

CAUGHT BY A LUMP OF SUGAR

A gentleman from Aspinwall tells the following curious story of the manner in which the natives of the interior of the Isthmus of Panama capture monkeys:

Almost all the pet monkeys in this country come from Gorgona, a small village half way on the line of the Panama Railroad. The inhabitants are mostly native negroes, for no white man could live in the village a month, unless he drank whiskey and took quinine constantly, the surrounding country is swampy and covered with a dense mass of luxuriant vegetation. At nightfall a thick miasma rises from the ground and hangs over the forest like a cloud. This place is the monkey's paradise. They travel through the forest in troops, going wherever the king monkey leads. When the natives have been apprised of the presence of a troop they go about warily to capture them. Their plan is a simple one. A hole is cut in the shell of a coconut large enough to admit a monkey's paw. The coconut is scooped out and a lump of sugar placed in the hollow. A string is then attached to the novel trap and the negroes conceal themselves until the monkey pass by. Curiosity is one of the chief characteristics of these little creatures, and when they espy the coconut lying upon the ground they come down from the trees and proceed to inspect it carefully. The lump of sugar does not long escape their notice, and one of them thrusts a paw through the aperture to grab it. With the lump of sugar clasped in his hand he finds it impossible to withdraw it, nor does his greedy nature allow him to abandon his prize. The negroes have no difficulty in drawing them nearer to their ambush, the whole troop scampering madly about him chattering and gesticulating as only monkeys can. When they have arrived within easy reach a large net is thrown out and they are made prisoners. Twenty and thirty are frequently captured at one haul. They sell them to the employes of the Panama Railroad, who in turn dispose of them in the American market.

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