
LONDON ZOO

The Zoological Gardens

BY GERTRUDE GLEESON



Illustrated with Photographs

New York : Mcmxxxiii

NATIONAL TRAVEL CLUB

make such a set at the food that the new-comer, far from hunger striking, decides it must hustle if it is to secure a bite.

Another creature which belongs to the awkward squad is the rhinoceros. His hide, as everybody knows, is absolutely impervious to blows and he is by nature a singularly obstinate animal. One of the hardest tasks connected with securing a rhinoceros for a zoo is to persuade the creature to walk down a gangway from the ship to the quayside. Generally the huge creature is housed in an immense crate on deck, and after the ship has berthed, ropes are secured round the animal's massive neck and huge legs, and it is hoped that the beast may walk in the desired direction. Its keeper, backing slowly across the gangway, offers it food, while six other keepers hang on to the long leading rope. All goes well, perhaps, until the van is almost reached. Then a quayside engine whistles, or something else disturbs the rhinoceros, and, infuriated, it tosses the van lightly into the air, and proceeds to make matchwood of everything solid within reach. This scene is re-enacted when the rhinoceros has later to be transferred from van to stable, but eventually the rhinoceros is safely housed at Regent's Park and the Zoo authorities and the keepers sigh with relief.

The common Indian and African rhinoceroses thrive in captivity and have often lived for thirty years in a zoo. Even the rarer kinds of rhinoceros may live for twenty years in captivity. In the London Zoo there are generally examples of the uncommon Javan and Sumatran rhinoceroses, besides the ordinary kinds.

When very young, the rhinoceros is easily tamed, and

will follow its keeper about like a dog. When they are captured in the Sudan they are generally led unfettered across the desert, they are so docile. They become deeply attached to people they know, and can safely be allowed to wander loose about the Gardens. If they lose sight of their keeper, however, they are deeply distressed and utter plaintive cries, until he shows himself to them.

The first rhinoceros to reach Europe cost its dealer £800 and was bought by the London Zoo for £1,000. It was quite young, being about thirty inches high at the shoulder, but it nearly killed the dealer. He travelled in a special compartment with the baby rhino and happened to fall asleep during the journey. He awoke to find the rhino cheerfully chewing up his coat-tails. When he tried to drag his coat from between the animal's jaws, it became madly enraged and attacked him furiously. The dealer leapt out of the way, upsetting a sack weighing 150 lb. This the young rhino tossed into the air as if it had been a feather. The dealer decided that a baby rhino was not an ideal fellow-passenger, so he escaped hastily into the corridor and summoned assistance. The rhino proceeded to split up the solid woodwork of the carriage-van as if it were matchwood. Finally the dealer had an inspiration. He cast a cloth entirely over the rhino's stall. Darkness seemed to quieten the animal, as it does certain birds, and the rest of the journey was comparatively uneventful.

Another creature of uncertain temper is the hippopotamus, a near relative of the rhinoceros. Yet a hippopotamus born and bred at the London Zoo lived to the