

WHERE IVORY COMES FROM

Ruthless Slaughter of Elephants to Make Billiard Balls.

Good Ivory Grows With Age—Interesting Statistics.

[Chicago Times.]

The veteran ivory turner of the United States is George C. Britner, whose knowledge of ivory both practically and from books is so extensive that he might be termed a human encyclopedia. "What he doesn't know about ivory is not worth knowing," remarked his friends. They were right, for he reeled off information enough to stretch from here to Africa and sufficiently weighty to require the strength and services of a herd of mammoth elephants.

"How long have you been in this business?" he was asked. "Since 1840. I always loved ivory and the results of the workmanship as seen in various productions, and I determined to devote myself to that for a livelihood."

"You have a fine collection," I observed. "Yes, it is interesting. Here is a bit of the natural ivory and here is a bit polished to a high degree. These mammoth tusks in Alaska millions of years, I suppose, and contrary to many opinions, I assert that it would make a good billiard ball. Mammoth ivory is as a rule, not as tough as fresh ivory—we call it 'green'—but it possesses an elasticity that is sufficient for many purposes."

"Elasticity is very essential for billiard balls, is it not?" "Decidedly," he answered. "In my profession the purpose of making the balls must be experts in judging of ivory. There are only certain portions of the tusk, although they are in reality a species of upper incisor, that is necessary to avoid the rest, otherwise an imperfect ball will be turned out. Step over here and watch me turn one."

Quick and alert as a man of 25, the ball was fashioned and as it revolved the expert chattered familiarly, pausing now and then to request the visitor to test its smoothness and beauty.

"Absolute accuracy is demanded. The ball must be of certain diameter to the hundredth part of an inch, and must weigh so much, neither more nor less. About 2,400 billiard balls are sold each month, and this represents the ivory from 240 elephants—a terrible demand on the living elephant, and I observe. But I do not agree that the tribes will become extinct; there are thousands of unexplored acres in the heart of Africa whence we receive the best ivory, and there are millions of tons still hidden in the earth, styled 'dead' ivory, but it is just as good. The durability of well preserved ivory, thousands of years old, has been tested, as balls were used by expert players who were not at all aware that the 'dead' ivory they were chasing over the table."

YEARLY CONSUMPTION OF IVORY

"What is the yearly consumption, and where does it come from and where is it used?"

"About 110,000 to 115,000 balls, I should estimate, America and Africa absorbing half, while the other countries absorb the remainder. The best ball tusk is those of full-grown elephants from near the higher regions of equatorial Africa. Weighing from twelve to eighteen pounds each, sometimes reaching thirty, these tusks are valued more highly than those of the male, which are often flat and diseased in the center. In the natural state you observe that the dark spot in the center, which was the last remains of pulp calcified, the outer edge was cementum and the rest was ivory. There are two kinds, hard and soft, the former used by experts. The largest exportation from Africa was in 1870-71, when 1,830,000 pounds each year was the output. The hard ivory, green or transparent, it is called, is from the west coast, while the opaque or white comes from the east coast. The former is brittle and transparent and contains much moisture, while the latter is tough and dry, evidencing the elephant has a different mode of living, doubtless, and under different climatic conditions. No substance has ever been produced artificially to take the place of this delicate and symmetrical structure."

In the past the Chinese and other oriental nations excelled in the treatment of it, as you know quite well. The Egyptians used it for ornamentation, but it is possible they used the more accessible hippopotamus. Sword handles, tenoises, chess, junks, trunks, for they rove the ivory of Solomon overlaid with gold, ivory palaces, couches, statues, as in the time of Phidias, when they were called chryselephantine, and thousands of articles, useful and ornamental, were made from this beautiful product of nature. The Arabian alchemists submitted it to the crucible and the pigment ivory black was produced. In Rome ivory was a symbol of power. Plates have been made of it, but lack the resonance of wood; being thin as paper, tablets and sheets are formed from it, its translucent quality indicating its perfection."

GOOD IVORY GROWS WITH AGE.

"Let me tell you as a fact that good ivory grows white instead of yellow with age. Yet it requires as great care as the finest pearl. Ivory balls, freshly turned, have to be treated very carefully, as a sudden change of temperature may cause them to crack. They should be placed in a warm room for three months, although they may have been properly 'seasoned' for six months or six years maybe, before 'turned.' We sent a set to a man who failed to take them from the express office on notification. When he did so, lo! they were cracked. The express agent vowed that he had taken the best of

care of them; in fact, he had placed them on the radiator to keep warm. As a matter of fact, the heat was too intense, so they cracked."

"Sometimes run across a bullet imbedded in the tusk. Presumably the hunter had shot to kill in the brain, but Mr. Elephant received his delicate attention in the support of the tusk or nerve of the tooth, and the result is a surprise to the ball ivory expert, who realizes that the growth has been affected seriously or not as the case may be."

"Commercial traffic is very great and full of interest in anecdotes and local advertising. The natives believe the elephant never dies in some sections of Africa, and others think he retires to some secret place to shuffle off his vast quantity of collected ivory was due, and after it became exhausted commerce demanded the slaughter of the elephant." By this time an exquisitely modeled sphere had been polished and presented to the visitor, who scarcely realized its rapid transformation under such delightful circumstances.

USE FOR IVORY DUST. The ivory dust had piled up in foamy masses like gelatine and naturally a query as to its subsequent use was propounded.

"Well, we do but little in that line—it sells from \$80 to \$100 a ton in London. It is used as a fertilizer, sizing for lace curtains, gelatine and for ivory ball. It weighs lightly, as you see. I believe straw hat makers use it as well," returned Mr. Britner. "Do you work every day?"

"Yes, and for over twenty years with this firm." "That's a long time. You have turned millions of balls and seen many vicissitudes." "Sometimes I will tell you of them. It has been a world of experience, as I have met many men of note, especially in this great game of billiards. Not these balls, but the ivory, I have seen. I have seen the ivory of the prettiest spheres, delicate as a woman's hand. 'The coloring has been well done. Some are not as attractive to me, as the color appears to lack brilliancy or the coloring is an art in itself.' He turned to his 'trucks' of various sizes and patted them familiarly.

"They are good friends. The whirr of the wheels sings pleasant memories of the past, and the present is equally as enjoyable."

BRITISH PATENTS IN THE YEAR 1898

How Common Incidents Suggest Inventions.

The report of the comptroller-general of patents for the year 1898 has been issued. For the first time since it was first published in 1844, there has been a falling off in the number of applications for patents. In 1898 they numbered 27,659, while in the preceding year there were 29,952 applications, showing a decrease of not 2,293 or nearly 10 per cent. The comptroller is of the opinion that the rapid growth in the number of applications which took place in 1896-7 was to be attributed to the activity in the cycle industry. Sixty out of 6,000 applications made in 1897 in connection with cycles, only 2,300 were completed, much less than the average. In the total number of applications, naturally the major part came from England and Wales, 15,389 from the United Kingdom, 1,389 from Germany with 2,599, and France with 1,133. This shows that American inventors fully appreciate the great advantages of a British patent. There were only eight other countries from which as many as a hundred applications came. There has been an increase among certain chemical classes, notably those which are connected with the acetylene industry.

Since the passing of the "Workmen's Compensation Act," the number of applications relating to guards for the prevention of accidents with machinery has been very largely increased. A single death or injury will often make considerable difference in the number of applications. For instance, after a railway accident caused by a luggage truck falling onto the line in front of an express train, there was a great increase in inventions for railway platform luggage trucks. As showing the relations between passing events and the course of invention, it might be mentioned that the publication in a London morning paper of a letter relating to the waste of horse-feed in London, was followed within five weeks by no less than 34 applications for patents for nose-bags for horses, while the average number up to this time had only been twelve annually. This is the most excellent example of the advantages which accrue to the inventor by the publicity which is given to legitimate wants. There is little doubt that many of our important inventions have been suggested by chance statements which have appeared in various papers as to the actual need for machines or processes.

Pleasures of Poverty

In a bright epigrammatic contribution to the August number of the North American Review, which is in the form of a dialogue between an artist and his wife, Max O'Rell celebrates "The Pleasures of Poverty." Monsieur is possessed with a desire for riches that his wife may live in luxury. Madame insists that they could never be so happy in luxury as they were when their income was most contracted, and she has the best of the argument, as is indicated in the following extract:

She—And do you also remember when, two years after we were married, our general suddenly gave notice, and left us alone to manage household-keeping as best we could? And how I never enjoyed them better. Now, say it is true.

He—Perfectly true.

She—And do you also remember happy, ringing with your laughter all day long; so that, in a month, baby put on six pounds of flesh?

He—And how I cleaned the knives?

She—Which helped your appetite for breakfast.

He—And the boots? Now I did not like cleaning the boots.

She—Yes, you did, and they never shone so beautifully.

He—Well, I flatter myself I was able to make myself useful.

She—Those were and will always be the days of my life.

He—And how pretty you looked with a white apron on, and your sleeves tucked up, showing your lovely arms?

She—Ah! and how you were once turned out of the kitchen for kissing the cook? You were sorry when I got a new servant.

He—Upon my word, I believe I was.

STRANGE KINDS OF FOOD

Lion Flesh, Elephant's Foot, Rhinoceros Meat and Other Delicacies.

Queer Dishes and Queer Appetites in the World.

[St. Louis Globe-Democrat.]

Lion flesh is said to be very good eating, but tiger is tough and starchy. Nevertheless, the latter is a delicacy as there is a superstition that it imparts strength and cunning to the eater. Bear's flesh is a great favorite in Germany, and smoked tongues and hams are considered great delicacies. On account of the rarity of the animal, however, it is not much eaten. Sausages—so dear to the Teutonic heart and stomach—are also made from bear liver; 25 pounds of sausage can be made from a single liver.

There appears to be considerable diversity of opinion as to the merits of elephant's flesh. In India and Africa it is a favorite dish with the natives, but a European who has traveled through Africa says: "I have tasted elephant over and over again. It is more like soft leather and glue than anything I can compare it to." Another traveler, however, declares that he cannot imagine how an animal so coarse and heavy can produce such delicate and tender flesh. All authorities, however, agree in commending elephant's foot. Even the traveler quoted above, who compared elephant's flesh to leather and glue, admits that baked elephant's foot is a dish fit for a king. When an elephant is shot in Africa the flesh is cut into strips and dried; it is then called "biltong." The elephant's foot is cut off from the knee joint, and a hole three or four deep is dug in the earth and the sides of it baked hard with burning wood. Most of these faggots are then removed, and the elephant's foot placed in the hole. It is then covered with a layer of earth, and a blazing fire built on top, which is kept burning for three hours. Thus cooked the flesh is like a jelly, and can be eaten with a spoon. It is the greatest delicacy which can be given to a

Rhinoceros meat is something between pork and beef, and is not to be despised when no other flesh is to be obtained. In America a possible estimate of a great delicacy. Kept in barrel for a week and fed on sweet potatoes, and when killed, stuffed and roasted, it forms a most delicate dish, resembling chicken in taste. A negro will spend all the night in the kitchen "possum for his Sunday dinner. Monkey meat is also good eating. Dr. Wallace, the well-known scientist, once breakfasted on monkey. "It was by no means bad," he wrote, "being so tender and juicy. Two states of it: 'Although the habits of the jaguar are filthy in the extreme, jaguar steaks are beautifully white, and remarkably like veal in taste.' In the same way, ducks, though feeding in mud, and covered with mud, form, as everyone will admit, a delicious dish. Kangaroo steaks are splendid, and our Australian cousins assert that kangaroo soup is the finest in the world. Travelers are also unanimous in declaring that the flesh of the alligator and crocodile is extremely tender, white and delightful to the palate. Seal flesh, though perfectly black, is matches for fowls, frogs and mud, form, as everyone will admit, a delicious dish. Kangaroo steaks are splendid, and our Australian cousins assert that kangaroo soup is the finest in the world. Travelers are also unanimous in declaring that the flesh of the alligator and crocodile is extremely tender, white and delightful to the palate. Seal flesh, though perfectly black, is matches for fowls, frogs and mud, form, as everyone will admit, a delicious dish. Kangaroo steaks are splendid, and our Australian cousins assert that kangaroo soup is the finest in the world. Travelers are also unanimous in declaring that the flesh of the alligator and crocodile is extremely tender, white and delightful to the palate. 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