

Harper's Stereotype Edition.

· N U B I A
AND
A B Y S S I N I A :

COMPREHENDING THEIR
CIVIL HISTORY, ANTIQUITIES, ARTS, RELIGION, LITERA-
TURE, AND NATURAL HISTORY.


BY THE REV. MICHAEL RUSSELL, LL. D.,

Author of "View of Ancient and Modern Egypt,"
"Palestine, or the Holy Land," &c.

ILLUSTRATED BY A MAP, AND SEVERAL ENGRAVINGS.

NEW-YORK:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY J. & J. HARPER,
NO. 82 CLIFF-STREET,

AND SOLD BY THE PRINCIPAL BOOKSELLERS THROUGHOUT THE
UNITED STATES.

1833.

whose root it seems to depend for its roof not falling in and burying it in the ruins of its subterraneous habitation. It seems to delight most in those places that are haunted by the cerastes, or horned viper. Nature has certainly imposed this dangerous neighbourhood upon the one, for the good and advantage of the other, and that of mankind in general. Of the many trials I made, I never found a jerboa in the body of a viper, excepting once, in that of a female big with young, and the jerboa itself was then nearly consumed.* This animal may be used as food. In taste it is scarcely distinguishable from a young rabbit. The ancients described it at an early period, and it is represented in some of the first medals of the Cyrenaicum, sitting under an umbellated plant, supposed to be the silphium, the figure of which is likewise preserved on the silver medals of Cyrene. Bruce informs us that he never saw a rabbit in Abyssinia, but that there is an abundance of hares.

Abyssinia produces several remarkable animals of the pachydermatous order, among which we rank the Ethiopian hog (*Phascochaerus* of F. Cuvier). This extraordinary genus contains at least two species, frequently confounded together, under the names of *Sus Africanus* and *Sus Æthiopicus*, specific titles by no means happily chosen, in as far as both are natives of the African continent, and that called Ethiopian, *par excellence*, inhabits more particularly the Cape of Good Hope. The imperfection of this nomenclature, it has been remarked, is certainly the chief cause of the confusion which has long reigned in the history of these animals. The most remarkable distinction between the two species just named consists in the former being provided with incisive teeth, which are wanting in the latter. For this reason the one is named *Ph. incisivus*, the other *Ph. edentatus*, by M. F. Cuvier.† These animals, though gentle, lively, and easily tamed when taken young, are of a peculiarly ferocious disposition after attaining to the adult condition in the state of nature. Yet their mode of dentition shows that they are naturally much less omnivorous than the wild boar, and we know, in fact, that their food consists entirely of roots and other vegetable produce. Their sight is said to be defective, owing to the peculiar position of their eyes, but their hearing is good, and their sense of smell exquisitely delicate.

The wild boar in these parts of Africa is smaller and smoother than that of Europe or of Barbary. It inhabits swamps and the wooded banks of rivers. This animal is accounted unclean in

* Travels, vol. v. p. 121.

† The hindmost or left-hand figure of the wood-cut at p. 291 of this volume represents the head and fore-quarters of the species figured by Rüppel, under the name of *Ph. Æliasi*.—Atlas, Taf. 26. It was observed in Kordofan.

Abyssinia, both by Mohammedans and Christians; and that it has not multiplied greatly, in consequence of being neglected by the hunters, is probably owing to its young being devoured by hyenas.

That huge animal the hippopotamus is well known in Abyssinia. Mr. Salt had no sooner reached the banks of the Taccaze, a tributary to the Nile, than his attention was excited by the cry of his attendants, of "Gomari! gomari!" the Abyssinian title for the hippopotamus. At that time, however, he only obtained a momentary glance, during which he could merely observe that its action resembled the rolling of a grampus in the sea. Between the different fords of the river, which, at the place alluded to, might be about fifty yards across, there are pools of almost immeasurable depth, resembling the mountain tarns of the north of England; and it is in these pools that the amphibious giant loves to dwell. Being desirous to attack it, Mr. Salt and his party stationed themselves on a high overhanging rock which commanded one of the favourite pools, and they had not remained long before a hippopotamus rose to the surface, at a distance of not more than twenty yards. He came up at first very confidently, raising his enormous head out of the water, and snorting violently. At the same instant their guns were discharged, the contents of which appeared to strike directly on its forehead; on which it turned round its head with an angry scowl, and making a sudden plunge, sank to the bottom, with a peculiar noise, between a grunt and a roar. They for some minutes entertained a sanguine hope that he was killed, and momentarily expected to see his body ascend to the surface. But it soon appeared that a hippopotamus is not so easily slain; for he rose again, ere long, close to the same spot, and apparently not much concerned at what had happened, though somewhat more cautious than before. They again discharged their pieces, but with as little effect as formerly; and although some of the party continued firing at every one that made his appearance, they were by no means certain that they produced the slightest impression upon any of them. This they attributed to their having used *lead* balls, which are too soft to enter his almost impenetrable skull.

It appears from what they witnessed that the hippopotamus cannot remain more than five or six minutes at a time under water. One of the most interesting parts of the amusement was to witness the perfect ease with which these animals quietly dropped down to the bottom; for the water, being exceedingly clear, they could distinctly see them so low as twenty feet beneath the surface.*

The elephant, rhinoceros, and giraffe, or camelopard, all dis-

* Salt's Voyage to Abyssinia, p. 354.

tinguished for their great dimensions and imposing aspect, likewise inhabit the low hot countries of Abyssinia. It has been noted as remarkable, that such common animals as the former two should have escaped the description of the sacred writers. Moses and the children of Israel, when sojourning either in Egypt or Arabia, were long in the vicinity of countries which produced them; and when we take into consideration the close connexion maintained by Solomon with the south-east coast of the Red Sea, it seems almost impossible that he should not have been acquainted with them, especially as both his father David and himself used abundance of ivory. Some, however, take the *behemoth* of the Scriptures to be the elephant, while the *reem* is regarded as identical with the species now designated under the name of rhinoceros.

The Abyssinian hunters of the last-named animal are called *agageer*, from *agaro*, to kill, by cutting the hams, or the tendon of Achilles, with a sword. The eyes of the rhinoceros are extremely small; and as his neck is stiff, and his head cumbrous, he seldom turns round so as to see any thing that is not directly before him. To this, according to Bruce, he owes his death, as he never escapes if there is as much plain ground as to enable a horse to get in advance. His pride and fury then induce him to lay aside all thoughts of escaping but by victory. He stands for a moment at bay, then starting forward, he suddenly charges the horse, after the manner of the wild boar, which animal he greatly resembles in his mode of action. But the horse easily avoids his ponderous onset, by turning short aside, and this is the fatal instant; for a naked man armed with a sharp sword drops from behind the principal hunter, and, unperceived by the rhinoceros, who is seeking to wreak his vengeance on his enemy, he inflicts a tremendous blow across the tendon of the heel, which renders him incapable of either flight or resistance. In speaking of the large allowance of vegetable matter necessary to support this enormous living mass, we should likewise take into consideration the vast quantity of water which it consumes. No country, according to Bruce, but such as that of the Shangalla, deluged with six months' rain, full of large and deep basins hewn by nature in the living rock, which are shaded by dark woods from evaporation, or one watered by extensive rivers which never fall low or to a state of dryness, can supply the vast draughts of its enormous maw. As an article of food, he is himself much esteemed by the Shangalla; and the soles of his feet, which are soft like those of a camel, and of a gristly substance, are peculiarly delicate. The rest of the body resembles that of the hog, but is coarser, and is pervaded by a smell of musk.*

* Mr. Salt is of opinion that the figure of the African rhinoceros given

Of equine animals, the zebra or zecora occurs chiefly in the southern provinces of Abyssinia. Its mane is much used for making a particular kind of collar, which on state-days is fixed as an ornament round the necks of the war-horses belonging to the chiefs. This privilege, however, seems to be confined to a few of the principal men. The wild ass (probably the quagga) is said to occur in the same districts as the zebra. In regard to the giraffe of Nubia and Abyssinia, we shall mention, in the first place, that from some difference in the spots and in the curvature of the cranium of the few individuals hitherto brought to Europe, M. Geoffroy St. Hilaire is of opinion that it is not of the same species as that from the southern portions of the African continent. It is an animal of a shy nature, and rarely to be met with, in consequence of its frequenting chiefly the interior districts uninhabited by the human race. Its skin forms an article of barter in some of the provinces; and an ornament made of the hair plucked from the tail is commonly fastened to the butt-end of the whips used by the inhabitants for the purpose of brushing away flies, which are exceedingly troublesome during the hot season. These whips, Mr. Salt informs us, are themselves formed from the skin of the hippopotamus, and are called "hallinga."

Of the antelope tribe, which is numerously represented in these parts of Africa, the only example we shall here name is the Nubian species called *Addax* by M. Lichtenstein (*Act. Acad. Berlin*, 1824, pl. xi.) Its horns are long and slender, and form three curves. It is represented on several of the ancient monuments of Egypt.*

We shall terminate these brief notices of mammalia by giving in a note below a list of the species described and figured by M. Rüppel in the atlas to his *Reise im Nördlichen Afrika*.†

by Bruce must have been copied from the one-horned species of Buffon, with the addition of the second horn, as the two-horned rhinoceros wants the folds in the skin, which are nevertheless given by the Abyssinian traveller.

* See the central figure of the wood-cut at page 291.

† *Felis maniculata*

Canis zerda

Antelope montana

Felis obana

Canis famelicus

Vespertilio Temminckii

Antelope Addax

Camelopardalis giraffa

Canis variegatus

C. pallidus

C. pictus

Mus dimidiatus

M. Cahirinus

Antelope dama

Canis Niloticus

C. anthus

Rhinolophus divosus

Antelope Semmerhingi

Lepus Isabellinus

Antelope Saltiana

Psammomys obesus

Sciurus rutilans

Phascocherus Æliani

Dysopes pumilus

Taphozous nudiventris

Nyctocejus leucogaster