

TARANTULAS FOR LONDON

FIVE OF THEM ARRIVE AND LEAD TO LEARNED REMARKS.

REGIONS WHERE THESE GIGANTIC SPIDERS ARE FOUND—PETS MADE OF THEM—MUSICAL CURE OF THE BITE.

In June last the London *Saturday Review* reported that a tarantula had been received by the society, and was then in the Insect House of the Zoo. This animal, however, was very short-lived, dying within a few days of its arrival. The loss has been much more than repaired, however, by the arrival in Regent's Park of not less than five of these gigantic spiders, which, though all known as tarantulas, belong to two different families, Mygalidæ and Lycosidæ. There is a solitary specimen of the former, and four specimens of the latter. They are respectively labeled as "Brazilian Tarantula, Mygale sp. f, Brazil," and "Deserta Tarantula, Lycosa nigra, Deserta Grande, Madeira." The first of these was purchased by and the others presented to the society, the last, at least, being "new to the collection."

The Mygalidæ, says the *Review*, "have a considerable range, but the larger of them, which are truly gigantic spiders, are found only in the warmer parts of the world—tropical America and the West Indies being specially favored by them. Among the smaller species which are found in Europe are the well-known trapdoor spiders, specimens of which are generally living in the Zoo, but, owing to their burrowing and nocturnal habits, can rarely, if ever, be seen; and also one species found in England, principally in the south, which constructs a curious dwelling consisting of a silk-lined tube or gallery, which takes at first a horizontal and then a vertical direction, the mouth being covered by a curtain formed of a continuation of the silken lining. At present, however, we are only concerned with the large American species.

"These, as a rule, do not burrow, but live in crevices in the bark of trees, and in hollows among rocks and stones, where they make a sort of silken case as a home. They are generally nocturnal in their habits, pursuing their prey in the evening and during the night, and appear to be by no means particular what they attack, though, no doubt, insects and other arthropods form the bulk of their food. According to the older authors, however, they are much given to destroying and feeding on birds, whence their name of *bird-catching* spiders, and the specific name of *Avicularia* given by Linnaeus to one species. Mme. Merlan figured and described one of these spiders which she declared was in the habit of surprising small birds on their nests and sucking their blood with avidity. Mr. Bates, in his 'Naturalist on the River Amazons,' tell us that, though he found the circumstance to be quite a novelty to the residents on the banks of the Pará River, he was able to 'verify a fact relating to the habits of a large hairy spider of the genus Mygale, in a manner worth recording.'

"The following is his account of what he saw: 'The spider was *Mygale avicularia*, or one very closely allied to it; the individual was nearly two inches in length of body, but the leg expanded seven inches, and the entire body and legs were covered with coarse gray and reddish hairs. I was attracted by a movement of the monster on a tree trunk; it was close beneath a deep crevice in the tree, across which was stretched a dense white web. The lower part of the web was broken, and two small birds—finches—were entangled in the pieces; they were about the size of the English sparrow, and I judged the two to be male and female. One of them was quite dead, the other lay under the body of the spider not quite dead, and was smeared with the filthy liquor or saliva exuded by the monster. I drove away the spider and took the birds; but the second one soon died.'

"This author also gives the following particulars of these spiders, which he describes as 'quite common': 'Some species make their cells under stones, others form artistical tunnels in the earth, and some build their dens in the thatch of houses. The natives call them *Aranhas Caranguejeiras*, or crab spiders. The hairs with which they are clothed come off when touched, and cause a peculiar and almost maddening irritation. The first specimen that I killed and prepared was handled incautiously, and I suffered terribly for three days afterward. I think this is not owing to any poisonous quality residing in the hairs, but to their being short and hard, and thus getting into the creases of the skin.' After this description it is curious to find that the Indian children make pets of these creatures. Yet Mr. Bates relates that one day he saw some Indian children 'with one of these monsters secured by a cord round its waist, by which they were leading it about the house as they would a dog.'

"In confinement these tarantulas are fed principally on cockroaches and meal worms. The specimen now in the Zoo is a large and sufficiently terrible-looking spider, though it is, we believe, by no means full grown. It is of a deep, glossy black, with the exception of its abdomen, the longer hairs on which are a rich orange red. It keeps itself concealed during the day, for which purpose it is supplied with two small flower pots and a quantity of moss, but if disturbed it shows considerable activity and every desire to attack the intruder on its privacy.

"Like the Mygalidæ, the Lycosidæ, or wolf spiders, to which family the *Deserta tarantula* belongs, have a very wide range, and the different species vary much in size, though none of them are so large as the larger members of the former family. Still, many of them, especially those inhabiting the warmer parts of the world, attain a very considerable size, as, indeed, may be seen by any one visiting the Zoo at the present time. They differ from the Mygalidæ, however, not only in size but also in general appearance; as, for example—a point which will strike the least observant—they are, by comparison, hairless and, indeed, generally more spiderlike, though, be it observed, they are by no means destitute of hair. They are wandering, preying spiders, capable of running with considerable swiftness, and, like the Mygalidæ, many of them are nocturnal in their habits, wandering about after dark in pursuit of the insects on which they feed. They live in holes, under stones, and in crevices in rocks or walls, and some species are fond of the water, on which they run in pursuit of insects.

"The most famous of all the wolf spiders is the tarantula of Southern Europe, *Lycosa tarantula*, about which most extraordinary stories were told by the older writers, many of which still cling to every spider that can be called a tarantula, thus causing the unfortunate animals to bear a much worse name than even they deserve. As a fact, the bite of the tarantula is painful, but not dangerous, yet it was fully believed to be the cause of a sort of hysterical dancing mania which appeared in an epidemic form in Italy in the fourteenth century, and spread all over the country, reaching its height in the seventeenth century, after which it gradually faded away.

"The following extract from Brookes's 'Natural History' gives in detail the symptoms which were supposed to result from the bite of one of these spiders: 'In the Summer months, particularly in the dog days, the tarantula creeping among the corn in the fields bites the mowers and passengers.' * * * The part which is bitten is soon after discolored with a livid black or yellowish circle, attended with an inflammation. At first the pain is scarcely felt, but a few hours after there comes on a violent sickness, difficulty of breathing, fainting, and sometimes trembling. The person who is bit after this does nothing but laugh, dance, and skip about, putting himself into the most extravagant postures; but this is not always the case, for he is sometimes seized with a dreadful melancholy. At the return of the season in which he was bit his madness begins again, and the patient always talks of the same thing; sometimes he fancies himself a shepherd, a King, or any other character that comes into his head, and he always talks in a very extravagant manner. These troublesome symptoms return for several years successively, and at length terminate in death.' * * * This odd disorder is cured by a remedy altogether as odd, which is music; for this only will give them ease, and they make use of the violin in particular.' The effect of the music was to make the patient dance sometimes for three or four hours until he was 'all over in a sweat, which forced out the venom which did the mischief.'

"Dr. Hill, however, whose book was published earlier than that of Dr. Brookes, evidently doubted the truth of the stories which were current about the effect of the tarantula's bite, as he passed over the subject with the remark, 'As to the effects of the poison they convey into the wound they make, there seems yet room for much explanation about it.' The *Deserta tarantula* are, as we have said, much smaller and less hairy in appearance than the Brazilian; they are also differently colored, being black in ground color, spotted and striped with a light gray and white. Those now in Regent's Park have no means provided for them to hide themselves, except a small plant in the middle of each case, and can therefore nearly always be seen, each of them sitting, generally in one of the corners of the glass cases in which they are confined, apparently screwed up into the smallest possible compass—as, indeed, is the habit of most spiders when at rest. They are, however, very fond of the sun, and when it shines they spread themselves out to enjoy the warmth, and at such times are full of life and vigor, and constantly on the look-out for prey, leaping with great agility on any unfortunate insect that may come near them.

"Considering the fierce and brigand nature of all tarantulas, it is, perhaps, needless to say that they are each confined in a separate case, the five cases being placed on the stand at the east end of the insect house. It is by no means an uncommon event for a tarantula, or even tarantulas, to be exhibited at the Zoo, but the present specimens are particularly noticeable as belonging to uncommon and, so far as the society's collection is concerned, new species.

"Pepys mentions the musical cure for the bite of the tarantula. 'One Mr. Templer, a great traveler and an ingenious man, and a person of honor he seems to be,' with whom he dined at my Lord Crewe's, after telling him a wonderful story of a 'serpent, and a Lark, the scene of which was laid in the 'waste' pieces of Lancashire,' speaking of the tarantula, informed him

that 'all the harvest long (about which times they are most busy) there are hidders who go up and down the fields everywhere, in expectation of being hired by those that are stung.'

GRANT'S EYE ON PURROY.

THE MAYOR AND HIS FRIENDS SUSPICIOUS OF THE COMMISSIONER.

It is not the bolt of John Reilly and the Fourteenth District or of John J. Scannell of the Eleventh District that the Grant group in Tammany Hall is most fearful about just now. It is the position that Fire Commissioner Henry D. Purroy, the Tammany boss of the annexed district, may take. Reilly has been doing the talking and Purroy is doing the thinking. Reilly and Purroy are the closest kind of friends, and the same may be said of Purroy and Scannell, or of Reilly, Purroy, and Scannell. The three have been together in Saratoga the past week, and the politicians who have been in the city have been wondering what they have had to say to each other.

Purroy has not committed himself to Grant. He is pretty certain to wait until the procession moves and then march in front of it, unless he determines that he had better take a hand himself in forming the procession. His personal following is so strong that he is wholly independent of Grant and his clique, and there is no special reason why he should aid in any way in a Grant boom. If he finally bolts Grant, and the two are on none too amicable terms, he will alienate from Grant other leaders than Reilly and Scannell. So it is the movements of Purroy that the Grant people are keeping the closest watch on now. It is said that it was on information received from Purroy that Reilly made his bet of \$10,000 with John Matthews that if ex-Mayor Grace and Mayor Grant were the opposing candidates this year ex-Mayor Grace would be elected by a large majority.

Speaking of anti-Grant men in Tammany, it can be stated positively that J. Edward Simmons, ex-President of the Board of Education, is unalterably opposed to Grant. It was wholly against the wish of Mr. Simmons that any woman members of the Board of Education were appointed this year. Mr. Simmons advised against it, but the Mayor paid no attention to his advice and reappointed Mrs. Mary M. Agnew and appointed Miss Clara M. Williams. This displeased Mr. Simmons very much and he determined to get out of the board. He did so, and when he prepared his resignation he said nothing to Mayor Grant beforehand about it, but submitted it without any consultation to the Board of Education.

THE LAW DEFECTIVE.

AN OPINION AS TO THE FORFEITURE OF SALOON KEEPERS' BONDS.

Messrs. Guggenheimer & Untermyer are counsel in many suits brought by the Excise Commissioners for the forfeiture of the bonds saloon keepers are obliged to furnish when their licenses are granted. Samuel Untermyer has just written an opinion for the Brewers' Exchange in which he holds that in many cases these bonds cannot be forfeited. The case in which he gave the opinion was a suit to forfeit the bond of a saloon keeper who had been convicted for selling liquor to a minor. The suit was brought on a clause in the undertaking to the effect that the licensee would observe all the provisions of the excise laws, or else his bond would become forfeited.

There is no authority in law, Mr. Untermyer holds, for the giving of the undertaking in the form in which it is given. The provision of the law is that no license shall be issued to keep a hotel, inn, or tavern until the licensee shall have made and delivered to the Commissioners a bond in the sum of \$250 with the condition that the applicant, during the time he shall keep the hotel, inn, or tavern, will not suffer it to be disorderly or to become a gambling place. The clause to the effect that the applicant will observe all the provisions of the excise laws, Mr. Untermyer thinks, is clearly beyond the powers of the Commissioners, who can only take a bond such as the statute provides.

In the case of a saloon keeper who has sold to a minor, he urges, a different system has been provided, and as the system fixes a penalty for the offense, the penalty must be held to be exclusive of all other penalties. Before 1886 licenses were issued only to hotel, inn, and tavern keepers. Since then the Commissioners have been authorized by law to issue licenses to persons not keeping hotels, inns, or taverns. The provision of the law as to the bond is not retained in this recent legislation as to the granting of licenses to saloons. This fact, Mr. Untermyer believes, will defeat many of the suits brought on bonds given since 1886. In some cases, as where the places have become disorderly, he admits that the bonds may be forfeited.

A WOMAN WITH A HISTORY.

THE WIDOW OF DR. ANTHONY BOURNONVILLE DIES IN THIS CITY.

Mrs. Charlotte Abadie Bournonville, almost a nonagenarian and widow of Dr. Anthony Bournonville of Philadelphia, was recently injured by falling down stairs at Asbury Park. She was taken to 153 Lexington Avenue, the home of her son-in-law, Hugh B. MacCanley, and died there. Yesterday, after many friends had viewed the body, it was taken to St. Stephen's Church, and Father Colton assisted at a high requiem mass. Among those at the church and at Mr. MacCanley's were Mrs. Bournonville's son, A. C. Bournonville; the Rev. Hugh B. MacCanley of Newark, Mrs. Fleming Maclehose of East Orange, Dr. C. H. Voorhes of New-Brunswick, and Mrs. W. C. Fountain of Dover, Del. The interment will be in Monument Cemetery, Philadelphia.

Mrs. Bournonville was born in France. Her father was a civil officer under Napoleon I. In 1816, when she was just in her teens, she came to Philadelphia with her brother, Eugene H. Abadie, who became a United States Army officer in 1836, and was a Brevet Colonel when he was retired in 1867. His sister married Dr. Bournonville before she was of age. He was of French lineage, and an uncle, the Count de Bournonville, was a warrior statesman whose portrait is in the Louvre gallery. His name is inscribed on the Arc de Triomphe.

Dr. Bournonville spoke seven languages, was a littérateur, and held the office of Master of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania for two terms. His wife shared his literary enjoyments, and, when Gettysburg was fought, was an officer of the Sanitary Commission. She went to the front and cared for the wounded for several months. She was a Roman Catholic and her husband a Protestant, but they settled all questions of faith for their children by allowing the girls to choose their mother's religion, while the boys became Protestants.

IN BED WITH ELECTRICITY.

THE IDAHO WAY OF KEEPING WARM ON COLD NIGHTS.

"We can give a point to New-York people about getting their money's worth out of these little movable electric-bulb lights," said a visiting Idahoan the other day. "Out our way we take them to bed with us. For keeping one comfortable on a cold night they are as good as a roaring fire in a room. Rubber bags, tin boilers, and other devices for holding hot water get cold.

"With the thermometer 40° below zero, as we often have it in Idaho for long stretches at a time, these old-fashioned arrangements would freeze before morning. But the electric bulbs keep one snug and warm all the time. When I begin to get ready for bed I put the light between the sheets. By shifting it about every little while it takes the chill from the bed by the time I am undressed. As I slide in I push the light down with my feet, and usually fall asleep with it there.

"It is proof against any blast of cold in the night. I never knew its warmth to fail. It doesn't cost me any more to burn it all night than if I turned it off at bedtime, and if I burned a cord of wood every month in my bedroom and could keep the fire blazing all night I could not be made as comfortable as by this little bulb."

THE WEEK'S VITAL STATISTICS.

There were 732 deaths and 927 births reported last week at the Health Department. The annual death rate in an estimated population of 1,637,548 was 23.32. Of the deaths, 509 occurred in tenement houses and 153 in public institutions; 369 were of children under five years, of which 250 were under one year and 63 were of persons sixty-five years and over. The chief causes of death were as follows: Measles, 9; scarlet fever, 5; diphtheria, 12; whooping cough, 15; typhoid fever, 10; malarial fever, 5; cerebro-spinal meningitis, 5; diarrheal diseases, 137; heart disease, 38; group, 5; bronchitis, 24; pneumonia, 54; consumption, 97; Bright's disease, 29, and violence, 34.

Scarlet fever, 40 cases of typhoid fever, 28 of typhoid fever, 3 of cerebro-spinal meningitis, 114 of measles, 39 of diphtheria, 11 of whooping cough, and 1 case of chicken pox reported in the course of the week.

ACCIDENTALLY SHOT.

While two young men, Amos Guinney of 71 Prince Street, Brooklyn, and William Collins of 239 East Thirty-fourth Street, were examining a loaded revolver in the room of the latter, the weapon was discharged, and Collins was shot in the stomach and dangerously wounded. Collins was taken to Bellevue Hospital. He told the police that the shooting was accidental, but Guinney was arrested and locked up at the East Thirty-fourth Street police station.