

PONDEROUS PACHYDERMS.

BY G. B. AND A. H. L.

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS BY GAMBIER BOLTON.

IT has been the endeavour in these articles to touch upon such points of interest in wild animal life which may be least generally known, but, however this may be, one is bound to realise that an immense literature has already arisen concerning the ways and manners of our old friend, the bun-eating and acutely intelligent elephant, and, although the hippopotamus and rhinoceros enjoy much less popularity, it is now some time since any imaginative artist has portrayed the hippo as being clothed in armour, finished off with long spikes.

If it is suggested that the intelligence of the elephant has been exaggerated, it will be understood that this is not by way of saying that he is unintelligent, but as against the absurd stories which have been told of his "thinking things out," probably told by way of demonstration that "truth" is sometimes very much stranger than fiction. His intelligence is receptive, not originaive, and the best point about the elephant is that he readily learns to obey. An interesting photo of an elephant stacking timber accompanies this article, but, in this instance, as in all instances, the elephant does nothing without the expressed injunction of the mahout, and, sometimes, his intelligence has to be jogged rather forcibly. He is generally a willing worker, and all the timber on the right of the picture has been stacked by him—this involving two distinct operations: lifting the timber on to the stack and subsequently ramming the timber home in the stack with his head, in order to get the different pieces composing it into position; but there is no spontaneity about it, every single movement being performed by behest of the mahout. The tusks enable the animal to lift a weight of half a ton or more.

There are, of course, two distinct species, the African and the Indian, or, more properly speaking, the Asiatic; the latter being usually divided pretty clearly into three classes, Koomeria, or thorough-bred, Duasala, or half-breds, and Mirga, third-rate.



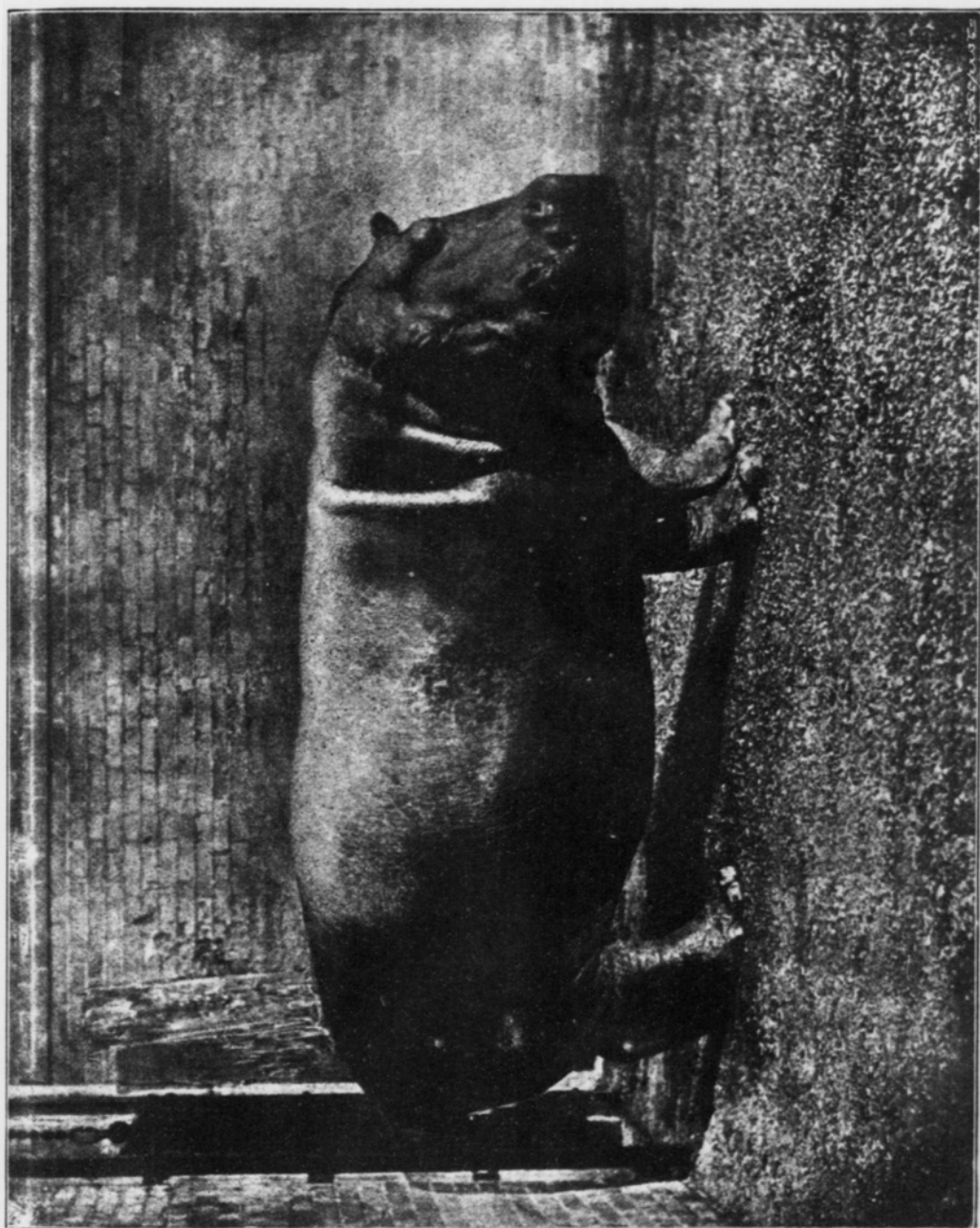
Stacking timber in Burmah.
By Gambler Bolton.
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The appearance of the two species differs considerably. Not only is the Asiatic elephant without tusks, but it is comparatively small, with one lip at the end of the trunk, while it is more graceful and has a smoother skin than the African elephant; the latter being noticeable for its huge ears, two lips at the end of the trunk, more or less hollow back, and a varying rough skin.

It is due to the misguided efforts of the insatiable and senseless "sportsman" that one species—the African—is rapidly becoming extinct, which is hardly to be wondered at, considering that the elephant breeds slowly, while it has been computed that the African elephant has been butchered at the rate of eighty thousand a year.

The heaviest recorded tusk is by no means the longest. In one case, for instance, where the tusks were 9ft. 5in. long, the weight was 184lb., and in another case of tusks of record length—20ft. 9in.—the weight was only 173lb. The heaviest tusk known, however, would seem to be one sold at Amsterdam, some time ago, which turned the scale at 350lb.

The timidity which generally characterises the elephant is probably due to the fact that it becomes aware of any possible danger through its delicate sense of hearing and keen power of scent, while its eyes are small and not very keen-sighted; hence the apparently disproportionate sense of alarm manifested at trivial noises or indistinct objects, the hurry-scurry of a little rabbit often reducing the big animal to a positive paroxysm of fright.



Hippopotamus
By Gambler Bolton.
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An elephant may weigh anything from three or four to six-and-a-half tons, and, to support this weight, its feet are composed of a succession of layers that act like springs and so break the jar of the animal's tread, and, when travelling at any speed, prevent the concussion which would otherwise be sustained from the great weight of the body. Though it cannot "gallop," the elephant can maintain a rate of speed which would render it impossible for a swift runner to get away from it, or even when mounted on a good horse, unless the ground were level and open, rarely the case in the home of the elephant.

The elephant—with a history going back to pre-adamite ages, when it roamed the world in company, and often at variance, with other thick-skinned monsters of whom only fragmentary record remains—is an interesting example of the survival of the fittest, able to hold its own in battle with the strongest of the carnivora. He seems not less at home in the water than on land, while it has been noted that he is an excellent hill-climber, being not less sure-footed than the mule.

At one time, a batch of seventy-nine animals were dispatched from Dacca to Barrackpur, near Calcutta, so that they had the Ganges and several of its large tidal branches to cross. In the longest swim, they were six hours without touching the bottom; after a rest on a sand-bank, they completed the swim in another three hours. Not one was lost, and Mr. Sanderson, who was responsible for that journey, also records that he has seen an elephant swim a river three hundred yards wide with his hind-legs tied together—a proof of the extreme buoyancy of these big-bodied animals.

Moreover, its stomach somewhat resembles that of a camel in the one

important respect that it possesses a chamber which can be cut off by a valvular arrangement from the one devoted to the process of digestion. In this receptacle the animal can store about ten gallons of water which it can take back into the trunk at pleasure, and either employ it to assuage its thirst by re-swallowing it or



Indian Elephant kneeling.
By Gambler Bolton.
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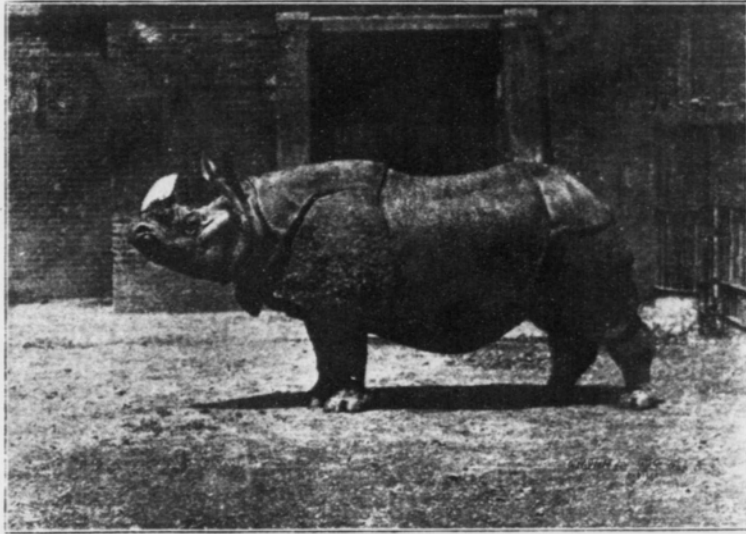
use it for the purpose of cooling the body by sprinkling the water over it. Altogether, no animal could be better fitted than this pachyderm of pre-historic lineage for holding its own under every conceivable circumstance.

Captivity reduces the longevity of the animal considerably. According

to Major Nott "there seems to be little doubt that, in a wild state, they will live to attain any age between a hundred-and-twenty and a hundred-and-fifty, but, when deprived of freedom, they very rarely live to be a hundred, occasionally attaining eighty, but more often dying at a considerably earlier age—the death-rate among the newly captured animals being very great after they have been subjected to the change of life for two or three years."

The hippopotamus, as the photographs go to show, is somewhat uglier, from the mere æsthetic point of view, than one could possibly imagine anything lying to be. Measuring, when full-grown, from ten to fourteen feet from the snout to the tail, it is huge-bodied, short-limbed, immensely large-headed, while its great length and girth is supported on very short and feeble-looking legs which are little more than eighteen inches high, so that the animal's body is scarcely lifted off the ground. Although not making for beauty, it is a great provision of nature that its ears, eyes and nostrils are on the same plane, enabling it, when swimming or floating in the water, to expose an exceedingly small part of its body, and its slow respiration enables it to remain under water for a long time.

It may not be everywhere known that the animal is able to sink in the water and walk at the bottom of the stream. When beneath the surface, the hippopotamus can exclude the water by hermetically closing the nostrils, being supplied with a wonderful valve arrangement which enables the animal to do this at will. But its gape! It has the largest mouth of any known animal and can display six molar teeth on each side of both jaws, very strong and enormous ripping canines forming the tusks, the upper ones being nearly straight, but the lower ones curved and working upon each other, so as to produce a chisel-like edge with which the animal can



Indian Rhinoceros.
By Gambier Bolton.
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cut grass, vegetables and river-weeds, or uproot them with the ease of an agricultural implement. The tusks of the lower jaw, especially, are harder and of even more commercial value than the ivory of the elephant. Tusks of the hippopotamus, Major Nott tells us, have been known to weigh twenty-one pounds, and this conveys some idea of the formidable teeth that are hidden in the closed jaws of this singular-looking beast.

On land, he is far less formidable; but, though an herbivorous feeder, he is, of course, a powerful opponent, and, without relating more experiences of the same kind, Robert Moffat, on one occasion, speaking of a man he saw trying to escape an enraged hippopotamus, says, "the sea-lion seized him, and literally severed his body in two with its monstrous jaws;" and, on numberless occasions, hippopotami have staved in the bottoms of boats, and have displayed other equally unpleasant propensities.

Like the "rogue" elephant who has been expelled from the elephantine community, there are "bachelor" hippopotami who prove exceedingly dangerous even on land, for, adding the natural, thick-skinned obstinacy of the hippo to its own perpetually bad-tempered disposition, it allows nothing to interfere with its projects.

In his book, entitled "Seven years in South Africa," Dr. Emil Holub writes:—"Of all the larger mammalia of South Africa, I am disposed to believe that, to an unarmed man, the hippopotamus is the most dangerous. In its normal state, it can never endure the sight of anything to which it is unaccustomed or which takes it by surprise. Let it come upon a horse, an ox, a porcupine, a log of wood, or even a fluttering garment, suddenly crossing his path, and it will fly upon any of them with relentless fury, but let such object be withdrawn betimes from view, and the brute, in an instant, will forget all about it and go on its way entirely undisturbed. (This peculiarity may, perhaps, be physiologically accounted for by the small weight of the brain as contrasted with the ponderous size of the body). Although, in some cases, it may happen that an unprotected man may elude the attacks of a lion, a buffalo, or a leopard, except they have been provoked, he cannot indulge in the hope of escaping the violence of a hippopotamus that has once got him in reach of his power."

The vitality of these animals is instanced in an account of Sir Samuel Baker's, but, through want of space, I can only quote one paragraph concerning the final end of the animal.

"On the following morning, I made a post-mortem examination. He had received three shots in the flank and shoulder; four in the head, one of which had broken his lower jaw; another had passed through his nose, and, passing downward, had cut off one of his large tusks. I never witnessed such determined and unprovoked fury as was exhibited by this animal—he appeared to be raving mad. His body was a mass of frightful scars, the result of continual conflicts with bulls of his own species; some of these wounds were still unhealed. There was one scar about two feet in length, and about two inches below the level of the surface skin, upon the flank. He was evidently a character of the worst description, but whose madness



Rhinoceros (African, black).
By Gambler Bolton.
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rendered him callous to all punishment The dinghy had lost a mouthful, as the hippopotamus had bitten out a portion of the side, including the gunwale of hard wood; he had munched out a piece like the port of a small vessel, which he had accomplished with the same ease as though it had been a slice of toast."

The rhinoceros ranks next to the elephant in size and strength, and is, therefore, the second largest and most powerful of mammalia. The horn from which the rhinoceros derives its name is not connected with the skull-bones, but grows from the skin. It is really fibrous, composed of thousands of hairs, and some unique photographs accompanying this article illustrate this fact. Of course, although not a bony formation, the horn is intensely hard, and is used by the animal to dig up roots and loosen things in the earth that it may require for its sustenance, and, occasionally, as a weapon of offence or defence. How frequently the horn is used in this way, for which it seems scarcely fitted, where any great resisting force is needed, there is not yet sufficient evidence to show. Colonel Kinlock has said, "Contrary to general belief, the rhinoceros does not make use of his horn as a weapon of offence. The wounds which it occasionally inflicts upon elephants are caused by its long, sharp incisors, with which it can give a very formidable bite." Another officer in the Indian army saw a desperate encounter between a rhinoceros and a large male elephant, in which the latter animal was beaten; but the method of attack adopted by the rhinoceros in this fight is not stated. The hide is so tough that it is necessarily jointed at the junction of the limbs to allow of free movement, so that it does have the appearance of a complete suit of armour.