

THE BOOK OF THE ANIMAL KINGDOM

MAMMALS

BY

W. PERCIVAL WESTELL F.L.S.



14 COLOURED & 260 PLAIN PLATES
CHIEFLY FROM PHOTOGRAPHS
OF THE LIVING ANIMALS BY
W. S. BERRIDGE, F.Z.S.

LONDON : J. M. DENT & SONS, LTD.

NEW YORK : E. P. DUTTON & CO.

MCMX

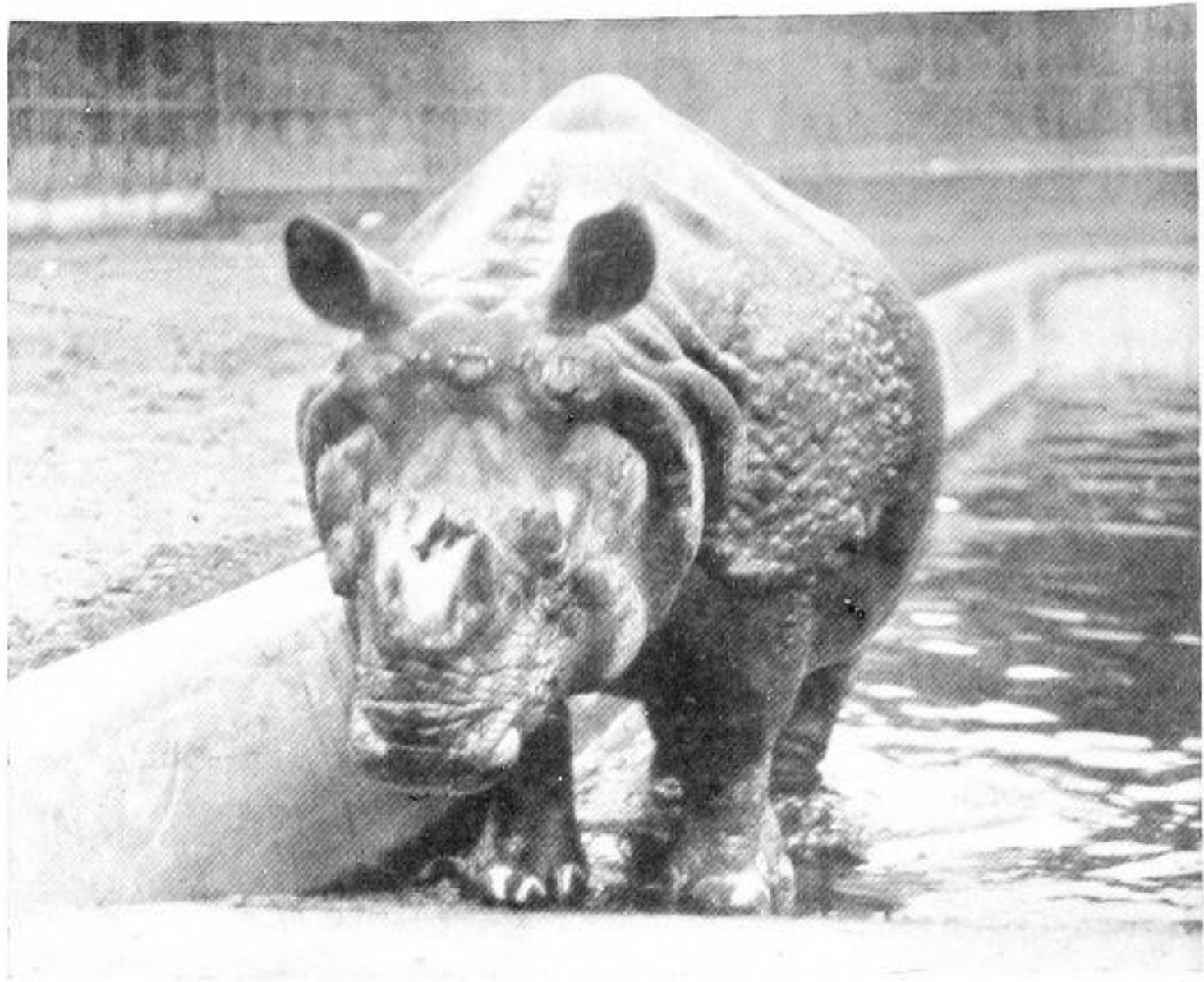


FIG. 6.—INDIAN RHINOCEROS

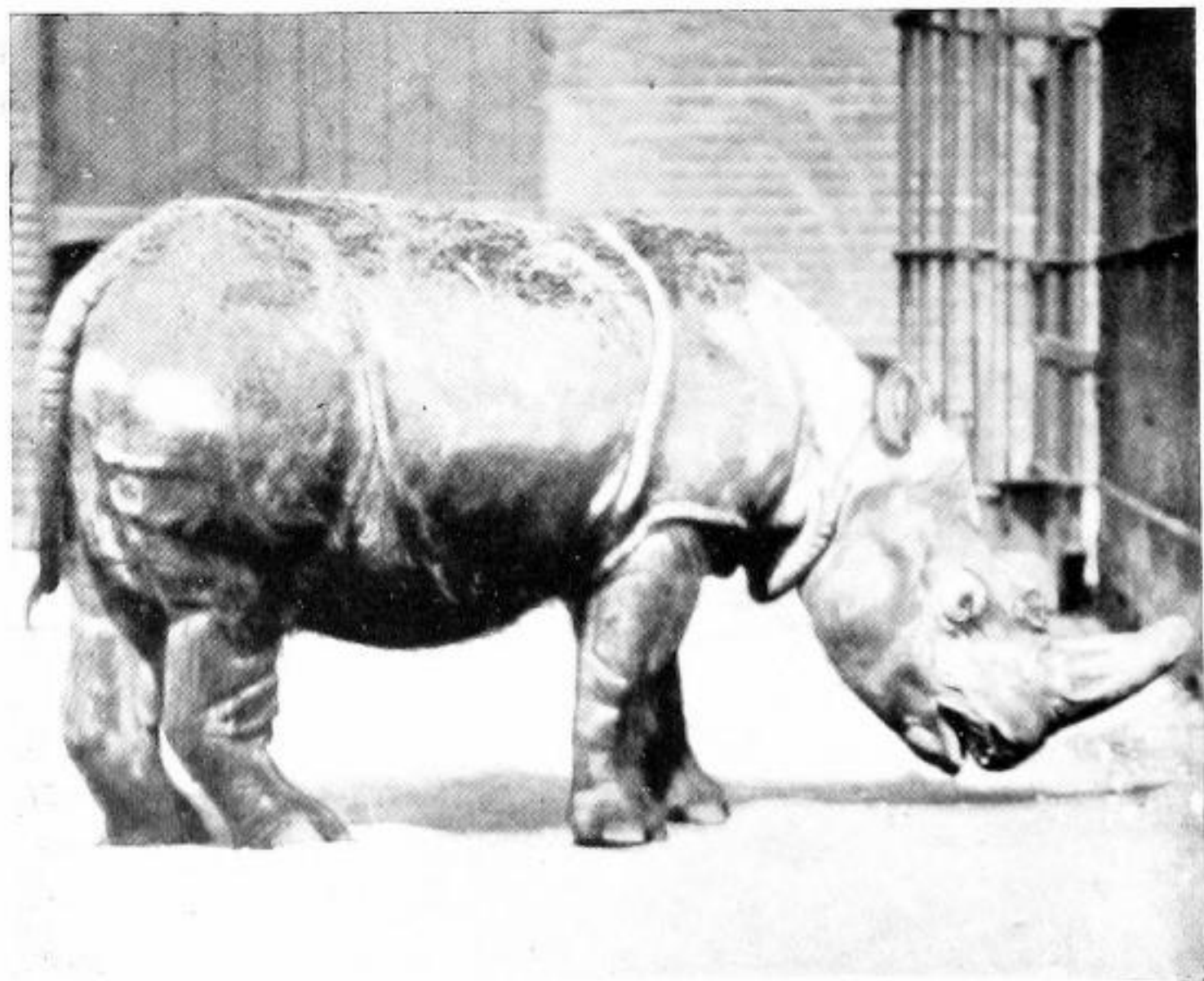


FIG. 7.—HAIRY-EARED RHINOCEROS

I noticed with interest that it was about four feet high at the shoulder. This height is exceeded in some instances, but five feet may be mentioned as the limit.

The species attains a length of from twelve to fourteen feet, and in weight is a close rival of the Elephant, turning the scale at as much as four tons. The hide, too, is very thick and heavy; indeed this alone will weigh five hundredweights when freshly taken off. It is dense and tough, as well as rough and warty. Close examination will show that it is almost naked with the exception of some short bristles near the end of the tail.

The male Hippo is dark brown, whilst his consort is of a yellowish colour.

As those who have fed this creature will know, the mouth is of large dimensions, and, says Mr. Selous, "the lower canine teeth or tusks grow to a great size, and in bulls may weigh from four to seven pounds each. They are curved in shape, and when extracted from the jaw form a complete half-circle, and have been known to measure upwards of thirty inches over the curve. In life, however, not more than a third of their length protrudes beyond the gums."

The lower incisors, as may be imagined, aid the creature in cutting, as with a scythe, various aquatic herbage upon which it feeds. The massive jaws are extremely powerful, and, aided by these and the formidable teeth, it is small wonder that the animal has been known to sever a man's body asunder at one stroke!

Although awkward on land, it can, if needs be, travel fairly fast for a restricted distance. The water, however, is undoubtedly its home, and there it swims with ease and facility and can walk on the bed of the river with comparative comfort.

The hide and tusks are both valuable, hence we find that this mammalian monarch is much sought after, and is often secured by the natives by means of a levered-trap and a poisoned spear which is heavily weighted. The natives find the spoor of the Hippo and then set their trap in his path, and sooner or later secure him.

In spite of his huge body we learn that this animal is not particularly tenacious of life, and—although it is cold-blooded slaughter hardly worth chronicling—"Mr. Neumann once killed four in four consecutive shots."

RHINOCEROSES.—There are two kinds of Rhinoceroses illustrated in Figs. 6 and 7, and these are easily distinguished one

from the other. The Indian species is a big, heavy animal which bears a thick plated coat of mail, and the Hairy-Eared species is much less distinguished in this way, and is a variety of the Sumatran Rhinoceros. In Mr. Walter Rothschild's well-known collection at Tring I have also seen the famous so-called "White" Rhinoceros, which is characterized by its square mouth. It is also known as the Mochuco, or Burchell's Rhinoceros.

This is a really magnificent specimen and was the first to reach England, the animal having been shot for Mr. Rothschild by Mr. Coryndon. In former days the species inhabited the South African steppes in great numbers, but it is now confined to British East Africa and the Eastern Soudan.

Whilst the Hippopotamus belongs to the even-toed Ungulates, the Rhinoceros owns alliance with the odd-toed set of Ungulates, having three digits on the fore and hind limbs, each ending in a strong hoof. The central digit is much longer and stronger than the remaining ones, and corresponds to the middle finger or third toe of Man, and to the well-known single digit of the Horse.

Four kinds of Rhinoceroses may be mentioned, namely, the three Asiatic species known as the Indian, Sumatran and Javan, and the African. The Indian and Javan species have only one horn, whereas the Sumatran and the Common African species have two, one situated behind the other.

The Asiatic Rhinoceroses are noted for their large erect ears, the massive folds of skin which give the body the appearance of armoured plates, and the horn, or horns, which, it is interesting to note, are composed of stout hairs firmly matted together.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, fossil remains of these animals have been discovered in England, and, like the Hippopotamus already dealt with, in former days species of Rhinoceros were to be reckoned in our own fauna.

Hog-like, of sulky temperament, possessing a large body and small eyes, short, stout legs and a tremendous head, such, shortly stated, is a description of the animal giant with whom we are now concerned. As with the Hippo, it is during the silent night-watches that it awakes from its lethargy, feeding upon vegetable food.

Although the skin is thick, and when dried becomes exceedingly hard, it is, nevertheless, very sensitive to the touch, and is not nearly so bullet-proof as some people might imagine. When dried

and hardened, an excellent weapon of defence is provided, and the natives of India use it as a shield.

Although one might suppose that such an ungainly and slovenly creature would be slow of movement, the Rhino can, as a matter of fact, move very quickly, and requires a fast horse and an experienced hunter to overtake and capture it.

In swampy jungles, rank with vegetation, the Rhinoceros finds a congenial home. It loves to wallow in mud, and thus ease its body of insect parasites that tickle and annoy it. Amid the regal splendour of its jungle haunts the Rhino gives very little evidence of its presence, for a number of the beasts will use regular runs like our better known rodents, the Rabbit and Hare, and to stalk them successfully is not by any means an easy task.

Hunted like the Hippo for the sake of its hide and tusks, the African Black Rhinoceros was, says Mr. Ernest Protheroe, shot in thousands between the years 1840 and 1880. He states that "two men bagged no less than fifty upon one occasion in a single excursion; Oswell and a companion captured eighty-nine in a season; and in the same short period sixty fell to C. J. Anderson's gun alone."

Mr. F. C. Selous, the intrepid big-game hunter, who has given us so much first-hand information concerning different kinds of animals which those of us, less fortunate, perhaps, have only been able to study in Zoological Gardens, gives an interesting account in his *Hunter's Wanderings in Africa* of the capture of a Rhinoceros calf, and before passing on to the next animal giant on our list Mr. Selous's graphic description of his encounter will be read with interest. He writes:—

"One morning Wood and myself, taking advantage of a few hours of clear weather, rode out to look for game, and after shooting a Roan Antelope bull were returning home, when, in a small patch of bush, we rode right on to a Black Rhinoceros, that we at once saluted with two bullets. As the wounded animal galloped off, we saw for the first time that it was followed by a small calf, which could not have been more than a day or two old, for it seemed unable to keep up with its mother, and upon our approach ran under the legs of Wood's horse, who, calling to me to go on and kill the cow, pulled in, in order to secure it. With another bullet I dispatched the cow accordingly, and returning to my friend, found him sitting under a shady tree, and the little Rhinoceros

standing close beside his horse, which did not manifest the slightest alarm at the near proximity of the uncouth-looking and, no doubt to him, strangely-smelling little beast. The young Rhinoceros, too, that was scarcely larger than a half-grown pig, did not seem at all frightened when either Wood or myself, or any of the Kaffirs, approached it, but stood quite still when we went up to it and passed our hands down its back. It was, of course, too young to have any sign of horns, but two round patches on the nose showed where they would in time have grown; in other respects, with its prehensile lip, large ears, and little twinkling eyes, it was a perfect miniature of an adult Black Rhinoceros. One circumstance, I remember, that struck me at the time, was that it sweated most profusely all over the back, which I never remember to have seen an adult animal do. As we found that it followed Wood's horse as closely as if it had been its own mother, we determined to try and get it to the wagons, which were about six miles distant, and endeavour to rear it on thin gruel, for, unfortunately, we had no milch cows with us; so, leaving the Kaffirs to cut up the old cow, we rode home, the little Rhinoceros following us like a dog the whole way. The heat of the sun seemed to give it great inconvenience, for it halted and remained behind beneath every shady tree; but, as soon as the horse was about twenty yards ahead, it would twist up its little tail, give a squeal, and come trotting up alongside of it again. At last we reached the wagons, when of a sudden the nature of the hitherto quiet little beast seemed changed; whether it was the sight of the dogs, that came barking around it, or of the wagons, or the *tout ensemble* of sights and smells with which its eyes and nostrils were assailed, I know not, but it was now transformed into a perfect little demon, charging people, dogs, and even the wagon-wheel, with great fury. I now passed an ox-rein round its neck and behind one shoulder, when it rushed alternately to the length of its tether, springing from the ground in its fury, and then back again at me, when it would inflict several bumps on my knees with its nose. Its *modus operandi* was to lower its head between its legs, and then, by throwing it up perpendicularly, strike several blows in quick succession with its nose. Small and weak as the poor little creature was, it still battered my knees with considerable violence. After being secured to the wagon-wheel it presently became quieter, though it still charged out to the full length of its tether at any dog

or person that approached it. It, however, as I feared, obstinately refused all food, though I have no doubt it would have drunk milk had we had a cow with us; so, knowing that to let it run loose would be merely to condemn it to a lingering death from starvation, or an equally painful one by the fangs of Lions or Hyænas, I judged it most merciful to put a bullet through its head, which I did, though not without regret, for I should much have liked to rear it."

GIRAFFE. — If the animals we have met with so far are distinguished by their enormous bulk, the next species of giant with which we propose to make acquaintance, the Giraffe, is characterized by its long neck and legs, small head and body. It must be a fine sight to observe a herd of these beautiful African beasts in their native wilds, and it is not at all difficult to imagine the enthusiasm with which Mr. Selous writes of his first experience with them.

That first experience, however, nearly cost the big-game hunter his life, for, becoming separated from the rest of the party through an unfortunate collision with the trunk of a tree, and losing his horse, he was stranded upon the veldt without food or shelter. He tells how in Africa the burning heat of the day is succeeded by Arctic cold at night, and how vainly he tried to close his eyes as he lay upon a hastily-made bed of cut grass. Hungry, and perishing with cold, it must have been no joke to lie on the veldt homeless and alone, with the moon and the stars in the vault above, and prowling Hyænas passing close by and uttering cries that made night hideous.

Looking at the creatures shown in Figs. 8 and 9, one exhibiting a specimen at the Zoo with body raised and neck outstretched, and the other showing the beast straddling, one can faintly realize the charm of watching a small herd in the pure unfettered wilds.

They can travel at a remarkable speed, and it requires a good horse to overtake them. Their tails are twisted over their backs like corkscrews, and when seen from the rear, we are told, the animals appear to be gliding or sailing along without any apparent movement. Their mode of locomotion is a kind of gallop, for the hind legs are straddled out at each step, and come (one on either side) in front of the forelegs.

The dappled hide of the Giraffe will naturally attract notice, for the animal is beautifully marked and always appears wonderfully well groomed. It is, in many ways, one of the most striking