

Bellefonte, Pa., January 24, 1902.

The American opossum, representing the genus Didelphys, is one of the most curious animals in the United States. It is the only one carrying its young in a pouch or marsupium, like a kangaroo. It is the animal which can feign death perfectly to escape its enemies, and the expression "playing possum" is a well known phrase. It is also remarkable in that it hangs by its tail like a monkey. Its hands resemble those of a human being. It is most liberally provided with teeth, and has a snout like that of a hog, eyes like those of a rat, and hisses like a snake.

Mr. Edward Decker, an agriculturist residing near Columbus, O., caught a female opossum last spring, and discovered that his captive had in her pouch an interesting family of twelve little ones. His dog had been investigating a rail pile, and suddenly raised a tremendous outcry. Mr. Decker found the dog worrying the old opossum and delivered her from the jaws of death, but not until after she had been severely bitten. He dressed her wounds, took good care of her and succeeded in raising to maturity every one of the twelve young ones.

When first discovered, the baby opossums were about two inches long, hairless and sightless. The dozen grew slowly at first, their progress being retarded by the injured condition of the mother. It was several weeks before the boldest of them, having had his eyes unsealed, timidly poked his white snout through the opening of the pouch and reconnoitered. By and by he ventured to crawl outside and hung by the long fur of the mother. Soon another and another followed the leader on a tour of inspection. After that the twelve came out daily, but were exceedingly timid, scuttling back to the pouch at the slightest noise or approach of any person.

One of the twelve managed to escape from the old corncrib where they were confined and was gone for ten days. Upon his return he was immediately set upon by his brothers and sisters as a renegade, and had his large, fan-like ears bitten off close to his head.

The method of feeding the mother consisted at first of throwing in a pigeon, and later a fowl from the barnyard. The young opossums used to have fierce fights over their nocturnal meals, and in one of these wrangles one of their number lost her ear, after the style of punishment visited on the renegade. This seemed to be the vulnerable point of attack in a possum fight.

When they had attained the size of rats the young bore a remarkable resemblance to these rodents, and when all climbed upon their mother, clinging to her hair, neck and legs, she staggered under the load. No other mother among the animals of North America bears such a burden, and her patience and tranquility under her manifold cares were admirable. Owing to the nocturnal habits few people have seen a female with her young.

The writer obtained from Mr. Decker four of the young opossums when they were about one-fourth grown and he made a close study of their habits. The opossums are known to naturalists as being one of the most innocent and harmless of animals. In its wild state, when attacked by man or dog, it immediately falls over as if dead, and no amount of beating or physical torture can make it cease "playing possum." There is only one way in which the animal can be made to resume the semblance of life, and that is by throwing it into water. A cold bath will instantly cause it to cease feigning death and swim for life.

In its habits this queer animal is a veritable sloth. The two things it likes best to do are to eat and sleep. It eats with great gusto and a carnivorous and omnivorous appetite. So eager were they to snap up a big beetle that one's fingers were in danger of being masticated along with the shelled tidbit. A half-grown fawn tied with a string and dropped under their noses precipitated a vicious fight for possession. The contestants for the epicurean morsel growled and snarled like so many dogs, and chewed each others' noses and ears in reckless disregard of sensitive feelings and proprietary rights. The claps whose noses were bitten hissed loudly, after the asprate fashion of their kind.

The four animals constituted two pairs. Three were gray, while one female was very dark. She was designated as "Blackie" and thrived amazingly, soon becoming larger than any two of the others. She was gentle but extremely sensitive and retiring. One day a collar was put on her neck and she was taken for an outing in the fields. Blackie became possessed of a frantic desire to part company with her self-constituted guardian, and became furious at the restraint put upon her movements. At first she tried to get away by stealth, sneaking away slowly and softly through the grass, and when at some distance, would begin to be pulled up with a sudden jerk was pronounced, and she growled like a bear at bay, tearing at the chain with feet and jaws and ruffling her long hair till it stood like quills upon the fretful porcupine. She never got over the memory of that day, and always afterward slunk into a corner and crouched low to the ground, the hands reached forth to touch her. She never manifested any resentment, however, her only desire being to escape notice.

The young animals spent much of their time in combing their long hair and washing their faces and hands. For the latter purpose nature has supplied them plentifully with salivary glands, and in taking a bath Blackie and her companions used copious quantities of saliva. Their pediculous extremities and their "fifth hand," the tail, were thus kept scrupulously neat, the hands being always clean and rosy. The hair combing process is both interesting and amusing. Blackie performed this operation principally with her rear foot-hands. With the right one she would begin to comb just back of the ears, and continue until a point above the ears was reached. The work was finished with the front feet. The five fingers of the front extremity are supplied with narrow nails, as are also the four fingers of the hands in the rear, but the thumbs of the latter have no nails, and in walking a limb the thumb invariably goes on one side while the four fingers go on the other. The tail is used while walking a limb, similarly to a rope-walker's balance-pole.

Young opossums may be carried around on the end of a walking stick and make gentle and interesting pets. They possess none of the viciousness of that most diminutive of the bear species, the racoon, but on the other hand seem to lack its intelligence. Naturalists characterize them as the most innocent and harmless of animals.—By A. C. Carson in Scientific American.

Subcribe for the WATCHMAN

Earthquake's Havoc

One of the most terrible catastrophes ever recorded in the City of Mexico, occurred late Thursday afternoon, when an extremely violent earthquake shock was felt at Chilpancingo, causing great loss of life and injuring many persons.

Details from the stricken district are meager, but scattering reports received here indicate that probably 300 persons were killed and as many more injured. In some quarters it is reported that 600 were killed, but this is believed to be excessive. It is known that the state capitol, the parish church and many business houses and residences are in ruins.

One of the buildings that suffered most was the federal telegraph office, which explains why but few details have been received from the City of Mexico so far. Though the telegraph lines and other apparatus at Chilpancingo were badly damaged, the employees, all of whom were uninjured, quickly proceeded to erect an improvised office on the outskirts of the city.

The number of deaths was greater in the parish church than in any other single place, as a crowd of worshippers was gathered there for the afternoon service. The solid masonry-walled roof came toppling down as if it had been wrenched from its bearings by a thousand strong hands.

The duration of the shock was 50 seconds. The war department has ordered the troops in the neighborhood to cooperate in the work of rescue. Until this work is completed it will be impossible to learn accurately the number of victims.

The greater part of the people of Chilpancingo are now camping out under trees around the town. In the City of Mexico the shock came at 5:17 p. m. Thursday, and was of such violence as to move the most substantial buildings. The Pan-American congress was in session at the time, and many of the delegates were greatly alarmed.

The first earthquake movement there was sharp. It was followed by an easier oscillatory movement north-northeast to south-southwest. The duration was 55 seconds. The actual damage was slight.

Late reports state that the shock was extremely severe at Chilpancingo. No casualties are so far reported there. The earthquake was also heavy at Iguala, destroying the parish church and many other buildings in the city and neighborhood. Among them was the sugar mill of General Frisbie, an American. The mill had just been completed and fitted up with American machinery at a cost of \$200,000. The property loss is immense throughout the state of Guerrero, in which Chilpancingo, Chilpancingo and Iguala are situated.

Chilpancingo is in the state of Guerrero, and is the capital. It is a town of 2,700 population, lying just east of the range of mountains along the coast, called the Sierra Madre del Sur. The state is where the Pacific coast of Mexico turns to the east. The city is almost 120 miles directly south from the City of Mexico.

Acapulco, a few miles away, is the seaport. It has one of the finest harbors on the Pacific coast, being practically landlocked, and was formerly the port through which Spain upheld communication between the Spanish islands in the Pacific and Mexico. The seaport and capital were formerly connected only by mule train, but now a branch of the Mexican railroad system runs to Vera Cruz, on the Atlantic shore. The state is one of the best mining districts of Mexico, but difficulties in transportation have retarded its development.

Chilpancingo, also shaken, is a small town, a few miles from the capital, to the southeast. It has a population of a few hundred. This section has been frequently subjected to earthquakes, although none of them have been serious. Church towers, ruined and buildings cracked have usually been the extent of the damage.

MANY HOUSES DESTROYED. Mexico City, Mex., Jan. 18.—A private telegram from a gentleman at Chilpancingo, just received by relatives in this city, says: "I and family safe. Many houses destroyed."

The fact that he does not refer to loss of life is considered significant, and it is believed that the first estimate of deaths resulting from the earthquake was greatly exaggerated.

West Branch Tunnel

The tunnel through the mountain for the West Branch road near Karthaus was opened a few days ago, the forces of workmen that have been working from each end having come together. The tunnel is being built on a curve and when completed will be in the shape of a letter U. This made the engineering work extremely difficult. The engineer's lines, running from both sides of the tunnel, met within a half an inch when the headings were connected. A shortage of only three inches in the entire length of the tunnel was discovered when the distance was measured after the opening was made. The measurement was made over piles of dirt and rocks, and the difference in the measurement may be reduced when the tunnel is completed and a survey is made along the level. The tunnel is 1,413 feet in length and the curve has a radius of 966.6 feet.

Mother of Six at 21

Mrs. Susanna Pennock, who is 21 years old and is now a patient at the City hospital, in St. Louis, has given birth to three pairs of twins in her brief life. Mrs. Pennock's mother bore twenty-four children, of whom twelve came in couplets. Mrs. Pennock says that one of her sisters, now living in Georgia, has borne five pairs of twins, and another four. There are thirteen more children, who produced three pairs each, making a total of fifty-seven sets in this one family, 114 children in all.

Mrs. Susanna Pennock was born in Sweden, whence her mother came to this country. The sad feature of this remarkable family is the fact that all but the first set of twins of the grandmother, who is now 83 years old, and still hale and hearty, have been afflicted with epilepsy.

Educator Loses Both Legs

Professor Samuel Hamilton, superintendent of Llanuel county schools, one of the best known educators in Western Pennsylvania, while attempting to board a train Wednesday morning near Braddock, slipped on the steps and was thrown under the wheels, losing both legs. Years ago, when Prof. Hamilton was principal of Braddock schools, he induced Andrew Carnegie to make a donation for a school library. This was Mr. Carnegie's first library.

Attempted to Kill Son

Farmers' Quarrel by the Burning of Two Barns. The burning of two barns is involved in an attack which Joel Troutman, aged 60, a farmer of Centre township, Berks county, is alleged to have made on his son, Howard, on Friday morning. The father is in jail charged with aggravated assault and battery, with intent to kill.

Several hours before daybreak, it is alleged, Troutman summoned his son to the barn and knocked him down with a billet of wood. Howard was quick to recover from the blow, and a fierce struggle ensued between father and son. The latter had the better of the bout, and left the place to avoid a recurrence of the trouble. Shortly afterward the barn was in flames, with five head of stock and fourteen hogs, burned.

While this building was burning the elder Troutman visited another barn, where his sons, Martin and Milton were at work. He told them, it is alleged, that their brother Howard's barn had been burned, and that they should go there and look after matters. Shortly after the young men had departed the barn on the old homestead had been fired, and was consumed. The house was burning when neighbors arrived, but the flames were subdued.

In the meantime Howard Troutman had procured a warrant for his father's arrest. The constable who executed the warrant found the elder Troutman suffering from terrible burns about the face, hands and feet. He is thought the man's mind may have been affected. He recently was involved in several law suits with the son, whose life it is alleged, he intended to destroy. The loss by the burning of the two barns is \$6,000.

JOEL TROUTMAN MAY DIE. Reading, Pa., Jan. 18.—Joel Troutman, in jail here charged with trying to kill his son, Howard, then attempting suicide, and suspected of burning two barns, is in a serious condition, as a result of burns received. He acts like an insane man, and declares that he does not remember anything that happened.

Jeweler Murdered

Would Not Open His Safe and Was Killed By Thieves. Bela E. Brown, aged 65, a prominent dealer in diamonds and manufacturer of jewelry, was found murdered in his store at Rochester, N. Y., Sunday night. His legs were tied together and he was gagged with a long red neck scarf. At the back of the head was a hole extending into the brain and there are several gashes in the scalp, evidently made by a hammer which was found near the body, smeared with blood and white hairs from the head of the victim.

The murdered man's head was covered with blood and a pool of it formed on a small chest of drawers on which the head lay. All about were evidences of a determined struggle, but a thorough search failed to discover any positive clew as to the identity of the murderer or murderers. From the position of the body in front of a safe the conclusion was reached by the police that the murderers had placed Mr. Brown before the safe, which was locked and which contained thousands of dollars worth of diamonds and jewelry and tried to force him to work the combination for them. His right hand was covered with blood, indicating that he had raised it to his head when he was struck and tried to ward off the other blows which followed.

The murderers secured nothing of value except, perhaps a diamond stud which Mr. Brown wore and which is missing. NEW CENTURY COMFORT.—Millions are daily finding a world of comfort in Bucklen's Arnica Salve. It kills pain from Burns, Scalds, Cuts, Bruises; conquers Ulcers, and Fever Sores; cures Eruptions, Rheum, Boils and Felons; removes Corns and Warts. Best Pile cure on earth. Only 25c. at Green's pharmacy.

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Medical

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Several persons of character and good reputation in each State (one in this county required) to represent and advertise established wealthy business house of solid financial standing. Salary \$5 weekly with expenses additional, all payable in cash each Wednesday direct from head office. Horse and carriage furnished, when necessary. References enclosed self-addressed envelope. MANAGER, 316 SANTON BUILDING, 46-54-1st St., Chicago.

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Travelers Guide

PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD AND BRANCHES. Schedule in effect Nov 24th, 1901. VIA TYRONE—WESTWARD. Leave Bellefonte, 9:53 a. m., arrive at Tyrone, 1:05 p. m., at Altoona, 1:00 p. m., at Pittsburg, 5:50 p. m. Leave Bellefonte, 1:05 p. m., arrive at Tyrone, 2:30 p. m., at Altoona, 3:10 p. m., at Pittsburg, 6:55 p. m.

Table with columns: EXPRESS, MAIL, WESTWARD, EASTWARD, STATIONS, TIME. Includes routes to Altoona, Tyrone, and other local destinations.

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