

A PET TAYRA -Baby is the pet name of my pet tayra. Does the reader know what a tayra is? Let him go to the Zoological Gardens, turn sharply round to the left as he enters, and keep straight on, steadfastly resisting the successive temptations of pelicans, ibises, mandarin ducks, *al fresco* tea, llamas, otters, and kites, till he reaches the Small Mammal House; there he will find a couple of tayras in the second cage on the left-hand side, ground tier. Or, if a visit to the Zoo be not convenient, here is the recipe for making an imaginary one. Conjure up in your mind's eye, if you please, an exaggerated stoat or weasel, with a body at least two feet long and thick, somewhat bushy tail in proportion; the whole of a beautiful silky jet-black color. Decapitate this visionary stoat, and having procured the head of an animal exactly similar, but white or grayish white in color, fix it neatly on its shoulders in place of the one which it has lost. Then paint a bright orange spot on its breast, elongate the hinder feet, and finally animate the whole with a most irrepressible spirit of ferocious mischief, and there you have a tayra. But not my tayra—not Baby; for, though he is mischievous to the very last degree—a very embodiment of all that is artful and designing—he is not a bit fierce. Why this should be I cannot say, since I never saw nor head of one of his kind before who was anything but irreclaimably savage. I had one some years ago, caught when just as young as this one, who would condescend occasionally to play with a stick or wooden ball for a few minutes; but before long its native instincts would be sure to assert themselves, and it would tear and rend the inoffensive object of its sport in the greatest rage, so that it was never safe to trust one's hand within its reach, and it never grew any gentler. My present specimen, however, is perfectly tame, and can be handled with impunity by any one who is not afraid of him. If you are nervous you will very likely get scratched, for he is firmly impressed with a conviction that every created thing is meant for him to play with, and he seizes everything with tooth and claw instantly. Consequently, if you draw your hand hastily away you may receive a scratch, as you would if you drew it sharply over a pin or nail; but there is no need for fear. There is not an atom of malice in Baby, and his little white teeth will not penetrate the skin in spite of all his energetic efforts. The same thing applies to the play of a puppy or kitten, or almost any young animal, whose object is to hold and carry, not to inflict injury, which it does only from the real or fancied necessity of self-defense. We talk of certain brutes as ferocious, or vicious, or spiteful; but we should remember that these words when used in this connection have a very different signification from that which they bear when applied to man, and that an animal's ferocity is really an index of its fear. When it is no longer nervous at the approach of man, it no longer seeks to defend itself from him with those weapons which nature has given it, primarily, for the purpose of procuring its food. Indeed, it may be laid down as a general axiom in the treatment of animals that when they can trust us we can trust them, and all our efforts should be directed, by every kindness in our power, toward inspiring them with this confidence,—
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