonderfully intelligent, and very soon she learnt to understand the meaning of the words that I whispered to her. While she stepped



Jane loved her evening shower-bath

JANE, THE MOTHERLY ELEPHANT

noiselessly through undergrowth, I would see ahead a bison, fox or buck ; and I would lean forward and whisper, " Quietly, Jane, quietly." Then she would stand perfectly still for a second and, when I gave the word, step forward without sound till we came within the range of my camera.

Through the jungle we would go, Jane and I, far out of the sound of man, with only the swaying vegetation around us to see, only the call of birds, the chattering of monkeys, and now and then the sound of some more dangerous beast, to hear. There were wild elephants, there were tigers, and I was always unarmed ; but somehow I never felt a moment's apprehension when Jane was with me. The strength of her beneath my knees prevented that.

Then, in the heat of the day, we would turn homewards, back to camp. And there I would watch Jane while, her work done, she enjoyed the delight of her life. Down she would go, into a little pool, to have her bath. First it was a shower-bath, with water squirted over her back by

MY ANIMAL FRIENDSHIPS

means of her own trunk : and then she would lie and roll in the comparative cool of the water.

Then up again, a tit-bit of sugar from my hand, and a pat on the side of the head. And after that, rest, till we could go adventuring again. I count those hours among the pleasantest of my life, and Jane too, I am sure, found delight in our comradeship.

CHAPTER SIX

MRS. SPIDER

I HAVE now told stories of a great many animals, and I trust that I have proved my point that friendship between man and members of the animal world is by no means confined to the higher intelligences : that making friends with a mongoose or an elephant is not a bit more difficult than arousing the affection of a chimpanzee.

But when one is rather keen on a point, as I am on this, one wants to make quite certain of establishing it ; and therefore I have one more story to tell. It is, I think, the strangest of all my animal stories, for it tells of friendship with a little creature no more than three quarters of an inch high and an inch and a half long—a spider.

Many people have a horror of spiders—nasty, crawly things found in places where they have no

MY ANIMAL FRIENDSHIPS

right to be, creatures which cause a lot of trouble by spinning webs on the tops of wardrobes and in other inaccessible places, creatures which, very occasionally, cause a sensation by crawling out from a tiny crack beneath the bath, just when one is barefooted and incapacitated from dealing with them in what is regarded as the proper manner. And in addition to all that, they are said to be unlucky.

Well, the heroine of this story had other drawbacks besides those ; and yet she had a few balancing virtues. The chief of the drawbacks was in her personal appearance. It would be possible to dwell on the grace of her finely tapering legs, on the lustre of her dark eyes ; but many people would have failed to appreciate those charms directly they had realised that instead of the two eyes to which we are accustomed, Mrs. Spider was possessed of eight !

In addition to that, although the front of her body, where her eight legs were fastened close to the black scales that sheltered all her eyes, was



I cannot seriously call her beautiful

MRS. SPIDER

not unprepossessing, the back was of dark pearl colour—smooth, shiny and egglike—really a thing of horror. I am afraid that anyone accustomed to shudder at the sight of a small spider busily creeping along the floor, would not have tolerated Mrs. Spider for an instant.

Nevertheless, as I have said, she had her virtues, and these were chiefly in her character : modesty and tidiness in particular. Doubtless she realised that beauty is but skin deep . . .

I first made her acquaintance in Algeria, not so very far from the original home of my friend Timmy the Rat. I saw a little circle of moss a shade higher than the rest of the ground and I knew that I had found Mrs. Spider's home.

I subsequently learnt how very proud she was of that house, and I must say that she had every justification. She had built it herself, burrowing out a tunnel five or six inches into the ground and then fastening the sides by spinning a web that plastered the earth. It had only one room, but then what more does a lonely widow

MY ANIMAL FRIENDSHIPS

require? And if it lacked space within, it made up for that on the outside, for it was furnished with a door, hinge and all, and that too she had made herself. Plastered earth and cobweb made the door, and web made the hinge. Great attention had been paid to the exterior appearance of the home, as was only right with a house so full of "modern conveniences." The tunnel stood nearly an inch above the surface of the ground, and this had the advantage that it enabled Mrs. Spider to watch, as from a tower, for the coming of possible enemies; but the outside of the closely-fitting door was covered with moss, to match the surrounding country, so that if Mrs. Spider thought it safest to lock and bar the door, visitors of evil intent might easily pass it by unsuspectingly.

For the same reason, I suppose, there was no handle: Mrs. Spider knew how to open her door, but she did not publish the information for fear of burglars coming while she was out. And there was no knocker, because that wasn't needed: Mrs. Spider always knew when visitors approached.

MRS. SPIDER

Clearly she knew of my coming, for the door was shut, and when I tried to raise it with the end of a needle, I found that it was bolted too—that is to say, that Mrs. Spider, resenting my intrusion, was holding on to the inside of the door with all her feet. Of course, like any other burglar, I could have forced the door, destroying it or its hinge in the process, but I didn't want to do that. On the other hand, I did want to make her acquaintance, and so, having myself the virtue of patience, I sat down outside to wait till she chose to show herself.

My patience then was severely tried. I sat staring at this little speck of moss till my eyes played me tricks and I could have sworn that the door moved; but always, clearing my eyes and peering closer, I found it still shut fast. This wasn't altogether surprising, for these trap-door spiders, as they are called, do not as a rule come into the open except at night.

If I had waited till dusk Mrs. Spider would doubtless have come out, but then I shouldn't

MY ANIMAL FRIENDSHIPS

have been able to see her. By this time, after a wait of some hours, I had become decidedly interested in her and very keen on making her better acquaintance. To wait again the next day seemed to offer very little greater chance of success, and at last I decided to treat her exactly as I was treating Timmy the rat : to take her home with me. But although I had taken Timmy out of his home and provided him with a new one (in my pocket) which was to his satisfaction, I couldn't do that with Mrs. Spider, for she would never have found anything away from the ground out of which a new house could be fashioned.

I therefore decided that her house should come too. I got a square wooden box, and then very carefully I dug a cube of earth with Mrs. Spider's home undisturbed in the middle of it and replanted it safely in the box. Mrs. Spider did not appear during the transference, and I sincerely trust that the mild little earthquake I had occasioned around her did not much upset her.

MRS. SPIDER

Very soon afterwards I returned to England, keeping the precious box and its contents in my cabin. Then it was that I discovered the first of many odd things about Mrs. Spider. Most creatures of the animal world are keen on their food; but it would be an exaggeration to say that Mrs. Spider had a poor appetite, for she had no appetite at all. I put what I imagined to be tit-bits inside the box, but they were never touched. Small insects did not fly round the cabin on that liner, and consequently, unless some tiny creatures out of the earth that was enclosed in the box happened to stray into the nest and pay the penalty of their daring, I am forced to conclude that Mrs. Spider ate nothing at all for more than a fortnight during the journey home.

And the hunger-strike continued for two more weeks after we landed in England! It was very odd, and entirely different from the conduct of any other animal I have known. Now, since she lived in my house for more than a year, I know a good deal about Mrs. Spider and her rather

MY ANIMAL FRIENDSHIPS

curious ways of living ; but I still don't understand how she managed to maintain her long fast, apparently without any inconvenience to herself.

The thing was really so puzzling that at times I doubted whether Mrs. Spider existed at all, wondering whether I had made the mistake of transporting to England an empty nest. She had, I knew, been at home when I first found her, for I had felt her holding down the door, and when I had raised it in spite of her a fraction of an inch I had caught a glimpse of one of her legs. But since then she had not shown herself.

Even to test the question of her existence, I was very unwilling to force her door, and therefore I tried to trick her into showing herself in the darkness. It was winter then in England, and it would never have done to have planted her nest in the garden ; so I kept it in its box, which I stood in a corner of my study. I fixed an electric lamp exactly over the box, and at night, when the curtains were drawn and all was dark, I suddenly

MRS. SPIDER

switched on the light in the hope of surprising Mrs. Spider on an expedition outside her house.

The plan didn't succeed, but it did prove that the home was inhabited, for at the third trial, though I did not see Mrs. Spider, I was in time to see the door being very rapidly closed. Mrs. Spider, I gathered, had got to the stage of taking an interest in her surroundings, and had opened the door for a peep out into her garden.

It was clear that she saw the sudden light very quickly and immediately acted on her discovery. It therefore occurred to me that I might do better by lighting the room gradually, so that Mrs. Spider might be seen in the growing light before she herself became aware of it. With that idea, I moved the box close to the window, turning it so that the trap-door opened towards the room and Mrs. Spider, if she looked out, would have her back to the light. Then, instead of turning on the light, I very gently drew back the curtain with the aid of a piece of string. The faint light of winter dawn came into the room,

MY ANIMAL FRIENDSHIPS

growing as I drew the curtain farther and farther back.

As soon as I could see, I discovered that the trap-door was standing open about a quarter of an inch, and at last, increasing the light still more, I was able to see Mrs. Spider's dainty feet on her doorstep. Then she saw me, and instantly the door was closed. Mrs. Spider, obviously, was a lady of very becoming modesty and discretion.

Still, I had made a beginning. I had definitely proved that the nest was inhabited, and also that its occupant had not succumbed to her long fast. More than that, I had begun to accustom her to the sight of myself—the first step towards arriving at an understanding with her.

Three mornings later, on repeating my experiment, I was rewarded with another brief glimpse of her feet, but again the door was slammed, so to speak, in my face.

The problem of feeding my guest still worried me, and it became more difficult than ever even to offer suitable dishes as the winter grew colder.

MRS. SPIDER

One day, however, I was lucky enough to catch a beetle in the garden, and with great care not to disturb Mrs. Spider, I put him gently into the box. Then I sat and watched, wondering whether his presence would be discovered and, if so, whether or not anything would be done about it.

The beetle set off to explore his new surroundings, stepping rather gingerly over the moss. After one or two journeys round the outside he tried a diagonal course, and that brought him on to the outside of Mrs. Spider's door. The instant he touched the moss that covered the door Mrs. Spider was aware of his presence : she heard him, for the earth carried the light sound of his footsteps, and she detected him in much the same way as Red Indians heard distant horsemen by putting their ears to the ground. Immediately she began to push open the door. The beetle was near the hinge, on the opposite side from that on which Mrs. Spider was emerging, and he didn't seem to be troubled by the slight lifting of the ground beneath him ; but he escaped for the time

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because I, in the excitement of the moment, made a slight movement.

It was a very slight movement indeed, and I was instantly still again, but it was enough to scare Mrs. Spider, and the door was at once drawn down again. I waited for another hour, but, beetle or no beetle, Mrs. Spider would not venture out while I was there. So I left her ; but I also left the beetle, still unheedingly exploring the box.

In the morning the door was shut, but the beetle had disappeared. I had put a cover over the box at night, and I didn't think he could have got out. So as he wasn't to be seen I felt bound to conclude that Mrs. Spider had at length broken her fast.

Nothing happened after that for two days, and then, in the afternoon, I saw the door very quietly opened. I did not see Mrs. Spider, but I saw the carcass of the beetle. Out it came, first a twisted leg, then another leg, and finally the shell of the insect's body.

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I made a careful examination of the remains, and was surprised to discover that, although the beetle had been torn in pieces, hardly anything had been eaten. Mrs. Spider, apparently, had been unable to resist an attack on the unfortunate trespasser, but she hadn't wanted much of him for dinner.

After that I tried to make our friendship move a little faster, but I didn't get much encouragement. My idea was to convince Mrs. Spider that in spite of my strangeness and my size I was not an ogre, but a perfectly friendly being who would not give her the slightest cause for fear. Yet in spite of all my efforts she continued to dislike, and to avoid, the sight of me. She knew, obviously, the advantage of keeping herself to herself, and she particularly resented the idea of strangers opening the door of her house and looking inside. And in that, of course, she was quite right: I don't like people opening my front door and peering in on my privacy.

Nevertheless, that was exactly what I persisted

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in doing with Mrs. Spider, because I did want to conquer her shyness and alarm. Each morning I lifted the trap-door a little with the point of a pin and, in my most winning tones, invited her to come out and show a little neighbourliness. Unfortunately, with the caution which I believe is habitual with widowed ladies living by themselves, she always seemed to misunderstand my intentions, and she held on tight to the inside of the door, preventing me from getting it properly open, so that we had to talk—or rather I had to talk—through the crack.

When I found that the earth round the nest was getting dry, I sprinkled it with water, for these trap-door spiders like their surroundings to be fairly damp. I hope Mrs. Spider appreciated the attention: I think she did, for it reminded her of her duties as a housewife, and I found the next morning that she had been out in the night to tidy her garden after the “rain”—the damp moss had been straightened round the edges of the door and everything put nice and ship-shape.

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Still, small mouthfuls of beetle-cutlet seemed to have constituted the whole of her diet for more than a month, and the meal didn't seem to be adequate. So I kept on trying to tempt her.

One day I found in the garden the body of a bumble-bee which must have been killed by the frost. I imagined that this would be regarded as an especial delicacy, and to make sure that Mrs. Spider should have it while it was still quite fresh, instead of merely putting it on the earth for her to find it during the night if she chanced to come out, I lifted the trap-door with my pin and let the bee drop down into the tunnel. Then, feeling very conscious of my own care and forethought, I went to a meal of my own.

When I came back three-quarters of an hour later, the first thing I saw was the body of the bee, whole and undevoured. It was lying on the moss, just beyond the door.

I thought that a trifle discourteous of Mrs. Spider. Surely she ought to have appreciated the trouble I had taken. But perhaps the repast

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had arrived at an inopportune moment, and she hadn't realised how nice it was. I therefore lifted the door and dropped the bee down the tunnel once more.

Five minutes later the door began to move, and as the interval had been so short, I guessed that Mrs. Spider was unrepentant and that the bee would again be ejected. That, I thought, was very disheartening, but I consoled myself with the reflection that, at any rate, the operation would give me a good view of her as she came out and dragged the bee behind her.

But not a bit of it! Mrs. Spider didn't come out: she merely threw out the bee, in a way which seemed to imply that she hadn't the slightest use for that kind of thing! She held the bee in front of her while she used it to push open the door, and then, shifting her grip, with a mighty heave she threw it outside.

Then she quietly closed the door, without even troubling to see where the body of the bee had fallen.

MRS. SPIDER

From my point of view that was a chance lost and a great disappointment. But in trying to make friends with animals there are many lost chances and many disappointments, and the only thing to do is to have patience and continue with efforts to get better acquainted. This I did, and somehow I eventually succeeded, though to this day I can hardly say how it was accomplished. The improvement was extremely gradual, so that I hardly realised what was happening, and I cannot even be sure of just when Mrs. Spider began to show a little personal interest in me.

If we can judge from the behaviour of ladies in romances, it is an excellent thing for a man to be hated, as it shows that he is going to be loved in the end. The heroine, in her intense dislike, is compelled to think about the object of it, and from that she comes to noticing little things about him, some of which attract her as much as others repel her: then the balance swings, and the hatred is utterly displaced.

It seemed to be the same thing with Mrs.

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Spider and myself. At first, obviously, I was an intruder, a spy, a breaker-up of homes. Then, because I persisted, Mrs. Spider apparently began to ask herself what manner of creature this was who was constantly trying to look in at her front door. Curiosity was aroused and gradually it got the better of her, until at last she couldn't conquer the temptation to peep out, just once—only once, of course—and see for herself.

That, at any rate, is what she did. I was holding up the trap-door with my pin and wishing that she would let go of the underside so that I could look right in, when I suddenly felt a slight lessening of her resistance, and I was able to lift the door nearly half open. As I bent down, we saw each other : a second's glance, and then, overcome with womanly modesty, she dropped out of sight.

That now happened day after day, until at last she succumbed to what is obviously not only a human weakness, and looked out at me on her own account. I kept perfectly still, looked as



Mrs. Spider would stare at me with all her eyes

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attractive as I could, and let her see as much as she wanted.

Apparently she decided then that, if not exactly worthy of her attentions, I was at least not entirely uninteresting; and from that day she became much more friendly, often staying to watch me for ten minutes or more at a time, with her front legs half over the edge while she held up the door with her back. She would stare at me with all of her eyes, then go below to meditate on what she had seen and afterwards come up for a further inspection. It was almost as if she had decided to write a book about me and was anxious to verify all her facts.

She still showed a disheartening lack of appetite, but by this time I had begun to realise that for some incredible reason that didn't matter. I put house-flies, small beetles, blue-bottle flies and many other kinds of insect right down into the nest, but they were nearly always ejected. Now and then a blue-bottle appealed to her and only the frame of it was returned, but for the most

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part she lived, apparently, on water and air. How delightfully low she must have kept her house-keeping accounts !

It never mattered whether the food offered to her was alive or dead. Once I caught a blue-bottle and a caterpillar in the garden and dropped them both, alive, through the doorway. After a few minutes the door began to move, and I realised that Mrs. Spider had captured both the caterpillar and the fly and, far from adding them to her larder, was summarily ejecting them both. She dragged them together to her door : then she pushed up the blue-bottle so that he acted as a wedge to hold the door back while she pushed the caterpillar through the aperture. He fell on to the moss, and then she held up the door with her back and sent the blue-bottle after him.

The extraordinary thing was that, either intentionally or otherwise, she managed to handle both the little creatures right through their capture and subsequent eviction in such a way that she did not kill them. The blue-bottle certainly came

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off rather badly—I think the weight of the door as he supported it must have crushed his wings—and I had to put him out of misery ; but the caterpillar, after lying half stunned on the ground for a moment, got up and ran. He certainly deserved his freedom, and I picked him up gently and put him back on a nice green leaf in the garden, where, doubtless, he continued to tell an unbelievable tale of his adventures for the rest of his days.

When Mrs. Spider had come to her threshold many times to take stock of me, I began to hope that as her fear seemed to have departed it might one day become possible to persuade her to come right out of her nest and walk about in front of me. This would be a proof that she now felt quite at home, and it would make the attainment of greater intimacy very much more simple.

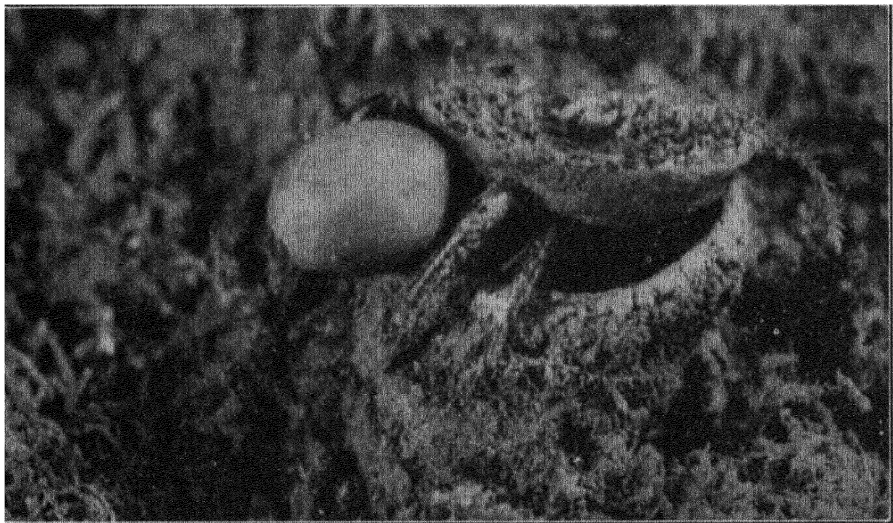
With any other creature this would have been easy : I should merely have had to set down a tempting morsel of food just out of reach and wait till appetite prompted an expedition to secure it.

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But that wouldn't work with Mrs. Spider, for to her food wasn't tempting and she hadn't any appetite. I therefore got a soft camel-hair brush, lifted the trap-door with my pin, and then put the brush just inside the tunnel.

What Mrs. Spider imagined this strange, furry creature to be I do not know, but she evidently regarded it as only another of the trespassers who had lately been so common in her domain, and she immediately attacked it, getting a sort of "strangle - hold" on to it with her numerous legs. Then, slowly and very carefully, I began to withdraw the brush, bringing Mrs. Spider with it. I was able to bring her level with the door hinge, so that the greater part of her body was above the rim of the nest, and I got the best view of her that I had had up to that moment. But then, before I could lift her right out, she suddenly took fright and dropped back into the tunnel.

I did not want to alarm her with another attempt too soon, so I waited a couple of days, and then tried the experiment again. This time she



She lifted the door and returned below

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held on valiantly, and I was able to lift her right out of her house and set her down on the moss of her garden. Then I laid aside the brush and waited. She examined the hairs carefully, decided that the intruder, if strange, was harmless, trimmed up a loose edge of moss on her doorway, and then calmly lifted the door and returned below.

All this took her about a minute and a half, and that was long enough to give me my chance of examining her, as I had so long wanted to do.

I cannot seriously call her beautiful, because of the smooth shininess of the back half of her body ; but she was a trim little thing, and I have no doubt that the lads of her race would have been ecstatic about her looks, even to the extent of risking the dangers which Fabre tells us are associated with wooing her. And at any rate, beautiful or not, she was certainly what a scientist would call "a magnificent specimen." I tried to find other trap-door spiders for the sake of comparison, but I could find none so large.

The next thing, now that I had succeeded in

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getting her out of her house with the aid of the brush, was to persuade her to come out of her own accord—a very different matter. There I failed. But my wife succeeded. I don't know why Mrs. Spider made this distinction between us, except that some of her characteristics were decidedly feminist and perhaps she thought my wife more likely to be sympathetic.

In any case, the distinction was certainly made. In all other matters Mrs. Spider became very friendly to me. She would now let me lift her out with the brush every time I tried, and she didn't hurry home again. She even became interested when I brought out the camera : she would pose on the edge of her nest, looking into the lens of the camera, and then, when I had finished, going below again. After I had lifted her out, she would often stay to do a bit of gardening, walking about quite unconcernedly and stopping now and again to look at me. She had no longer any fear, nor even any shyness. But the womanly modesty which I had already noticed in her seemed to

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demand that she should not visit a man unless she were properly invited.

From that point of view I suppose it was reasonable that visiting a lady should be governed by quite different laws. It certainly was. One day, soon after I had taught Mrs. Spider how safe it was to come out even in the daytime, I was sitting writing in the study and Mrs. Spider was down in her nest with the door shut. My wife entered the room, and within ten seconds the trap-door was lifted and eight dark eyes were peeping out.

Naturally I put this down to coincidence, because, although I had seen how Mrs. Spider knew directly a beetle crawled across her door, it did not appear credible that she could possibly know what was happening on the other side of the study. Yet the incredible thing in this case was the fact. I cannot attempt to explain it. I only know that from that time onwards Mrs. Spider immediately lifted her door the moment my wife came into the room !

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It happened again and again. And what is more, Mrs. Spider didn't make mistakes about it. She never peeped out as soon as *I* entered the room, but she did every time my wife came in. Perhaps by some amazing sensitiveness she was able to distinguish between our footsteps: I suppose that as she could detect a beetle's tread at a distance of three or four inches, it is not, after all, so unreasonable to find her detecting a woman's step at forty or fifty times that distance.

Still, however much one may try to explain it, it was certainly the most surprising thing I have discovered during my thirty or forty years as a naturalist. There was first Mrs. Spider's power of knowing immediately the study door was opened, then her distinction between the entrances of my wife and myself, and finally her different attitudes towards us.

For there always was a difference. She would walk about her garden in front of me, and while I photographed her: but if I tried a nearer approach, down she would go at once into her

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nest. Yet with my wife she would be positively playful. With either of us she would always put up some resistance against the opening of her door, but if I stopped and withdrew my pin she would be content with her victory and remain below : whereas when my wife did exactly the same thing, Mrs. Spider would open her door at once and sit there, just as if she were playfully daring my wife to try again.

If the challenge was accepted, there would be another struggle ; and if my wife gave in again, once more Mrs. Spider would come and ask for the game to continue. In this way the fun would be kept going for ten minutes or more. Sometimes at the end of it my wife would let go of her end of the pin and leave it half under the door. Then the door would open and Mrs. Spider would creep out, push away the discarded pin on to the moss, and then return to her doorway and sit watching triumphantly.

Of course, my wife would then urge me to have a try, and I would lean forward to pick up

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the pin ; but always, before I had even got a proper hold on it, Mrs. Spider would promptly go into her house and shut the door close behind her !

I cannot say, however, that this invidious treatment worried me. I was far too pleased at our success in getting Mrs. Spider to play at all. It had taken nine months to do it, with many hours of patient watching, and we had achieved what at one time I had thought to be impossible. This shy little insect, whose strange habits in the matter of food prevented us from coaxing her as most creatures can be coaxed, had yielded at last to nothing else but friendliness. She had got to know us well and to distinguish between us, she had put away her shyness and her fear, and had learnt to play with us.

That, as this book should have shown, is always the turning-point towards animal friendship. Timmy the rat played with me among little heaps of paper ; Chuey the cheetah played both with Toto and with me ; Robin Parker the mongoose played with anybody who would have a game

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with him, and when there was nobody wandered off to play by himself; Jane the elephant was older and more sedate, but she at least enjoyed our forest rambles; and Mrs. Spider came to the doorstep to play with my wife.

I have said that your animal friends must be regarded as your guests. For your guests you would provide entertainment. Get your animal guests to play; and then you will very soon have won their friendship.

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