

DOWN TO

BY ALAN DEVOE

EARTH ★ *The Abbot Talks to Tigers*

A FRIEND of mine who has spent years in India was telling me a while ago about a monastery in a cedar-fragrant forest in the Himalayan foothills. There are many tigers in the area, he says, but the monks are not afraid. Love, they think, can cast out fear and invite in return love instead of hate. So they are friends of the tigers, and talk to them comrade-wise. What my friend swears he has seen is the Abbot going out on the verandah in his yellow robe in the dusk and talking tiger-talk in his benevolent old voice, until out of the jungle a great striped cat comes padding and presently purrs under his stroking hand like a kitten.

It's hard to believe. But I wonder. . . .

It was on a hot summer afternoon that I found the mourning dove disabled and gasping, in the dust beside our little country road. It fluttered in a spasm of terror as I stooped to it, and struggled with all its crippled strength as I held it in my hand. I took it home and put it in a red-lacquered bamboo cage (pre-empted from its status as an

antique and dust-catcher), with a dish of fresh water, and seeds and berries.

In eight days nature had restored her dove to health, the soft plumage sleek as ever, the wild eyes gleaming. My wife and I made a slow, sorrowful excursion, cage in hand, up the old wood road that climbs the hill behind our house. In a quiet birch copse the cage was opened. Our dove darted out and in an instant had risen on rushing wings, circled the tree tops and rejoined the freedom of the wild.

So we thought, for over a week. Then one morning I was sitting on an old stump, engrossed in watching a hollow where a family of white-footed mice were living. Suddenly, out of nowhere, a winged shape fluttered down to me. Perched on my forearm, clutching it as trustfully as it might grasp a branch in the friendly woods, was a shimmering mourning dove. It stayed only a few seconds, infinitely close and comradely. Then it was off, this time forever. I never saw it again.

Though a dove has a wild, shy spirit, it is not a fierce, feral thing

like a tiger. But there was the fox in the winter woods. When I told about that fox in a book, I wondered whether he could seem believable. Then the readers' letters came, to tell me of other fox encounters in other woods. My fox was not unique.

I jumped him on a bitter winter morning among the snow-bowed hemlocks where he had been sleeping in a drift. He whirled up perhaps thirty feet ahead of me, in a spume of flying snow, and we stared at each other, motionless, in the wintry silence. We stood so long that it began to seem unreal and eerie. Why didn't he run? Foxes have every hand against them, every country gun and dog. Their hearts have a permanent savage wariness, "ingrained," we say. When I couldn't stand our queer tableau any longer, I shied a dead hemlock stick at the peak-eared form confronting me. It dropped short in the fluffy snow. My fox ran then, all right. He ran toward me, in great bounding leaps, pounced upon the fallen stick, and with the head-high prance of a happy collie went dancing off into the woods, his treasure gripped tight in his narrow jaws.

Foxes are savagely wary. But this one, on a bitter morning, confided to me a strange and unsuspected secret. Deep down under all the fear he'd like to be a dog.

I CONFESS that after telling that fox-tale in my book, I was a little worried. Would it sound like a

tall tale? I needn't have worried. The other day I had a letter from a game warden out West — saying that a similar adventure once befell him.

One fox and one dove don't make a case. What hints at something substantial is that hosts of witnesses have similar stories to tell, all testifying in various ways to a bond of affection that can exist between "wild" animals and men. We may think of the adventure of Androcles and his lion as only a distant, doubtful story; but there abound, it turns out, true tales that are just as surprising and just as eloquent of the impulses, deep in wild hearts, toward affection and gratitude.

There is no animal in the woods that's "meaner," if you like, than a wildcat, certainly no animal that would seem less likely to turn trustfully to a human being. So it seemed to Phil Traband and so improbable was his adventure, even after it had happened, that he kept it to himself for years for fear his cronies among Oklahoma hunters and fishermen would laugh at him. He confided it to me recently.

He'd been hiking through a clearing of tall grass at the edge of a blackjack timber, when he heard behind him what sounded like a baby crying. As he entered the timber, the cry came again, closer, with a feline edge to it. He turned around. There, padding in soft-footed pursuit of him, was a wildcat.

He admits he was scared for a

minute. But then, something in him responded to what seemed to his incredulous ears to be a note of appeal. He stood still and let the big cat approach. He'd never before looked (he'd never *expected* to look!) close into a lynx's eyes. What he saw in the eyes of this one, as it came close, touched his heart. Unmistakably it was the look of a brother-spirit beseeching help.

Traband saw that the wildcat's mouth and muzzle were swollen. He squatted down, took the fearsome head between his hands, and gently pried open the mouth. One of the lynx's great canine fangs had somehow pierced its tongue and held it fast; the wound had become infected. As gently as he could — but it still must have been excruciating — Traband worked loose the swollen tongue-tissue from the impaling fang. All the while, his legs were tensed to jump and run.

They needn't have been. The wildcat stood quietly, without a whimper, until the operation was over. Then for several seconds more it stood motionless, relaxed in grateful relief, while the cautious hand of a still incredulous man stroked the tawny, grizzled back tenderly. With a final "mrroww," the big cat slipped away into the woods, to resume its life of being, as we may think, incurably alien and enemy.

THE beloved naturalist, Ernest Harold Baynes, didn't believe that any animal in the world is really

incurably hostile to us, or incapable of being accepted into comradeship. Baynes did something that a thousand authorities had sworn couldn't be done. He made pets (or "guests", as he liked to call them with a sensitive naturalist's dislike of the patronizing quality in "pets") of a pair of timber wolves. He acquired them as small cubs from the wolf-den in a zoological garden.

One of his wolves, named Death, he kept only until near maturity; but the other great wolf, Dauntless, was his affectionate comrade for years. Baynes treated Dauntless as he would treat a dog. Despite the direst predictions, the naturalist fed his gigantic friend raw meat, tramped the woods and fields with him, enjoyed serenely Dauntless's terrifying displays of special affection (consisting in taking Baynes' cheek gently in his teeth and fondly nibbling it). Dauntless appeared with Baynes on lecture platforms. On several occasions Baynes perpetrated the amiable joke of entering him in dog shows.

Dauntless was all wolf and looked frightening enough to be pursuing a fleeing *droshky* through the Siberian snow, but his heart was as devoted as his teeth were terrible. He died full of years, of natural causes.

Baynes tamed many other improbable animals: foxes, a bear, a bison, and that notably vicious animal, a big buck deer. He didn't think of it as "taming," though, which is perhaps why his successes

were so astonishing. He thought of it as just the going out of the human heart in love, to enlist the natural love deep-planted in wild hearts too.

THE Africa of Albert Schweitzer is savage jungle, and Dr. Schweitzer's Lambarene hospital only a tiny speck of humanness amid the encompassing wildness of tropical nature. But it is a speck that shines and glows with the great medical missionary's central faith; reverence for all life, even the humblest, even the fiercest. To that radiance of faith and affection, jungle creatures have responded in a way to amaze visitors.

The night watchman at Dr. Schweitzer's door is an awesome-looking African pelican. Years ago it swooped down on a native woman, thinking to secure a fish from her. Frightened, she struck at it frantically with a paddle, breaking one of its legs and crippling a wing. Schweitzer rescued the pelican, healed its hurts, and set it free. But it would not leave him, ever, for all the tug of its ancestral blood. It had been tugged by something greater. Night after night the huge bird perches over the doctor's door, watching, protecting.

If that pelican has surprised visitors, a wild boar has left them scarcely believing their eyes. You can't tame a wild African boar. But a wild boar, it may be, can tame itself: can respond, that is, to anything so ineffably strange and unexpected as finding itself cherished.

Dr. Schweitzer was not afraid to cherish the savage, ungainly hog that he adopted and called by the preposterously elfin name of Josephine. A weird sight presently became familiar in the little world of Lambarene: a wild boar running eagerly each Sunday, when the mission-bell sounded, to the corrugated iron barrack that served Dr. Schweitzer as his Chapel. For years, while a man of God talked in his simple way of the Love of God, a warty-snouted, wicked-eyed old tusker stood beside him.

Sir Edwin Landseer, the painter of animals, had an old crony in his house who, dozing with him before the evening fire, used to startle visitors considerably. It was a lion.

Ernest Thompson Seton was convinced — and the conviction grew ever the deeper during his 86 years of knowing the outdoors — that no animal is natively afraid of man. Thus no animal natively hates man, for it is only in the dark places of fear that hate breeds. If there is the rage of terror in wild hearts, there is also — if hidden, secret, shy — the original essence of a potential that might have become love and trust.

Perhaps the Abbot talks to tigers, out of a full and guileless soul, and they purr for him. Or perhaps they don't. I'm not sure. But again and again at the heart of wild things, naturalists and outdoor men have found the essential secret of that story. The name of the secret is love, and it lies hidden and waiting.



BY JAMES E. WARNER

What Ever Became of the **HOOVER REPORT**

PRESIDENT EISENHOWER is in the middle of one of the toughest battles of his career. From the political standpoint it may be tougher than the victorious campaign he waged for the Presidency.

It is the battle for economy, and efficient, businesslike operation of the sprawling federal bureaucracy, grown fat and arrogant in twenty years of unchecked growth.

A major sector in this battle goes by the dry-sounding name of "government reorganization." But cutting down the cost of operating the literally stupendous and colossal Federal Government — the biggest business in the world's history — is the only avenue to national solvency.

By-products will be the elimination of red tape, and very probably a reduction in force: but these are secondary objectives. The basic aim

is to instill really good business administration into the federal bureaucracy, which is now costing every man, woman, and child in the United States about \$600 a year.

The moment an American child is born, he gets an automatic birthday present from Uncle Sam. It is \$1800 of debt — the infant's per capita share of the staggering national debt of nearly 270 billions. The newborn baby will have to help pay this off during his lifetime, in addition to meeting his \$600-a-year current share for operating the Federal Government.

Like current defense expenditures, much of the debt was piled up by the last two wars, and neither political party can be blamed too much for it. But when fighting men in the Korean battle line can't get enough ammunition in the midst of vast de-