

A Cockney Rhinoceros. FRANK BUCKLAND..

Category: Letters to the Editor

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A COCKNEY RHINOCEROS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Not long ago it was my privilege to announce the birth of a baby hippopotamus at the Zoological Gardens. "It never rains but it pours;" and it is therefore with great pleasure I beg to inform the public through your columns that a young rhinoceros (*R. Sumatrensis*) has been born at the Victoria Docks. The steamship *Orchis*, 73 days from Singapore, arrived in the docks with one rhinoceros. Two of these animals had been placed on board, they were male and female; but the frightful waves smashed the cage of the male, and he died on the voyage.

This pair of rhinoceroses had been captured by the natives of Malacca in a pitfall. Out of six or seven rhinoceroses so caught, the average is only one uninjured and fit to send to Europe. The female alone arrived safe in London, and on Friday evening last this rhinoceros gave birth to a young one. My friend, Mr. Bartlett, of the Zoological Gardens, kindly informed me of the fact, and I at once went to inspect it. The little beast, with its mother, is now at No. 1, King's-place, Commercial-road, and is the property of Messrs. C. W. Rice, A. H. Jamrach, jun., and C. Hagenbeck. It is about three feet long and two feet high. It has a ridiculous-looking innocent, hairless face, not unlike that of a newly-born mouse; it carries its ears folded backwards like a hare, and its body is covered with black hair; while it has a little horn as big as a shilling on its nose. It had a narrow squeak for its life. It escaped from the cage soon after it was born, and wandered about the ship's deck, getting quite wet and cold. It was, however, rescued and Mr. Bartlett called into consultation. By his advice it was carefully wrapped up in blankets and moved to Mr. Rice's house. On arrival, Mrs. Rice nursed it before a warm fire till its mother arrived in her cage. Mr. Bartlett advised that no cow's milk should be given. After a time, when the mother arrived in a van, she was milked like a cow and the milk given to the young one, and the little wretch got so lively that Mrs. Rice could not hold him; so they put him with his mother at once, and the pair ever since have been doing famously in a dark, warm corner at Mr. Rice's estab-

blishment. The little one has a box to himself and a feather bed to sleep on. "Jack," Mr. Rico's head keeper, sleeps in the box with the young rhinoceros, and takes care that it is warm and comfortable. The mother—a great beast about 10ft. long and about 4ft. 6in. high—has been hitherto very quiet, but now she is getting a little savage, even though she has a nice warm horse rug tied over her, and has the best of food. The little animal seems quite strong and active, and walks about by himself, going into his box or lying down by his mother when he has had his dinner. I have tasted the milk of the rhinoceros. It is excellent. I suppose I am about the only man who has tasted rhinoceros milk and eaten a steak of young hippopotamus in London. We must look out for new articles of diet in these hard times.

I should be very sorry if this young rhinoceros and its mother were allowed to cross the Atlantic, and I trust sincerely that the Council of the Zoological Society will see fit to purchase these two interesting and valuable animals. Very great credit must be given to Mr. Engelke, who has been 15 times to India to bring back living animals, and to Mr. Rice and Mr. Jamrach for the capital they have embarked and the courage they have shown in the capture and shipment of "wild beasts" for the instruction and amusement of the public. At the next meeting of the Zoological Society, December 17, at Hanover-square, Mr. Bartlett will give further particulars of this young rhinoceros, the first, and I believe the only one, ever born in England.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

FRANK BUCKLAND.