

Mammals of Other Lands

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Photo by W. P. Dando

HAIRY-EARED SUMATRAN RHINOCEROS

This species is found in Eastern Bengal and in the Malay Peninsula and adjacent large islands

THE RHINOCEROS.

BY F. C. SELOUS.

OF the five existing species of RHINOCEROS, three are found in Asia, whilst two are inhabitants of Africa.

Of the three Asiatic species, two, the INDIAN and the JAVAN, are one-horned, and have a single pair of broad incisor teeth in the upper jaw, and a pair of sharp-edged and pointed tusks in the lower, the nasal bones being long and narrow, and terminating in a point. In both these species the skin is hairless (except for tufts or fringes at the extremity of the tail and on the edges of the ears), and is arranged in shield-like folds over the body. The arrangement of these folds, however, differs somewhat in the two species, and the large round tubercles with which the skin of the great Indian rhinoceros is profusely studded are wanting in the Javan species.

The INDIAN RHINOCEROS inhabits the Terai at the foot of the Himalaya from Bhutan to Nepal, and is said to be very abundant in Assam and the Bhutan Dooars. It frequents

swampy ground, and lives amongst jungles and dense growths of reeds and grass, which attain a height sometimes of 20 feet, and cover vast areas of ground in the valley of the Brahmaputra and other rivers.

Owing to the nature of the country in which it lives, the Indian rhinoceros cannot often be hunted with much prospect of success, except with the aid of elephants, which sagacious animals are not only employed to carry the hunters, but are also used to beat the great grass jungles in which the rhinoceroses lie hidden, and drive them towards the guns.

Despite its great size and strength, the Indian rhinoceros seems to be regarded as, in general, a timid and inoffensive animal, and even when wounded it seldom charges home. Elephants, however, appear to be as a rule nervous when in the near proximity of rhinoceroses, perhaps objecting to the smell of those animals. When the Indian rhinoceros does make good its charge against either man or elephant, it cuts and rips its enemy with its teeth, and makes little use of its horn as an offensive weapon.

The Indian rhinoceros is said to live principally, if not entirely, on grass and reeds. As a rule it is a solitary animal, but sometimes several are found living in a comparatively small extent of grass-covered plain.

Large males of this species will stand from 5 feet 9 inches to 6 feet at the shoulder, and they are enormously bulky. Both sexes carry well-developed horns, which, however, do not usually attain a length of upwards of 12 inches. There is a specimen in the British Museum measuring 19 inches, and it is believed that in very exceptional instances a length of 2 feet has been attained.

The JAVAN RHINOCEROS, though it has been called the Lesser Indian Rhinoceros, is said by a late authority—Mr. C. E. M. Russell—to stand about the same height at the shoulder as the Indian species. It is found in the Sunderbunds of Eastern Bengal, and has been met with in the Sikhim Terai and in Assam, ranging eastwards through Burma and the Malay Peninsula to Sumatra, Java, and Borneo.



Photo by J. W. McLellan]

[Highbury

GREAT INDIAN RHINOCEROS

The largest land mammal of the East after the elephant

But little appears to be known of the habits of this species of rhinoceros. Although it is found in the swampy grass-covered plains of the Sunderbunds, its more usual habitat seems to be hilly forest-covered country, and both in Burma and Java it ascends to a height of several thousand feet above sea-level. It feeds principally upon leaves and the young shoots of trees and bushes. In disposition it is timid and inoffensive. Only the male carries a horn, which, being very short, is a very poor trophy for a sportsman.

The third Asiatic species of rhinoceros, known as the SUMATRAN, is the smallest of all living rhinoceroses. This species carries two horns, and its skin, which is very rough, is usually thinly covered with hair of a dark brown colour and of considerable length. The folds in the skin of the Sumatran rhinoceros are not nearly so well developed as in its single-horned relatives, and the one behind the shoulders is alone continued over the back. Although furnished with tusks in the lower jaw, the small pair of incisor teeth, which in the other two Asiatic rhinoceroses are always present in front of these tusks, are wanting in the Sumatran species.

The Sumatran rhinoceros is rare in Assam, but is found in Burma and the Malay Peninsula, as well as in Siam, Sumatra, and Borneo. The two horns of this species are placed at some

distance apart. Although they are as a rule very short, the front horn occasionally grows to a considerable length, sweeping backwards in a graceful curve.

In height adult males of the Sumatran species stand on the average from 4 feet to 4½ feet at the shoulder, and females sometimes not more than 3 feet 8 inches.

Like the Javan rhinoceros, the Sumatran species is by preference an inhabitant of hilly, forest-covered country, and browses on the leaves and shoots of trees and bushes. It is a timid and inoffensive animal, soon becoming tame in captivity. Its flesh is said to be much appreciated by the Dyaks of Borneo; and as its horns are

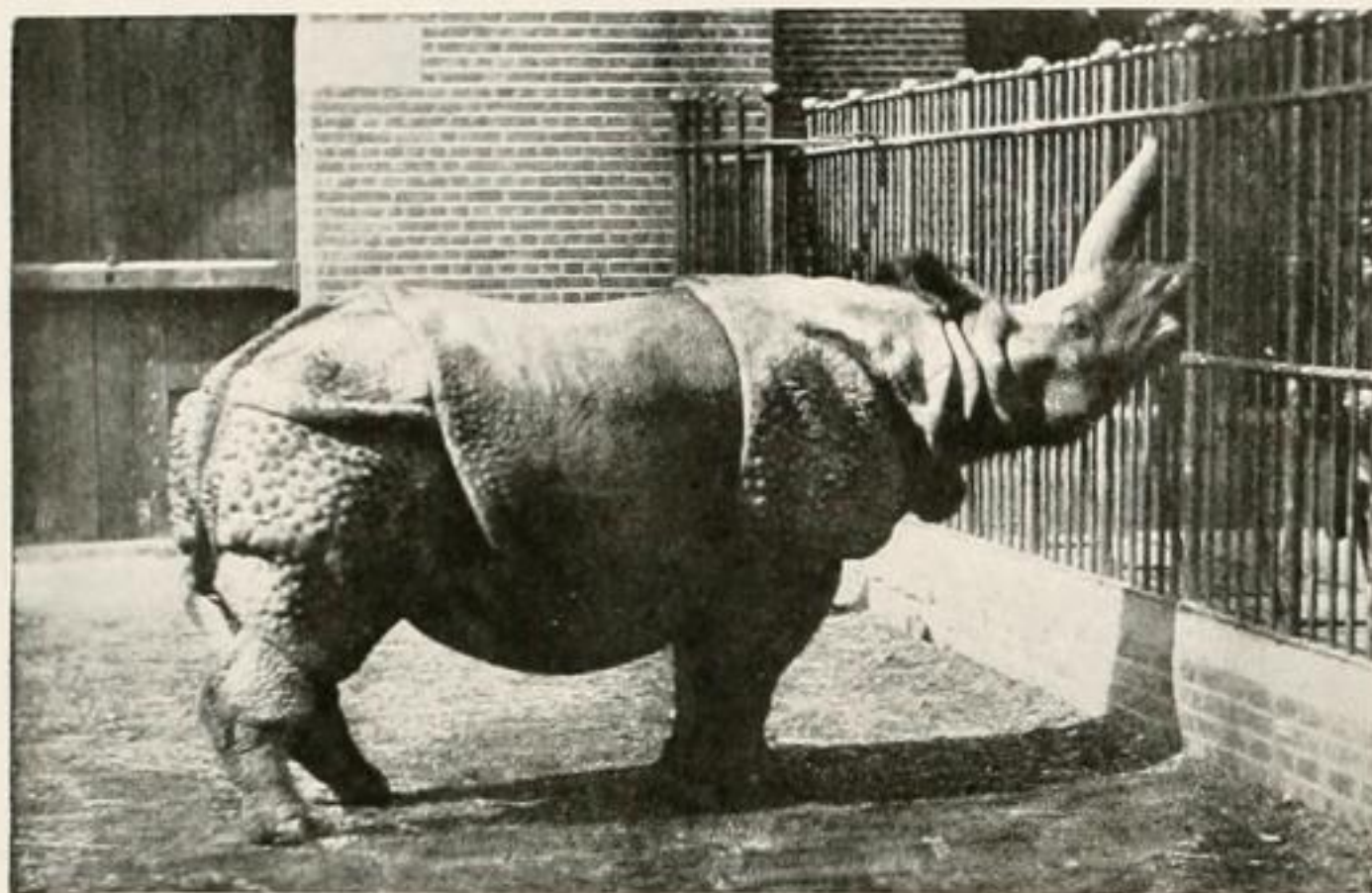


Photo by York & Son]

[Notting Hill

GREAT INDIAN RHINOCEROS

This species inhabits the grass jungles of Northeastern India

of value for export to China, where they are used for medicinal purposes, it has of late years very much decreased in numbers in the province of Sarawak, but is more plentiful in Central and North Borneo. Living as it does in dense jungle, it is an animal which is seldom seen by European sportsmen, and its habits in a wild state have never been yet very closely studied.

Turning to the two species of rhinoceros which inhabit the continent of Africa, both are double-horned, and neither furnished with incisor teeth, the nasal bones being thick, rounded, and truncated in front. Both, too, are smooth-skinned and entirely hairless, except on the edge of the ears and extremity of the tail, which are fringed or tufted.

Of the two African species, the WHITE or SQUARE-MOUTHED RHINOCEROS is the larger and the rarer. Until quite recently the range of this huge ungainly-looking animal, the biggest of all terrestrial mammals after the elephant, was supposed to be entirely confined to the southern portions of the African Continent; for although from time to time horns had found their way to Zanzibar which seemed referable to the square-mouthed rhinoceros, the fact of the existence of the white rhinoceros in any part of Africa north of the Zambesi remained in doubt until a female was shot in the year 1900, in the neighbourhood of Lado, on the Upper Nile, by Captain A. St. H. Gibbons, who brought its skin, skull, and horns to England. The fact, however, that the

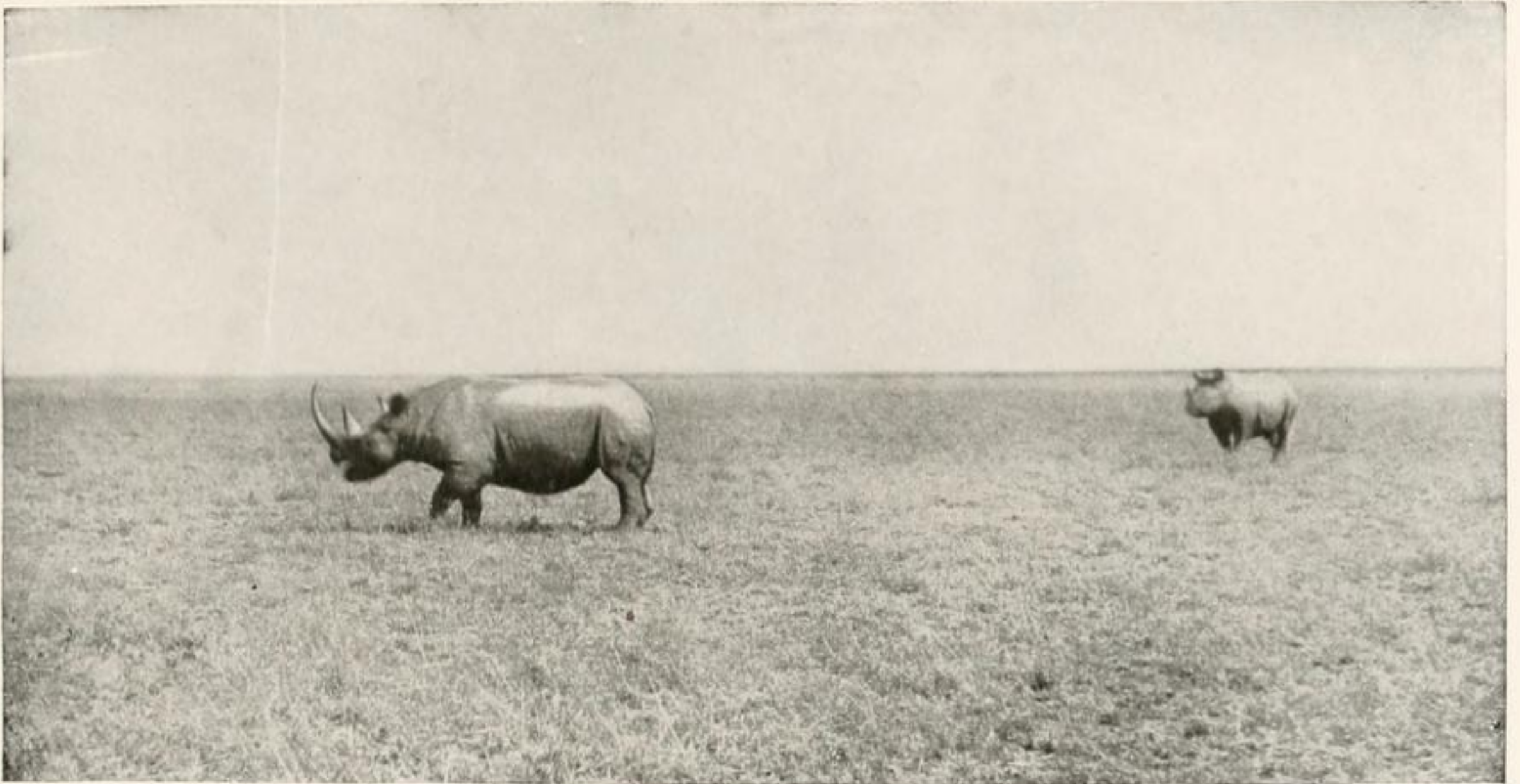


Photo by C. B. Hausburg, Esq.

BLACK AFRICAN RHINOCEROSES

A splendid snapshot of two black African rhinoceroses taken on the open veldt. They were afterwards shot by the party

white rhinoceros has never been encountered by any other traveler in Central Africa seems to show that the animal is either very rare in those districts, or that it has an exceedingly limited range.

In the early years of the nineteenth century the square-mouthed or white rhinoceros was found in large numbers over the whole of South Africa from the Orange River to the Zambesi, except in the waterless portions of the Kalahari Desert, or those parts of the country which are covered with rugged stony hills or dense jungle.

Speaking of his journey in 1837 through the western part of what is now the Transvaal Colony, Captain (afterwards Sir) Cornwallis Harris wrote: "On our way from the waggons to a hill not half a mile distant, we counted no less than twenty-two of the white species of rhinoceros, and were compelled in self-defense to slaughter four. On one occasion I was besieged in a bush by three at once, and had no little difficulty in beating off the assailants." Even so lately as thirty years ago the white rhinoceros was still to be met with in fair numbers in Ovampoland and other districts of Western South Africa, whilst it was quite plentiful in all the uninhabited parts of Eastern South Africa from Zululand to the Zambesi. In 1872 and 1873, whilst elephant-hunting in the uninhabited parts of Matabililand, I encountered white rhinoceroses almost daily, and often saw several in one day. At the present time, however, unless it should prove to be numerous in some as yet unexplored districts of North Central Africa, this strange and interesting animal must be counted one of the rarest of existing mammals, and in Southern Africa I fear it must soon become extinct. A few still exist amongst the wild loquat groves of Northern Mashonaland, and there are also a few surviving in Zululand; but I fear that even with the most rigid protection



Photo by C. B. Hausburg, Esq.

ONE OF THE SAME RHINOCEROSES DEAD

This picture gives some idea of the size of the commonest surviving species



Photo by J. W. McLellan]

[Highbury

RHINOCEROS BATHING

All the Asiatic species of rhinoceros are fond of bathing and wallowing in mud

might measure from 18 inches to 40 inches in length; those of cows from 24 inches to 60 inches. The longest horn known—that of a cow—which was brought from South Africa by the well-known hunter the late Roualeyn Gordon Cumming, measures $62\frac{1}{2}$ inches over the curve. As a rule, the front horn of the white rhinoceros curved slightly backwards, but was often straight or bent slightly forwards, and sometimes curved strongly backwards. The posterior horn varied from a few inches to 2 feet in length.

The white rhinoceros lived in families, usually a bull, cow, and calf being found together; but there might be two or even three calves of different ages, and of which the youngest alone would be suckling, living with the father and mother. In the early South African spring (September and October), when the young green herbage was just sprouting after the first rains, two or three families of white rhinoceroses might be seen feeding in close proximity, presenting the appearance of a herd; but I fancy the several families of these animals had only been brought together for the sake of the young green grass. In Southern Africa the white rhinoceros lived entirely on grass, and I have never seen any evidence of their having eaten anything else. When either walking, trotting, or galloping, the white rhinoceros always carried its nose close to the ground. A calf always preceded its mother, and she appeared to guide it by holding the point of her horn on the little creature's rump; and in all changes of pace, no matter how sudden, this position was always maintained. The white rhinoceros was easily killed by a shot through the heart or through both lungs, but would travel very long distances, and probably, as a rule, ultimately recover from wounds in other parts of the body. They could travel at a great rate and for a considerable distance with a broken fore leg or shoulder, but if a hind leg were broken they were rendered almost immediately helpless. In disposition they were sluggish and inoffensive animals, lying asleep in the shade of trees or bushes during the heat of the day, and coming to the water to drink at night or often before sundown in parts of the country where they had not been much molested. When disturbed, white rhinoceroses would go off at a swift trot, but if chased on horseback would break into a gallop, which they were capable of maintaining for a considerable distance, and at a wonderful pace for so large and heavy an animal. The meat of the white rhinoceros was most excellent, the part in greatest favour amongst hunters being the hump on the back of the neck in front of the shoulder, which was cut off whole and roasted in the skin in a hole dug in the ground.

The colour of the so-called white rhinoceros is dark gray. The second species of African rhinoceros, which is also dark gray in colour, is known as the BLACK or PREHENSILE-LIPPED RHINOCEROS.

they are too few in number to restock the country. They have a better chance, I think, of increasing in numbers in Zululand than in Mashonaland, in which latter country it is at present impossible to afford them any protection either from natives or Europeans.

A full-grown bull white rhinoceros stands from 6 feet 6 inches to 6 feet 9 inches at the shoulder, and is very massively built, with short, stout legs. The head is very much elongated, and the mouth square, like that of an ox. When white rhinoceroses were still plentiful, very considerable differences were observable in the length and shape of their horns. The anterior horns of full-grown bulls

Less than a hundred years ago the range of this fast-disappearing species extended from the northwestern districts of the Cape Colony to Abyssinia, and at that time it must have been plentiful over almost the whole of the intervening country. It never seems to have penetrated into the equatorial forest regions of West Central Africa, where the climate is probably too damp to suit its requirements; for both species of African rhinoceros appear to like a dry climate, and not to object to very arid surroundings. At the same time they never wander many miles from a river or pool, and drink regularly every night, and in hot weather probably very often a second time in the early morning.

In Southern Africa the black rhinoceros appears to attain to a larger size than in the countries farther north. To the south of the Zambesi large bulls of this species will stand 5 feet 8 inches at the shoulder; whilst the height of an adult bull, as taken by Mr. F. Jackson at Naivasha, in East Africa, was 5 feet 5 inches; and Mr. A. H. Neumann gives the standing height of another adult bull shot by himself still farther north, near Lake Rudolph, as only 4 feet 9 inches.

It is now generally recognised that there is but one species of prehensile-lipped rhinoceros in Africa, though the horns, and especially the hinder one, differ in length and shape to such an extent that it was long thought that there were at least two distinct species, those with both horns of equal or nearly equal length having been distinguished from the more common form, with a comparatively short second horn, as the KEITLOA, this being the name in the Sechuana dialect for a prehensile-lipped



Photo by Norman B. Smith, Esq.

BLACK AFRICAN RHINOCEROS

This photograph, taken by a sportsman in Africa, shows a charging rhinoceros just before it was shot

rhinoceros with horns of equal length. Speaking on this subject, Mr. A. H. Neumann, who has had great experience with the black rhinoceros in East Africa, writes: "Length of horn is a purely fortuitous individual trait; and the extremely long horns (mostly of females) which have occasionally been obtained from traders on the east coast, and brought home, are merely exceptionally fine specimens, selected from among large numbers brought to the coast (the bulk of which, I am told, go to China to be ground up into medicine), and do not belong to any distinct species, nor come from any particular region. In proof of this contention I may mention that I have a 40-inch horn, the owner of which I myself shot at the northern base of the Jambeni Range (near Kenia), in a neighbourhood where I hunted a great deal and saw great numbers of rhinos, and shot a good many. The vast majority have quite short horns—under a foot—and anything over 18 inches is uncommon, while a length of 30 inches or upwards is extremely rare." The black rhinoceros, I believe, never eats grass, but browses on the young shoots of trees and bushes, which are often quite leafless and seem excessively dry. In this way it chews up and swallows great quantities of dry-looking twigs, much of which passes through its stomach undigested.

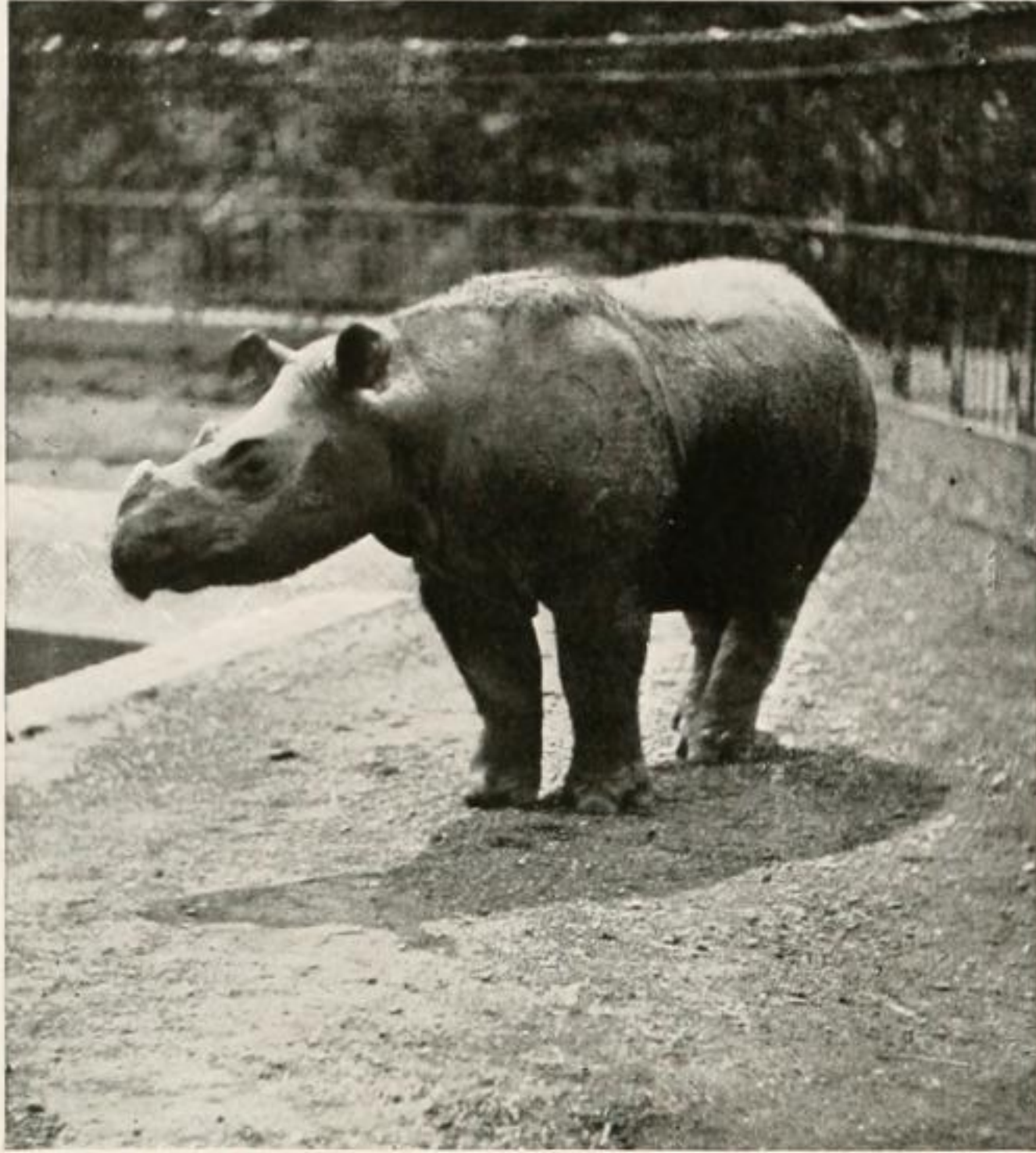


Photo by York & Son]

[Notting Hill

SUMATRAN RHINOCEROS

This species of rhinoceros is the smallest of the three Oriental forms. It has two horns

There has been a good deal of controversy as to the character and disposition of the black rhinoceros, some hunters and travelers regarding it as most dangerous and aggressive, whilst others are inclined to take an almost opposite view. That some black rhinoceroses are certainly aggressive and therefore dangerous animals, the experiences of C. J. Anderson and W. Cotton Oswell in South Africa many years ago, and of many travelers and hunters in East Africa during the last few years, certainly prove beyond a doubt; and as one never knows that any particular rhinoceros, when encountered, may not prove to be a vicious brute, a certain amount of caution should be employed in approaching one of these animals. In my own experience I always found that black rhinoceroses ran off at once on getting the wind of a human being; whilst, on the other hand, if they only heard one approaching, they would come towards the noise, and I have often known them to trot up to within twenty yards of where I was standing,

snorting and puffing loudly; but as these animals always turned round and went off eventually without charging, I came to the conclusion that they were inquisitive and very short-sighted rather than vicious. When fired into, a black rhinoceros goes off at a gallop—his usual pace, when alarmed, being a very fast trot—puffing and snorting loudly. He can gallop at a very great pace, considering his size and weight; but a South African shooting-pony can easily come up with him, or get away from him if pursued. In death a black rhinoceros will often sink down on its knees, and remain in that position, looking as if it were simply resting. When dying, it often gives vent to a pitiful squeal, the sound seeming very small and thin for so large a beast. The meat of the black rhinoceros is not ill-flavoured, and, if fat, very palatable; but as a rule these animals are very lean, and their flesh tough and coarse. The tongue, however, if well cooked, is always good; and the liver if first roasted under the ashes, and then, after being beaten up in a native wooden mortar, cooked with rice and fat, makes a dish which is good enough for a hungry man.

During the making of the Uganda Railway the engineers came upon something like a preserve of this species of rhinoceros, especially in the thick and waterless thorn jungle near the coast. The rhinoceros was almost the only animal, except the lion, which was able to penetrate the bush. As many as five of these animals were seen in one day when the line was being made; they did no injury to the coolies, other than by frightening them, and appeared to be stupid and by no means vigilant animals, perhaps because no other creature attacked them. The lion never meddles with a grown-up rhinoceros, though it might and probably does kill a calf occasionally, when the latter is no larger than a full-grown pig. The horns of some of these East African black rhinoceroses were of unusual length and thinness.