

ODD CREATURES :

A Selection

BY

DUM-DUM

LONDON

CONSTABLE & COMPANY LTD

10 ORANGE STREET LEICESTER SQUARE WC

ELEGY ON A RHINOCEROS

COME, let us weep for Begum ; he is dead.

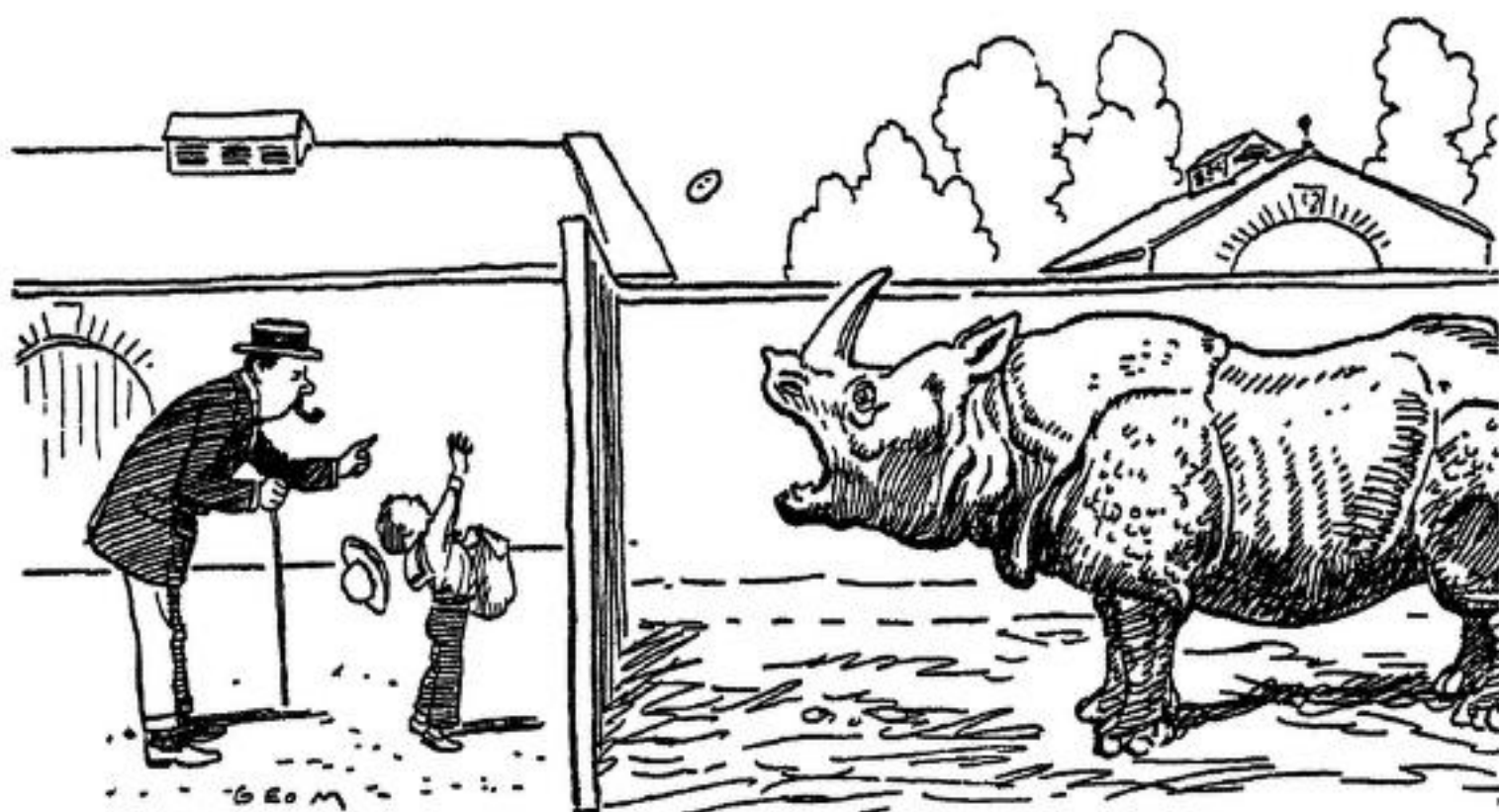
Dead ; and afar, where Thamís' waters lave
The busy marge, he lies unvisited,

Unsung ; above no cypress branches wave,
Nor tributary blossoms fringe his grave ;
Only would these poor numbers advertise
His copious charms, and mourn for his demise.

Blithesome was he and beautiful ; the Zoo

Hath nought to match with Begum. He was one
Of infinite humour ; well indeed he knew

To catch with mobile lips th' impetuous bun
Tossed him-ward by some sire-encouraged son,
Half-fearful, yet of pride fulfilled to note
The dough, swift-homing down th' exultant throat.



ELEGY ON A RHINOCEROS

Whilom he pensive stood, infoliate
Of comfortable mud, and idly stirred
His tiny caudal, disproportionate
But not ungraceful, while a wanton herd
Of revellers the mystic lens preferred ;
Whereof the focus rightly they address ;
And, Phœbus being kind, the button prest.

Then, being frolic, he, as one distraught,
Would blindly, stumbling, seek the watery verge
And sink, nor rise again. But when, untaught
In craft, the mourners raised th' untimely dirge,
Lo ! elsewhere himself would swift emerge
Incontinent, and crisp his tasselled ears ;
And, all vivacious, own the sounding cheers.



Nothing of dark suspicion nor of guile
Was limned on Begum ; his the mirthful glance,
The genial port, the comprehensive smile :—
The very sunbeams shimmering loved to dance
Within that honest, open countenance ;—
And far as eye could pierce, his roomy grin
Was pink, as 'twere Aurora dwelt therein.

ELEGY ON A RHINOCEROS

Yet he is dead! Whether the froward cates
Some lawless lodgment found, nor coughs released:
Or if adown those hospitable gates
Drave the strong North, or shrilled the ravening East,
And, ill-requiting, slew the wretched beast,
We nothing know; only the news is cried,
Begum is dead: we know not how he died.

Still, though the callous bards neglect to hymn
Thy praises, Begum; though, on dross intent,
The hireling sculptor pauseth not to limn
Thy spacious visage, kindly hands are bent
E'en now to stuff thy frail integument.
Then sleep in peace, Belovèd; blest Sultân
Of some Rhinokeraunian Devachân.