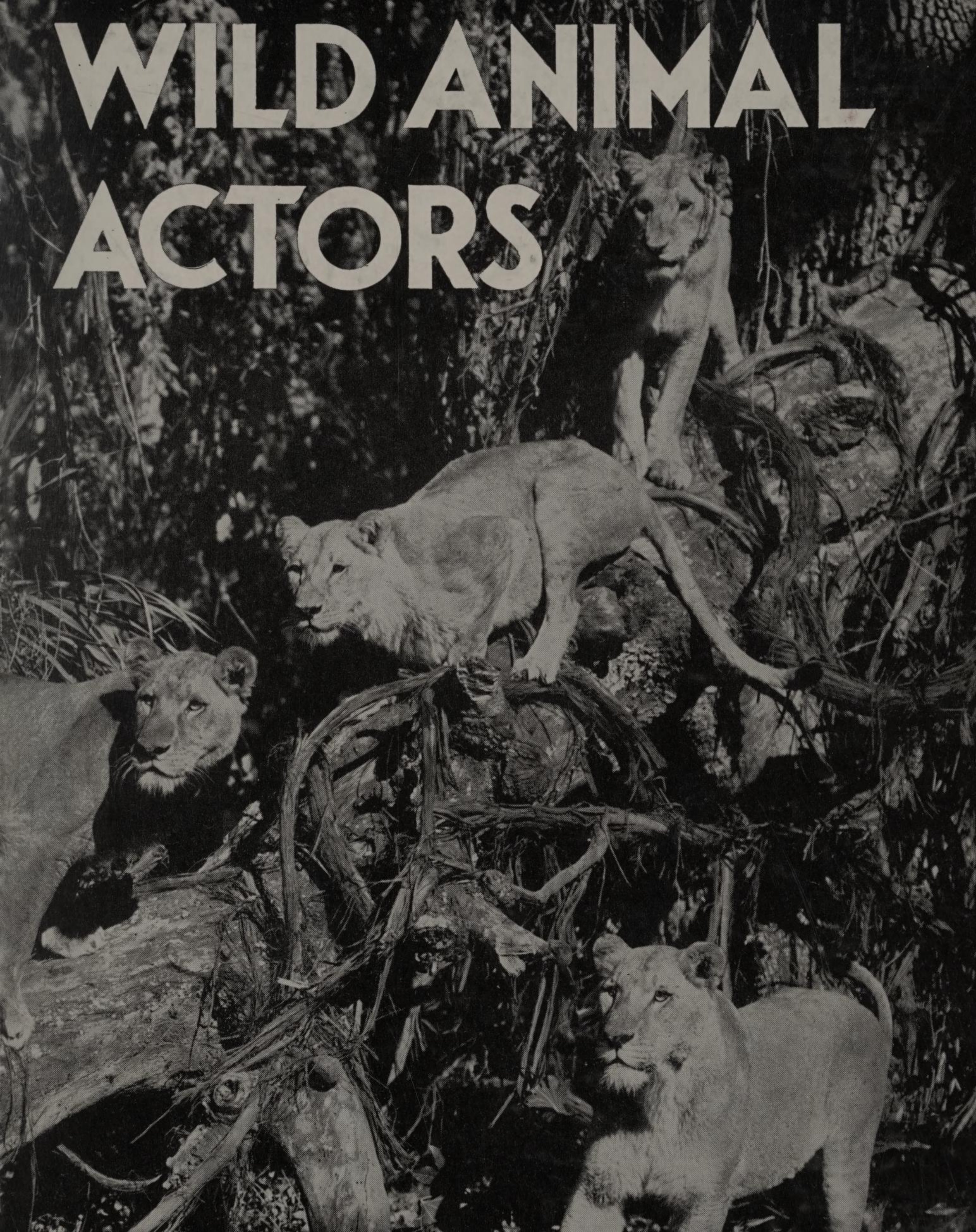


# WILD ANIMAL ACTORS



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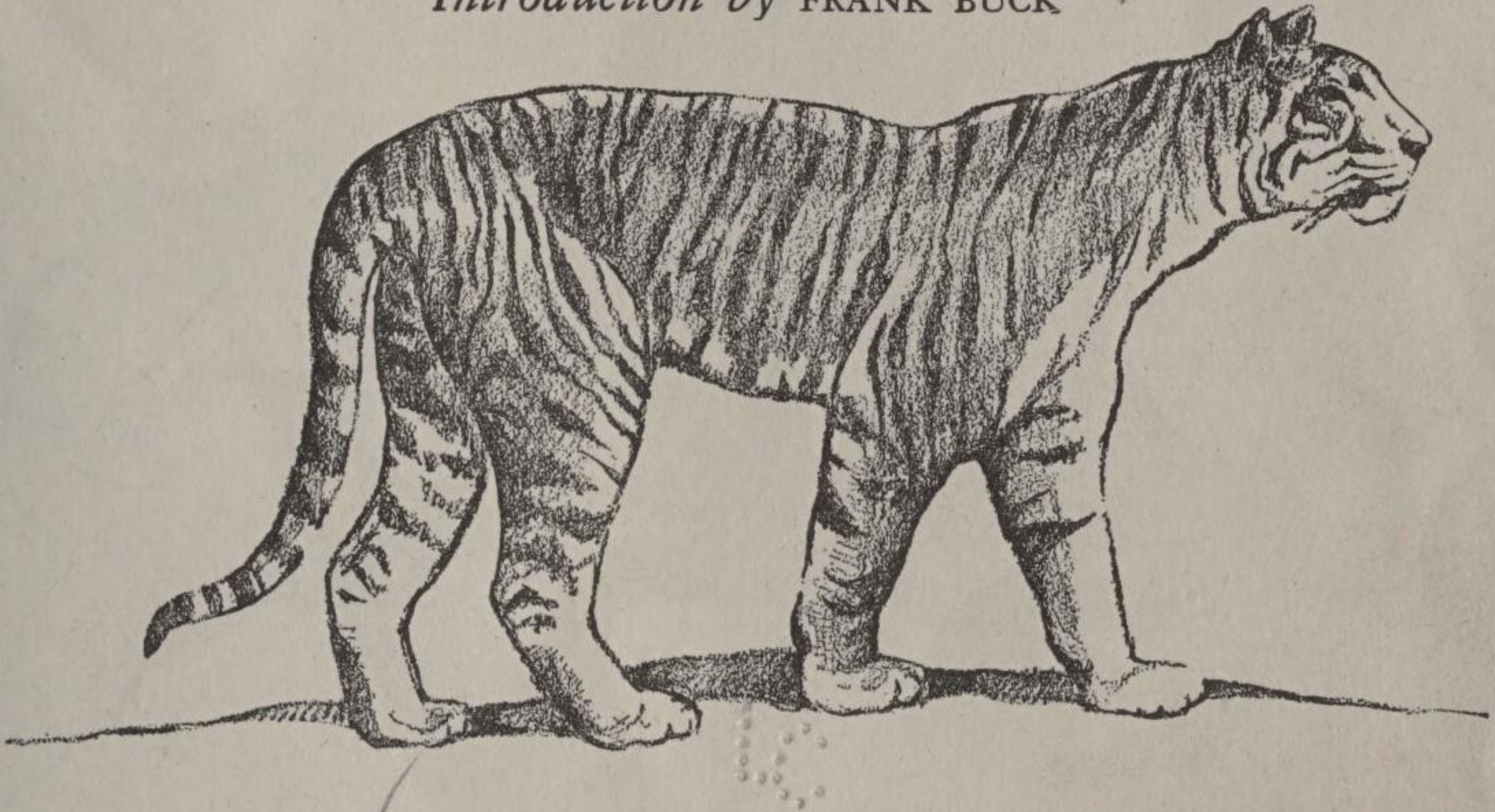
# WILD ANIMAL ACTORS

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by

*Frances*  
F. M. *and* H. M. CHRISTESON ✓

*Introduction* by FRANK BUCK ✓



Illustrated with Photographs

Decorated by  
KAY LITTLE ✓

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*Johnny Weissmuller rides Mary, -  
from "Tarzan and His Mate"*



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### MARY

### THE RHINOCEROS

**O**N the lot of any motion picture studio the importance of an actress may be judged by the unusualness and the size of the room which is provided for her dressing room. Some of the larger studios are most generous in setting aside small bungalows, complete miniature homes, beautifully decorated where even the most temperamental actress is satisfied to rest, to have luncheon served, and to dress for whatever scene may be



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on the call-board for that day. One must be *very* important to have a bungalow dressing room.

The Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios boast of many prominent actresses, but if their importance be decided on the basis of the unusualness of their studio home, then Mary, the nine-year-old rhinoceros, is the biggest star of them all.

On Lot Number Two is the trim grey bungalow with fenced-in patio, or small yard, which is Mary's home. The furnishings of the main room which is a living room by day and a bedroom by night, are very simple. On the freshly-scoured floor in one corner, a fresh pile of alfalfa hay is arranged each evening for her. This is the extent of the furniture in this part of the house, as nothing more is needed for her comfort.

The kitchen is a bit more elaborate. It is separated from the living room by a crossbar fence, and boasts a low stool, several large, clean, shining buckets, a very big round, red, tub with low sides, and seven square wooden boxes which serve as a kitchen cabinet. These boxes hold the vegetables and fruits from which Mary's chef prepares her meals.

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Each day, if Mary could read, a menu like this might be put before her.

Beets	}	BREAKFAST 7:00 A. M.	}	Bran mash Clear, cold water.
Carrots				
Onions				
Apples	}	DINNER 3:30 P. M.	}	Bran mash Clear, cold water.
Oranges				
Bananas				

But since it is not possible for her to select her own dishes, her meals are put before her in the combinations which are best for her. It is probably just as well that she cannot pick and choose, since she might be like her sometimes foolish human friends who eat too much, or neglect their spinach!

The large buckets are the measuring cups into which the chef cuts up the vegetables or the fruits according to which meal he is preparing. Breakfast is always vegetables: dinner is always fruits, but not always the same kind of vegetables or the same kinds of fruits. Bran mash is combined with whatever else is on the menu, and the whole concoction is poured into the big, round, low tub.

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Mary knows very well when the cook is in the kitchen. She stays close by waiting for the table to be set. This is a simple operation too—the tub is set on the floor of the room which is not only a livingroom-bedroom, but now breakfast nook as well. Her big, heavy-horned head is lowered eagerly over the tub even before her meal is brought in, so that the minute she is served the fingerlike tip of her upper lip is busy pushing the food into her mouth. This little fingerlike tip resembles an elephant's trunk in miniature, although it is not noticeable when she is not eating.

She eats daintily and carefully, not gulping down her food as so large an animal might be expected to do. She eats slowly, raising her head now and then to make sure that the waiter is bringing her the drink of water with which the repast is brought to a close. It takes two buckets of clear, cool water to satisfy Mary's thirst before she leaves the dirty dishes for someone else to worry about and waddles sedately from the room to sun herself in the patio.

If Mary were at home in her native country, Africa, her menu would be similar, since leaves, roots and grains

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are her natural diet. But she would have to look for her food herself, and then go down to the river Congo or the river Lompoco, for a drink. She would do this at night however, since the rhinoceros, like the hippopotamus, forages for food at night, and sleeps, suns himself, or hides in his lair by day.

It is a long way from Africa to Hollywood. Mary arrived there by way of Hamburg, Germany, the home of the great Hagenbeck Zoo and animal dealers. One of their representatives came all the way with Mary in September, 1933, to see her well established in her new home on the M-G-M lot. Here she was to star with Johnny Weissmuller and Maureen O'Sullivan in *Tarzan and His Mate*.

So far, this is Mary's only appearance as a motion picture actress, but since she is the only rhinoceros in California, or for that matter, on the Pacific Coast, she is apt to be cast as often as one of her kind is needed in a picture.

She played her part so well, and has proved herself to be of such a comparatively amiable temperament, that she will no doubt be in demand frequently. Her trainer, Mr. George Emerson, sings her praises. She is the third

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rhinoceros he has worked with and he finds her most responsive to his kindly treatment. When he enters the fenced-in yard of her home, she comes to him for a pat of greeting. To other persons outside the fence she pays scant attention.

A rhinoceros in its native haunts would charge at a man who came this close. In fact any noise is enough to start a charge in the direction from which it comes. The poor rhinoceros takes no chances on his naturally weak eyesight, but relies on his sensitive hearing and sense of smell to detect danger. He then can charge toward it.

When Mary is acting, she can be made to charge this way, just as she charged at Cheeta, the chimpanzee in *Tarzan and His Mate*. On the jungle set at the studio, accommodations similar to her permanent home are maintained. Here she whiles away the time until her scenes are ready to be filmed. Then she is led from her quarters through the jungle, but always over the same path and in the same direction, so that when she is sent running through the jungle as the cameras are whirring, she will follow the path which it has become a habit to follow and will be led by it back into her pen.

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This plan takes advantage of the rhinoceros' natural habit of always following a certain path through the jungle on its way to eat or drink. Hunters tell of having whole camps destroyed because some inexperienced person who couldn't recognize the trail of a rhinoceros had pitched his camp immediately across his path. When a rhinoceros finds something in his way, there is no side-stepping. He goes straight through, scattering the obstacle to the four winds. He is impulsive and fearless, but with his huge head lowered, the horn on his snout well-placed to do as much damage as possible, he is a formidable enemy and a fast one in spite of his great bulk and short, thick legs. A quick side-step is his enemy's only escape. His short-sighted eyes cannot see what he is charging quickly enough for him to change his course and suddenly step aside to catch his victim.

So far, Mary has seen fit to behave herself, but there is always the danger that she may suddenly act the part of the wild animal she is. Before she was brought to the United States, she had become well acquainted enough with man not to charge at him in fear and in anger. She has even made friends with Teddy, a small dog who comes

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calling on her every day. But after all, she is not many months removed from the jungles, and might readily develop into a wild animal, very strong and ungovernable, should she really take occasion to act like one.

Mr. Emerson has broken her so he can ride on her back, but riding her is always dangerous even for him. So when in *Tarzan and His Mate*, Johnny Weissmuller jumped on her back in the scene which follows Mary's attack on the chimpanzee, it took a great deal of courage on his part.

Mary is an excellent representative of her family, the common, or black rhinoceros of Africa, and although she differs in several ways from her cousins who live in India, Java and Sumatra, she probably will at some time represent them too in a motion picture.

In her way, Mary is the studio's most individual actress. There is great rivalry among the large studios as to which one has the most popular star, but no one can gainsay the fact that the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios has the biggest one. There is none to compare with Mary.