

GUIDE
TO THE
GALLERIES
OF
MAMMALIA
(MAMMALIAN, OSTEOLOGICAL, CETACEAN)
IN THE
DEPARTMENT OF ZOOLOGY
OF THE
BRITISH MUSEUM (NATURAL HISTORY).

ILLUSTRATED BY 57 WOODCUTS AND 2 PLANS.

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their soles are covered with fleshy pads, which enable them to adhere to, and climb with safety up, smooth surfaces of rocks or trees. These animals are entirely vegetable feeders, some dwelling among rocks, others climbing up trees. Among the Rock-Conies may be

Fig. 14.

The Coney (*Hyrax syriacus*).

specially mentioned the *Hyrax syriacus*, which is the "Coney" of our English translation of the Bible.

Suborder PERISSODACTYLA.

The Perissodactyla, or Odd-toed Ungulates, are represented at the present day by three well-known animals, the Rhinoceros, Tapir, and Horse, which have in common many important characters, chiefly in their teeth and limb-bones, which will be better explained in connection with the skeletons exhibited in the Osteological Gallery. Whilst in Miocene and Pliocene times this Suborder was represented by a very large number of different forms, it is now so deficient in species and individuals that it must be supposed to be in a more or less decadent condition.

Of the Rhinoceroses there are five or six known species, all large animals, with such thick and unyielding skins as to necessitate in some the formation of deep folds to enable them to move their limbs with any facility, and with three toes on each foot. The horns, which are placed on their muzzles, differ essentially in structure from those of other Mammals, being composed of modified and agglutinated hairs.

This group is now restricted to the African and Indian regions,

but in former times they were spread over all Europe, Asia, and America. One of them (*R. tichorhinus*), a native of Europe and N. Asia, was invested with a coat of thick woolly hairs, just like its contemporary, the Mammoth. Specimens of the following species are exhibited on the left of the Saloon:—

The Indian Two-horned Rhinoceros (*R. niger*), a native of the Malayan peninsula, one of the rarest of the genus. The Common African Black Rhinoceros (*R. bicornis*), found all over Africa. It is distinguished from the next species by its elongated and prehensile upper lip, smaller size, and different habits. Its two horns are very variable in length; the front one being generally much the longer of the two, but in some specimens the posterior horn is as long as or longer than the anterior; these latter specimens are often considered to be a distinct species, to which the name of "Keitloa" is given.

The White Rhinoceros (*R. simus*) of S. Africa, with a square upper lip, is a large species, of which no full-grown specimens have ever been sent to England. Its anterior horn is very slender, and has been found to attain to a length of four feet; the animal being of a mild and timid disposition, and feeding chiefly on grass, uses its horn rarely, either for digging or for attack. This species is becoming very scarce and in danger of being exterminated, which is the more to be regretted, as from all accounts it was capable of being tamed. A young mounted specimen is placed near the *R. bicornis*.

The large Indian Rhinoceros (*R. unicornis*), a one-horned species from North-eastern India, of which a full-grown male is exhibited.

On the tops of Wall-cases 45, 46, 53, and 54, is a series of Rhinoceros horns representing variations of growth.

The Tapirs (*Tapirus*) (Cases 35 and 36) are swamp-loving animals, excellent swimmers and divers, of which one species occurs in Malaysia and the others in Central and South America—a distribution which shows that at some former period of the world's history they ranged all over the intervening countries, through China, Kamtschatka, and North-west America. In fact a fossil Chinese Tapir has been discovered in which the teeth are so perfectly preserved as to show that the species can only have become recently extinct. Of the five species of Tapir known

[Cases
35 & 36.]

the Malayan has a white back, while the rest are nearly uniformly black when adult, although all when young are marked with longitudinal stripes of yellow or white. They are thick-set animals, with short ears, and with their nose elongated into a short prehensile proboscis; they have four toes on their fore, and three on their hind feet.

In the Horses, Asses, and Zebras (*Equidæ*) the toes are reduced in number to an extent entirely unique among the Mammalia, there being only a single digit on each of the four feet, enormously-strengthened to bear the weight of the body, but yet retaining the same composition as our own middle finger. The wild species of this family are indigenous in the open plains of Asia and Africa. The herds of Wild Horses now found in America are the descendants of domesticated and introduced animals. Curiously enough, however, that continent was in former ages the headquarters of the family, many different forms having been there developed, and become again entirely extinct.

The two Cases in the centre of the Gallery show several members of the family, as, for instance, the nearly extinct true Zebra (*Equus zebra*); the comparatively common Burchell's Zebra (*Equus burchelli*) of Central South Africa, distinguished by the different arrangement of the stripes on the body; the Wild Ass of Central Asia; and several interesting cross-breeds between different members of the Horse family.

Suborder ARTIODACTYLA.

The Artiodactyla, or Even-toed Ungulates, are distinguished by having the two central hoofs of each foot equal in size. They consist of two very distinct groups. The members of the first are the Hippopotami and Pigs, which are non-ruminant, the second comprising all the Ruminants, or Mammals that chew the cud.

Of the *Hippopotamidæ*, which were once extremely numerous in this country, in Southern Europe, and India, only two species have survived, viz. the Common Hippopotamus (*H. amphibius*), too well known to require further notice, and of which several stuffed specimens are exhibited in the Saloon; and the much smaller Liberian Hippopotamus (Case 37), which does not exceed a Wild Boar in size, and occurs only in a few localities in West Africa.