

18. The Malay Race of the Indian Elephant, *Elephas maximus hirsutus*\*. By R. LYDEKKER, F.R.S., F.Z.S.†

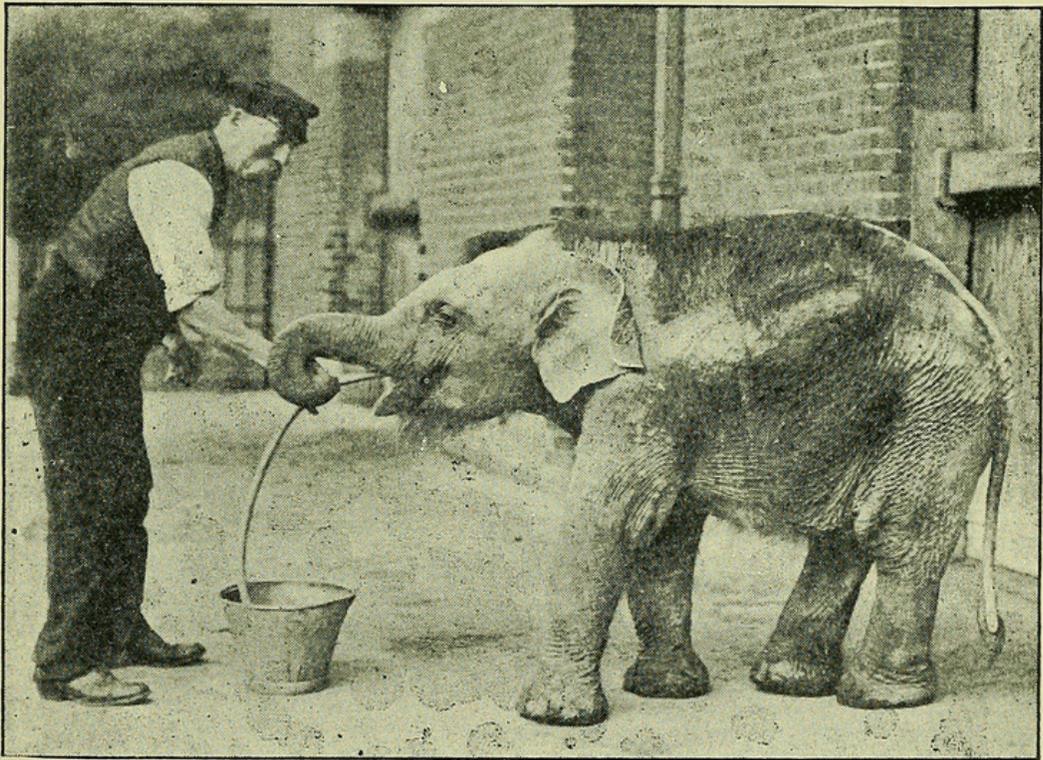
[Received February 24, 1914: Read March 17, 1914.]

(Text-figures 1-3.)

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Thanks to the Trustees of the estate of the late Mr. Rowland Ward, the Natural History Branch of the British Museum has received the mounted skin of the young Malay Elephant which died in the Society's Gardens during the latter part of last year. While yet alive, the extraordinary hairiness of this animal attracted the attention of naturalists; and this feature, coupled with a peculiarity in the form of the ears, seems so well marked and so distinctive as to justify the recognition of the Malay Elephant as a distinct local race of the Asiatic species.

Text-figure 1.



Young Malay Elephant when alive in the Society's Gardens.

As I learn from Mr. Pocock, this Elephant came from the Kuala Pila district of the Negri Sembilan province of the Malay

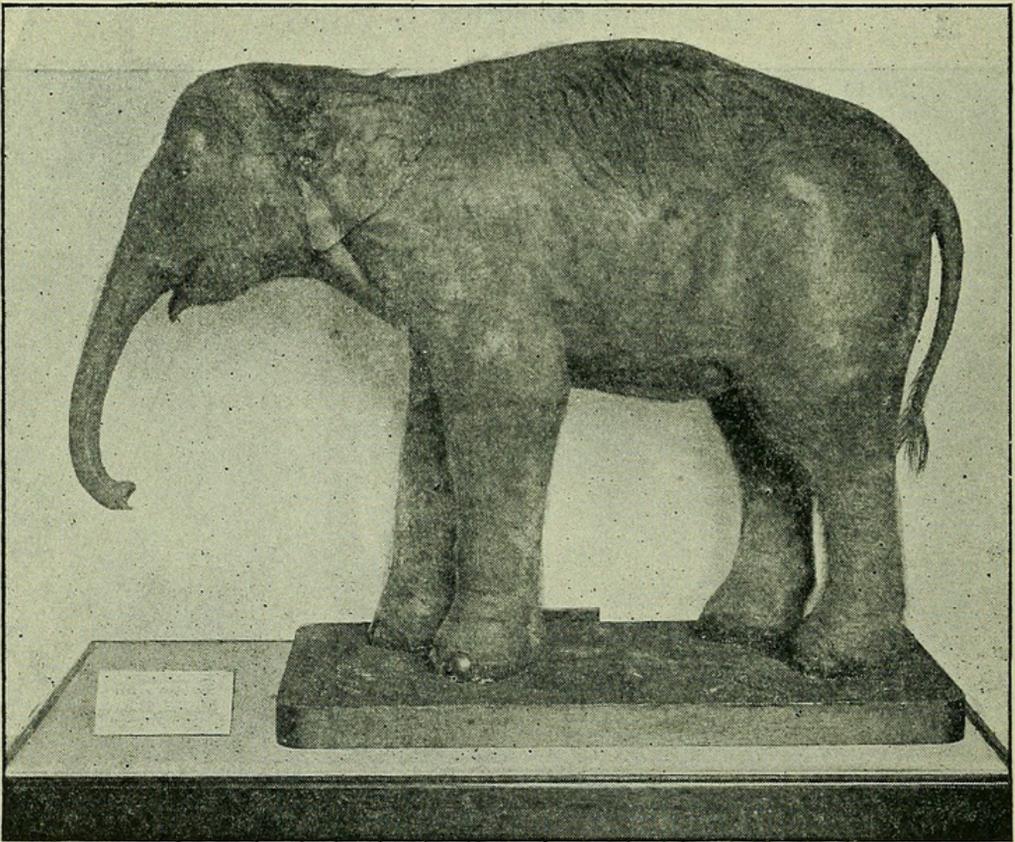
\* [The complete account of this new subspecies appears here, but since the name and a preliminary diagnosis were published in the 'Abstract,' No. 130, 1914, it is distinguished by being underlined.—EDITOR.]

† Published by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.

Peninsula, and is believed to have been about three years old at the time of its death. As shown in the accompanying photograph from life (text-fig. 1), it has a somewhat stunted appearance—suggestive, at first sight, of its belonging to a small race,—the height of the specimen, as mounted, being about 3 feet 8 inches. This stunted appearance may, however, be merely due to the effects of early captivity, for Mr. T. R. Hubback, in his book on *Elephant and Seladang Hunting in the Federated Malay States*\*, records that the Elephants of the Negri Sembilan are of ordinary size, although of late years most of the big bulls have been killed off. He also mentions that practically all the bulls are tuskers, and very generally have one tusk much smaller than the other.

Before proceeding further, it may be mentioned that it is very difficult to obtain definite information with regard to the hairiness or otherwise of Indian Elephant calves—that is to say, in those of the typical Indian race of the species. Dr. Möbius † has, indeed,

Text-figure 2.



Newly born Indian Elephant in the Natural History Museum.

shown that young Elephants may have remnants of a soft hairy coat comparable to the under-fur of the Mammoth, and the young Elephant born—from a presumably Indian mother—in the

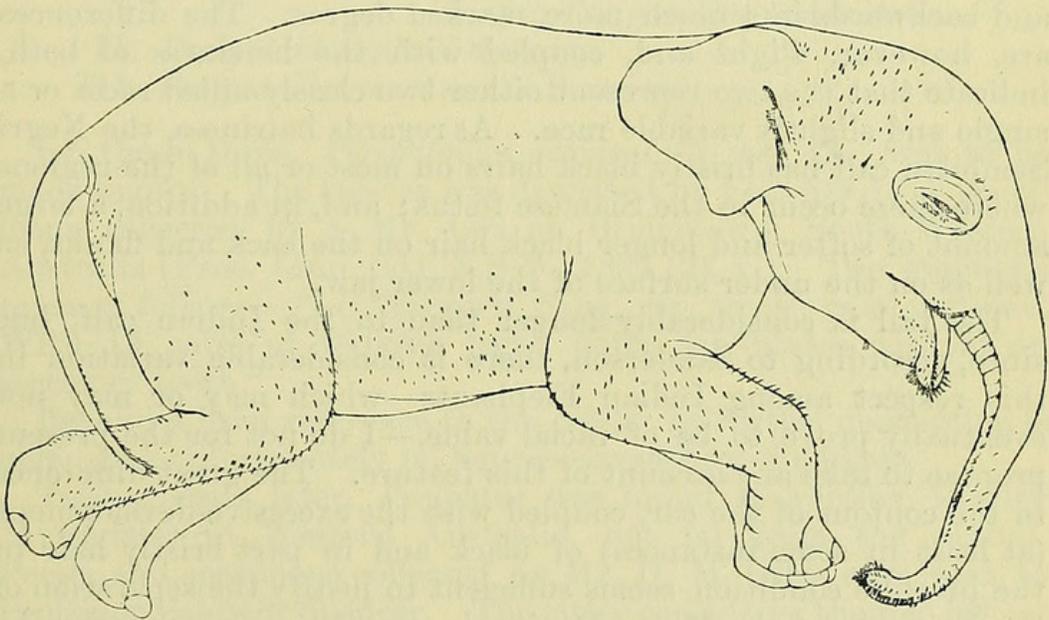
\* London, 1905, p. 63.

† Sitzber. k.-preuss. Ak. Wiss., Math.-Nat. 1892, p. 527.

Society's Gardens in 1902, the mounted skin of which (text-fig. 2) is exhibited in the Natural History Museum, has a considerable portion of the body clothed with a somewhat sparse coat of rather short, soft, rufous hair, which also forms a fringe to the margins of the ears. There likewise appears to be a certain amount of hair of a similar type shown in the photograph of the young Indian Elephant born in Copenhagen in 1912.

On the other hand, from the fact that writers like G. P. Sanderson and W. T. Blanford make no mention of the hairiness of Indian Elephant calves, it seems probable that in many cases the skin may be more or less nearly bare, although it must be confessed that information with regard to this matter appears to be very scant and defective. Still, it may be taken for granted that if Indian-born Elephant calves exhibited hairiness in any way comparable to that of the young Negri Sembilan animal, the fact would have been recorded in textbooks on Indian natural history and sport.

Text-figure 3.



Outline of a Fœtus of a Siamese Elephant.  
(From Toldt, Denks. k. Ak. Wiss. Wien, 1913.)

It is, however, very noteworthy that Mr. K. Toldt\* has recently described and figured an advanced fœtus of a Siamese Elephant (text-fig. 3), in which the sides of the crown of the head, the terminal half of the trunk, the point of the lower lip, the under-parts, the greater portion of the limbs, and the hind aspect of the buttocks are sparsely covered with short bristly hairs, which would doubtless have attained much greater development after birth. Nor is this all, for if Mr. Toldt's figure (text-fig. 3) be compared with that of the young Indian † Elephant shown in

\* Denks. k. Ak. Wiss. Wien, vol. xc. p. 259, 1913.

† The term "Indian" is here used *strictu sensu*.

text-fig. 2, it will be at once evident that there is a marked difference in the shape of the ears in the two specimens.

To describe this difference in words is very difficult, and it is most easily apprehended by contrasting the figures. It may be mentioned, however, that in the Indian Elephant—both young and adult—the ear is distinctly triangular, owing to the great development of the descending lobe, and that its longer diameter is vertical. In the Siamese calf, on the other hand, the descending lobe is less elongated and the postero-inferior border placed less obliquely, while there is a greater development of the postero-superior border. In consequence of this—making due allowance for the turning-forward of the lower part of the postero-superior border, which may apparently also occur in Indian calves\*,—the whole lower half of the ear forms, roughly speaking, an obliquely hung half-square, with somewhat emarginate borders.

Now the ear of the Negri Sembilan calf accords very closely in general type with that of the Siamese fœtus, the chief differences being the minor degree of emargination of the borders and the direction of the antero-inferior border, which is inclined downwards and backwards in a much more marked degree. The differences are, however, slight and, coupled with the hairiness of both, indicate that the two represent either two closely allied races or a single and slightly variable race. As regards hairiness, the Negri Sembilan calf has bristly black hairs on most or all of the regions where these occur in the Siamese fœtus; and, in addition, a large amount of softer and longer black hair on the back and flanks, as well as on the under surface of the lower jaw.

The tail is considerably longer than in the Indian calf, but since, according to Sanderson, there is considerable variation in this respect among Indian Elephants—which may or may not eventually prove to be of racial value,—I do not for the present propose to take any account of this feature. The great difference in the contour of the ear, coupled with the excessive development (at least in some instances) of black and in part bristly hair in the juvenile condition, seems sufficient to justify the separation of the Elephant of the Malay Peninsula as a distinct race, under the name of *Elephas maximus hirsutus* †. That the Siamese Elephant is near akin to this race seems certain, but whether it should be included therein, or should be regarded as a race by itself, may be left for future consideration.

It should be added that I have no means—except on the ground of geographical isolation—of distinguishing the Malay Elephant from *E. maximus sumatranus*, the description of that race ‡ not being comparable with the specimens forming the subject of the present communication.

\* According to Sanderson, 'Thirteen Years among the Wild Beasts of India,' p. 60, the permanent backward folding of the margin of the ear in Indian Elephants does not take place till the sixth or seventh year.

† Abstract P. Z. S. 1914, p. 20 (March 24th).

‡ See Sclater, Nat. Hist. Rev. vol. ii. p. 72, 1862, and Falconer's 'Palæontological Memoirs,' vol. ii. p. 256, 1868.



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