

SCIENCE AND ART MUSEUM, DUBLIN.

GUIDE

TO THE

NATURAL HISTORY DEPARTMENT.

I.—VERTEBRATE ANIMALS.

[CHIEFLY RECENT.]

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tragus), a well-known inhabitant of the highest European mountains. Its skin is much valued for its toughness and pliability. The Domestic Sheep has probably descended from several species of wild sheep, some of which are of great size. Horns of the Pamir Sheep (*Ovis polii*), each measuring sixty-three inches along the curves, are exhibited in the case. The Swiss Ibex (*Capra ibex*), one of the wild goats of Europe, has become almost extinct.

SUB-ORDER—PERISSODACTYLA.

Case V. In the foot of all the animals of the family to which the Horse belongs, there is only one greatly developed toe, which, with its hoof, the equivalent to our nail, constitutes the whole foot; of the other four toes, generally present in mammals, two being absent and two rudimentary. Only one representative of the Horse tribe is contained in this case, viz.:—a skeleton of Burchell's Zebra (*Equus burchelli*). The Tapirs are hog-like animals, with an uneven number of toes on their hind feet. They inhabit the dense forests of Malaysia and South America, feed on vegetables, and are nocturnal in their habits. The Rhinoceroses have large bodies supported on short, stout legs. Some species have one, others two horns on or above the nose. The skin is so thick that bullets have some difficulty in penetrating it. A stuffed specimen of the Sumatran Rhinoceros and a skeleton of the Indian Rhinoceros are on the ground floor, whilst skulls and teeth as well as horns are placed in Case V.

SUB-ORDER—HYRACOIDEA (CONEYS).

Case V. This sub-order contains but one genus, called Hyrax or Coney. It is a little animal about the size of a rabbit, but in its internal structure it more nearly resembles the Ungulates than the Rodents. It inhabits Palestine, Arabia, the Cape of Good Hope, and West Africa.

SUB-ORDER—PROBOSCIDEA (ELEPHANTS).

The Elephants have huge massive bodies, sparsely covered with hair. The nose is prolonged into a trunk or proboscis which is used for conveying both food and water to the mouth. The upper incisor teeth grow to a great length, and are known as "tusks." Elephants are hunted for the sake of the ivory of which their tusks are composed. There are two species living, viz.:—the African and Indian Elephants. Skeletons of the latter are in the lower room. The Mammoth, an extinct Elephant, covered with long coarse hair, formerly inhabited Europe, and remains of it have been found in some parts of Ireland, and are exhibited in the Palæontological Room.

ORDER—RODENTIA (GNAWING MAMMALS).

The Rodentia, the largest order of Mammals, have all long, curved, chisel-shaped front or incisor teeth, which continue growing during the whole life of the animal, being worn away at the tips as fast as they grow. Canine teeth are entirely absent.

SUB-ORDER—SIMPLICIDENTATA.

Case VI. The Flying Squirrels (*Pteromys*) are easily distinguished from the ordinary squirrels by the large fold of skin extending along the sides of the body. This gives the animals great support in their extensive leaps from tree to tree. The true Squirrels (*Sciurus*) are distributed over nearly all parts of the world, and number about eighty species. The Souseliks (*Spermophilus*) are closely related to the squirrels. They are burrowing animals, and live in large colonies. The Marmots (*Arctomys*), like the last genus, live underground in extensive burrows. In autumn they take unusual quantities of food, which makes them very fat, and prepares them for their long winter sleep. The Beaver (*Castor*) is now very rare in Europe, but is abundant in Siberia and some parts of North America. It is very destructive in woods, cutting down the trees with its sharp teeth. With the logs it builds large mounds, and constructs dams across rivers. More than 300 species of Rats and Mice are known. Lemmings (*Myodes lemmus*) are among the most remarkable of the Rat family on account of the great migrations they perform from time to time in Norway, their native country. The Jerboas, or Jumping Mice (*Dipus*) look like miniature Kangaroos. They inhabit North Africa and Asia.

The Coypu (*Myopotamus coypus*), from South America, is one of the largest Rodents, and lives near the banks of lakes and rivers. It is a good swimmer, but moves awkwardly on land. Its fur is of considerable value. The Porcupine (*Hystrix cristata*), is an inhabitant of Southern Europe, and most parts of North Africa. The hinder part of the body is covered with long, sharp spines, which the animal is able to erect, thus forming for itself a very powerful protection. The Capybara (*Hydrochærus capybara*) is more pig-like than any other members of the order. It is distributed over the eastern part of South America, where it frequents the borders of lakes and rivers.

SUB-ORDER—DUPLICIDENTATA.

Case VI. All Rodents, which have been described above, have a single row of teeth, while the members of this second sub-order have a pair of minute incisor teeth placed immediately behind the large incisors. The first family includes the Hares and Rabbits which are found in nearly all parts of the world. (For difference between Irish and English Hare, see description of British collection)