

WILD ANIMALS IN CAPTIVITY

BEING AN ACCOUNT OF THE
HABITS, FOOD, MANAGEMENT AND TREATMENT
OF THE BEASTS AND BIRDS AT THE 'ZOO'

WITH
Reminiscences and Anecdotes

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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RHINOCEROS.

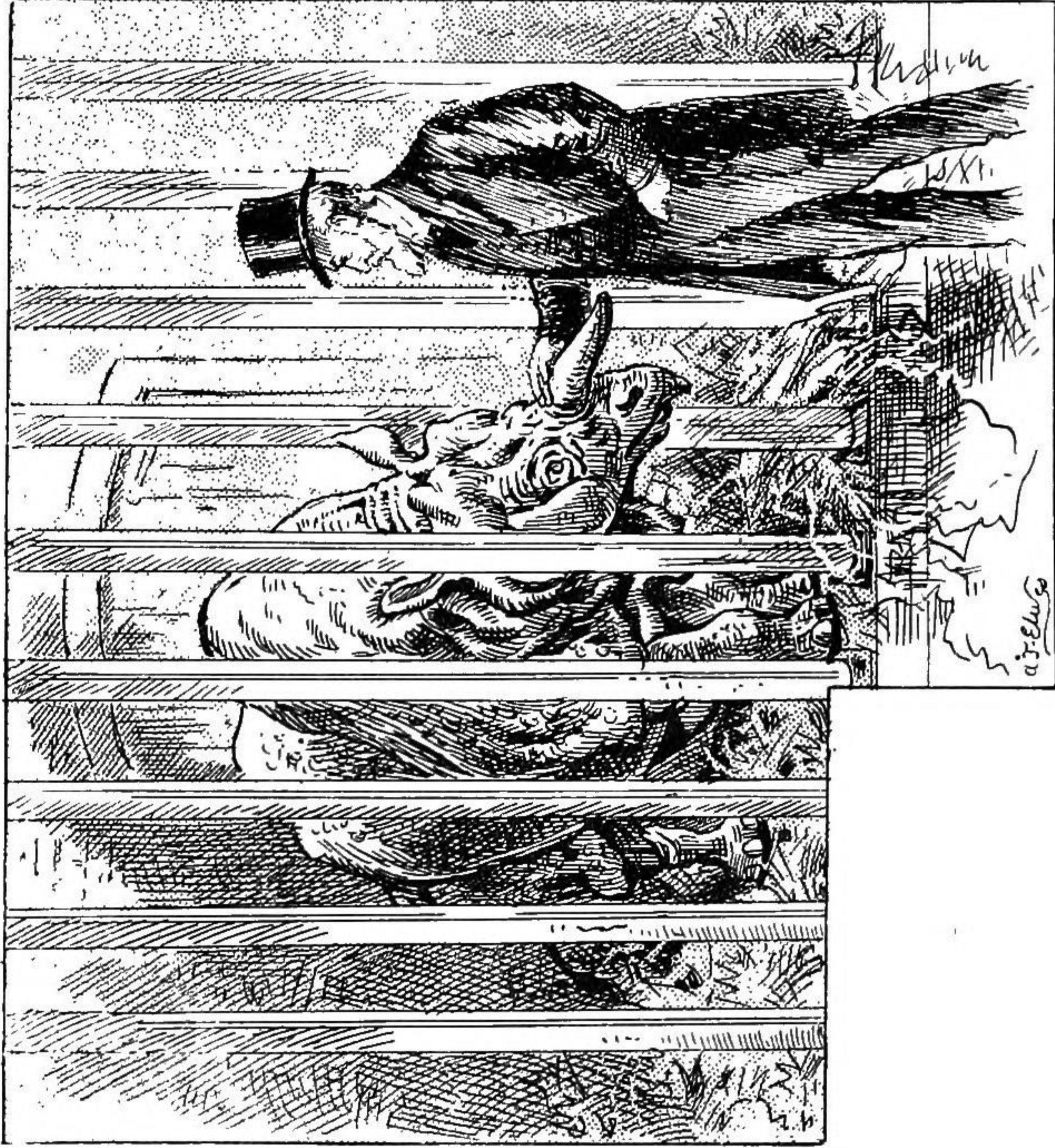
THE CHARACTER GENERALLY OF RHINOCEROSES.

WHEN very young and small the rhinoceros is not usually bad tempered, in fact many are playful, and if a large ball or small cask were allowed it in its paddock the animal would roll and tumble it about for hours, pushing it with that part of the head where the horn would eventually be formed. Long before the beast becomes adult it is dangerous to enter the den or paddock when the animal is at liberty. It may be simply an act of playfulness on its part, but it would rush suddenly upon you and on account of its great weight and strength there would be much danger of being crushed.

Some of the species, such as *R. lasiotis* and *R. sumatrensis*, being of smaller size and less irritable, are by no means so dangerous as the one-horned *R. unicornis* of India, and the two-horned *R. bicornis* of Africa. The two latter are never to be depended upon.

The savage manner in which the Indian species will attack the bars of its den or walls of its prison, beating itself furiously against any structure and, in more than one instance, tearing off the horn and leaving the skull bare, is well known.

A large Indian rhinoceros living in the Gardens, while attempting some few years ago to tear down the iron fence, tore the horn bodily from its position on the head.



PLAYING WITH RHINOCEROS.

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RHINOCEROS

The horn of the rhinoceros is of a very remarkable structure, being composed of agglutinated hair, having no bony core but growing from the skin, which is immensely thick over the nose, and when the horn was torn off it left the smooth bony portion of the nasal bones bare and fully exposed. The animal bled very much at the time, but the bone becoming thickly covered with the dried exuded blood, the place soon healed, and in the course of a few months a new horn commenced to be developed.

I may mention another instance: a female rhinoceros in her constant endeavour to tear down the iron fence caused the horn to grow forward, so as to project beyond the nose, consequently the animal had great difficulty in feeding off the ground by reason of the horn coming in contact with it first. Consequently I determined to saw it off. The animal became comparatively sociable and friendly, allowing me to rub her eyes with my hand, and at the same time I practised with a walking-stick the process of sawing the horn. This performance I continued to go through on several mornings. Finding she submitted gently to this treatment I went one morning prepared with a sharp saw, and, with the aid of one of the keepers, who smoothed her eye in order to keep it closed, I commenced to saw off the horn, which I very effectually accomplished in about ten minutes, during which time she remained perfectly quiet. I have kept this horn, and, although it has got very dry, it weighs 11 lbs., and measures 15 in. in length.

Upon another occasion the hairy-eared, two-horned rhinoceros (*R. lasiotis*), in consequence of constantly driving one of her horns against the bars of her cage, she caused it, in growing, to curve backwards until the point was in the act of forcing its way through the skin, causing it to become ulcerated. In this case I had much

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greater difficulty, the brute was not to be coaxed into any kind of submission, but exhibited the most determined resistance to be touched.

I therefore arranged to make both of her front legs fast by ropes attached to the bars of the den. It was a difficult matter to commence using the saw because of her obstinate determination to resist, jerking from side to side her head which we found almost impossible to hold still. After a little while she became less violent and I commenced with the saw to cut off a portion of the horn that curved backwards. Before I had cut half way through she by a sudden jerk snapped the saw in two. Having two more saws at hand the second attempt, I thought, would be successful, but another sudden jerk broke the second saw. She now made such desperate struggles to get free, and becoming thoroughly exhausted remained quiet for a few seconds, thereby allowing me to complete the operation.

My pupil, the late Charles J. Andersson of Ngami fame, on his return from one of his hunting expeditions, told me of the danger of shooting a wild African rhinoceros. He said this ferocious beast would without any apparent provocation make furious charges at trees, rocks, or anything movable, and he, himself, narrowly escaped upon more than one occasion being killed by this powerful beast.

This ungovernable temper is exhibited also by the Indian species, which I have had the opportunity on several occasions of witnessing, tearing its horn and skin in a frightful manner. During these outbursts of temper it would be extremely dangerous for any one to dare to approach it. This furious and inexplicable behaviour has been recorded by many sportsmen who have ventured to hunt this unwieldy and powerful monster.



CUTTING HORN OFF RHINOCERO.S.

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THE RHINOCEROS

REMOVING RHINOCEROS

Having resolved on a certain day in October 1865 to remove for the winter months the two young rhinoceroses to the house next to the Elands, I arranged the night before with the keepers to muster at six o'clock the following morning.

Dr. Corrigan, the Director and President of the Dublin Gardens, was in London at the time, and as he had also received a male rhinoceros, which was brought to England at the same time as our pair, he was, I knew, interested in and would like to witness any operations connected with them, in order that he might get a hint for his own future guidance. I therefore informed him that if he wished to be present at the removal I should be glad to see him.

At the appointed time all was ready. One of the animals had a strong leather collar on, the other a collar made of strong, thick, soft rope, round the neck; to these collars were tied two strong ropes, one on each side of the animal. The men were divided so as to take charge of the ropes attached to the collars, there being about twelve men to each beast, and one or two others to assist in leading, or attending to other matters, such as opening or closing gates, keeping the way clear, etc. One keeper was to lead off with a bundle of new hay on his back, in the expectation that as the brutes were hungry they would, perhaps, follow him at once. The ropes fast, the men arranged and the gates opened, the animals came out at a nice easy trot; seeing the crowd of men they suddenly turned round and plunged about. This caused a great commotion, at the same time some of the ropes getting slack became entangled with the

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legs of the beasts. Knowing the danger of their being irritated and annoyed by their limbs being encumbered, I ordered the ropes to be let fall on the ground in order that they should be disengaged from their legs, then, to keep them quiet, I took a quartern loaf which had been kept in readiness, and, going between them, broke off pieces of bread and put in their mouths.

Having attracted their attention by these means, they got steady and turned round to follow me for the bread; this enabled the men to again get fairly hold of the ropes.

What had become of my friend Dr. Corrigan and the keeper with the bundle of hay during this little scramble I never heard, but certainly they were completely out of sight before we started the second time. No sooner had we started again (towards the house they were intended to pass the winter in) than I found their pace increase rapidly from a walk to a trot, from a trot to a gallop, myself taking the lead; there was no time for talking, but away we went full pelt. I was closely followed by my rough friends dragging behind them all my brave army, whose weight, strength, and determined efforts did not appear to make the least difference to the speed of these brutes, but on we went. Fortunately I had directed the gates of the yard leading to the house to be set wide open, and which had been attended to, as there was no time to knock at the door. The animals bolted in and across the yard into the house; I threw the remaining portions of the loaf on the floor and scrambled over the rails out of the way of danger; they followed close at my heels, then came to a sudden stop inside the house, and all was soon satisfactorily settled.

After the experience of the first removal of the two rhinoceroses, I thought it would be quite unsafe to again risk a run for it in taking them back to their summer

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quarters; moreover the animals had much increased in size and strength during the winter months.

I therefore arranged to get them into a large den (one at a time), and draw this on a low-wheeled truck, used for this purpose, but the enormous weight of this den and the animals combined prevented this plan from being carried out. After we had succeeded in getting the beast (the male) into the den, the weight of which was over two tons (without the rhinoceros), I considered that the only way we could move it was by rollers on planks laid on the pathway, and so slide or roll it on. Owing to the slow progress we made, the day was so far advanced that, before the transfer to the summer quarters was completed, I felt convinced we should not have time to repeat the process with the other animal before dark. I was, however, in fear that the female would turn ill-tempered on account of her being left by herself, and I also had vague fears that she was able to break out of the house were she to attempt to do so.

After safely depositing the male, and having the whole staff of keepers (thirty in number) at hand, I ordered the strong leather collar and an additional rope collar to be put on the neck of the female, and with two double ropes behind and one double rope in front we started. Although we went on tolerably steady, and got safely to the end of the journey, we all felt perfectly sure, from the few pranks played by her ladyship—she had given every one his work to do—that the male would be more than all concerned would have cared to tackle in this fashion.

The large female Indian rhinoceros died on December 13, 1873. She was the same animal which met with the accident by falling through the ice on the pond in her paddock, and of which Mr. Buckland gave a graphic account in *Land and Water*, December 29, 1870.

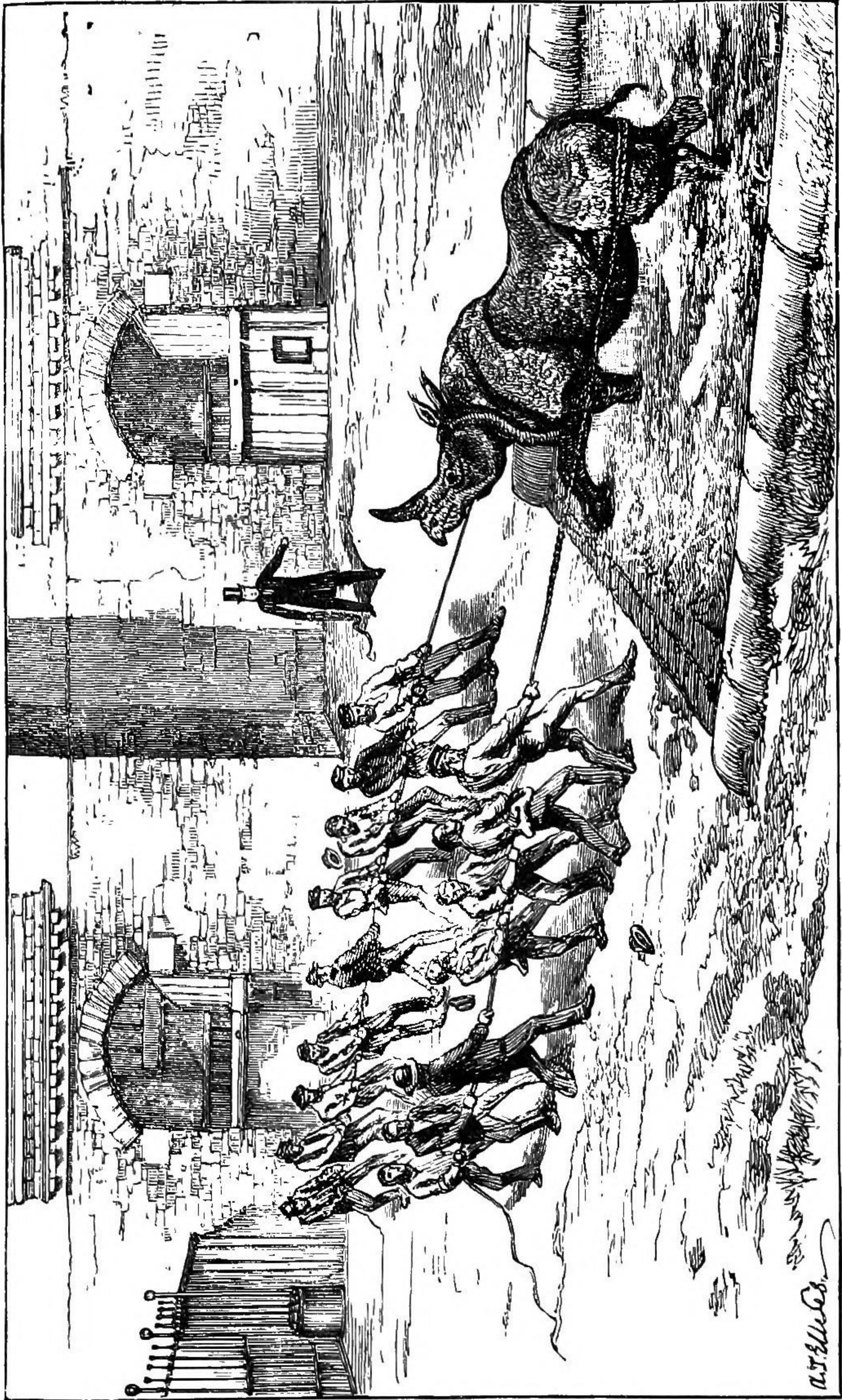
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He afterwards wrote:—"This animal arrived in the Gardens in 1850. It was then supposed she was about one year old, so that would make her about twenty-four years old when she died, and the fact that an Indian animal accustomed to a hot climate should live in the Regent's Park such a length of time does infinite credit to the management. Her gigantic carcass was placed on boards on rollers, and it took twenty-five men to roll it to the dissecting-house in the Gardens. The measurements of the great beast were:—Total length from tip of nose to tip of tail, 12 ft. 4 in.; circumference at widest part, 12 ft.; the weight was probably between two and three tons. By means of pulleys the huge and ponderous skin was hauled up while Mr. Gerrard separated it from the flesh. The skin was of great thickness, in some places from 2 in. to 3 in.

"This is the same rhinoceros whose horn was amputated by the Superintendent some time since, the weight of the piece weighing 11 lbs."

Mr. Buckland wrote in *Land and Water*, vol. x. p. 484, from information I gave him, an account of the strange ice accident to the rhinoceros :

"The animal had been turned out that morning as usual into the paddock behind the elephant-house while the dens were being cleaned. The snow had fallen thickly during the night, so that the pond was not to be distinguished from the ground. The rhinoceros not seeing the pond put her fore-feet on the ice, which immediately gave way, and in she went head over heels with a crash. The keepers ran for Mr. Bartlett, the resident superintendent; when he came (in a few minutes) he found the poor rhinoceros was floundering about among great sheets of ice, under which she had probably been kept down till her great strength enabled her to break up the whole



RHINOCEROS IN THE ICE.

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mass. Here then was a most awkward accident under unexpected and novel circumstances, putting Mr. Bartlett's readiness of action to the test. My friend, however, with his usual courage, quickness, and readiness of resource, was quite equal to the occasion. He immediately let the water off the pond by knocking away a large plug which he has thoughtfully fixed instead of a tap, which is liable to get out of order. In the meantime the poor rhinoceros was in great danger of drowning, as the pond is 9 ft. deep, so while the pond was running off, Mr. Bartlett, losing no time, sent for all the available keepers and a long and strong rope; barrow-loads of gravel were at the same time strewed on the sloping sides of the pond, to give the exhausted animal a foothold. The rope was then tossed round the haunches of the rhinoceros, like the kicking-strap of a horse in harness, and twenty-six men, one-half at one end of the rope and the other half at the other, pulled hard on the rhinoceros, so that in her struggles to get up the bank she would not only be supported but pulled forcibly forwards. After much hauling on the part of the men and much plunging on the slippery bank of the pond, the rhinoceros was at last landed on *terra firma*. The salvors of this valuable living property had then to look out for themselves. Mr. Bartlett had anticipated this, for he had left the sliding gate of the enclosure open just wide enough to let out one man at a time, but not a rhinoceros. An absurd scene then took place, everybody rushed to the gate, but the first of the fugitives from the rhinoceros, naturally stout, and possibly stouter at Christmas time than usual, jammed fast in the open gate, so that the other twenty-five men were in the paddock with the rhinoceros. The poor frightened and half-frozen beast luckily behaved very well; she did not rush after the men, but stood still, pricked her ears and snorted, giving the

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keepers time to get out as fast as they could and how they could, through the ingenious 'man-hole' or guard in the railing, made in case of emergencies. Neither the rhinoceros nor the men received the slightest injury. Shortly after the accident I saw the rhinoceros munching her breakfast as if nothing had happened. The rhinoceros was the big female; she is about 10 ft. 6 in. long and about 5 ft. high at the shoulder, and she weighs at a guess between three and four tons. The ice I found was 4 in. thick.

“I think the Society are much indebted to Mr. Bartlett for the admirable way in which he prevented what might have been a bad accident.”