

ANIMAL
BIOGRAPHY;

OR,

ANECDOTES

OF THE

LIVES, MANNERS, AND ECONOMY,

OF THE

ANIMAL CREATION,

ARRANGED ACCORDING TO THE SYSTEM OF LINNÆUS.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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106 THE SINGLE-HORNED RHINOCEROS.

bring forth several young at a birth. When fat, they are considered as excellent food.

THE RHINOCEROS TRIBE.*

WE now come so a race of animals of a huge size and bulk, inhabitants only of the tropical climates, dull and sluggish in their manners, and in their disposition sufficiently peaceable, except when attacked or provoked. They have, seated on the nose, a solid, conical horn, not fixed in the bone, which is never shed, but remains, unless broken off by accident, during life.†

THE SINGLE-HORNED RHINOCEROS.‡

The Single-horned Rhinoceros is not exceeded in size by any land animal except the Elephant, and in strength and power it gives place to none. Its length is usually about twelve feet, and this is also nearly the girth of its body.

Its nose is armed with a formidable weapon, a hard and very solid horn, sometimes above three feet in length, and eighteen inches in circumference at the base, with which it is able to defend

* This name is derived from *ρίς* *ρίως* nose, and *κέρως* a horn.

† Linn. Gmel. i. 59.

‡ SYNONYMS.—Rhinoceros Unicornis. Linn.—Rhinoceros. *Buffon*. *Parsons*, &c.—*Shaw's Gen. Zool.* pl. 60.—*Berw. Quad.* 156.

itself against the attacks of every ferocious animal. The Tiger will rather attack the Elephant than the Rhinoceros, which it cannot face without danger of having its bowels torn out. "With this horn," says Martial, "it will lift up a Bull like a football."*

The body and limbs of the Rhinoceros are defended by a skin so hard as to be impenetrable by any weapons, except in the belly: it is said, that in order to shoot a full-grown Rhinoceros of an advanced age, it is necessary to make use of iron bullets, those of lead having been known to flatten against the skin.

The upper lip seems in this animal to answer in some measure the same purpose as the trunk of the Elephant; it protrudes over the lower one in the form of a lengthened tip; and, being extremely pliable, is used in catching hold of the shoots of vegetables, &c. and delivering them into its mouth.

The Rhinoceros is generally of a quiet and inoffensive disposition, but when attacked or provoked it becomes very furious and dangerous; and he is even sometimes subject to paroxysms of fury, which nothing can assuage. That which Emanuel, King of Portugal, sent to the Pope, in the year 1513, destroyed the vessel in which they were transporting it.

Dr. Parsons, in the year 1743, published a history of the Rhinoceros, containing a very minute

* Epigr.

description of one that was brought from Bengal into Europe.* He was only two years old, and the expence of his food and journey amounted to near 1000l. sterling: he had every day, at three meals, seven pounds of rice, mixed with three pounds of sugar; besides hay and green plants: he also drank large quantities of water. In his disposition he was very peaceable, readily suffering all parts of his body to be touched. When he was hungry, or was struck by any person, he became mischievous, and nothing would appease him but food. He was not at this time taller than a young Cow.

A Rhinoceros, brought from Atcham, in the dominions of the King of Ava, was exhibited in 1748, at Paris. It was very tame, gentle, and even caressing, was fed principally on hay and corn, and was much delighted with sharp or prickly plants, and the thorny branches of trees. The attendants frequently gave him branches that had very sharp and strong thorns on them; but he bent and broke them in his mouth without seeming in the least incommoded. It is true they sometimes drew blood from the mouth and tongue, "but that," says Father Le Comte, who gives us the description, "might even render them more palatable, and those little wounds might serve only to cause a sensation similar to that excited by salt, pepper, or mustard, on ours."†

As an equivalent for a very dull sight, Dr. Parsons remarks, that this animal possesses an acute

* The first that was brought into England was in the year 1684.

† Church.

and most attentive ear. It will listen with a deep and long-continued attention to any kind of noise; and although it be eating, lying down, or obeying any pressing demands of nature, it will raise its head, and listen till the noise ceases.

The Rhinoceros is said to run with great swiftness, and from his strength and impenetrable covering, is capable of rushing with resistless violence through woods and obstacles of every kind; the smaller trees bending like twigs as he passes them. In his general habits and manner of feeding he resembles the Elephant; residing in cool sequestered spots, near waters, and in shady woods: like the hog he delights in occasionally wallowing in the mire.*

The Asiatics sometimes tame and bring them into the field of battle, to strike terror into their enemies, but they are in general so unmanageable that they do more harm than good, and in their fury it is not uncommon for them to turn on their masters.†

The skin, which is of a blackish colour, is disposed about the neck into large plaits or folds: another fold of the same kind passes from the shoulders to the fore legs; and another from the hind part of the back to the thighs. It is naked, rough, and covered with a kind of tubercles, or large callous granulations. Between the folds and under the belly the skin is soft, and of a light rose-colour. The ears are moderately large, upright,

* Shaw, i. 200.

† Church.

and pointed: the eyes are small, and so placed that he can only see what is nearly in a direct line before him.*

The flesh is eaten: the skin, flesh, hoofs, teeth, and even the dung, are also used in India medicinally. The horn, when cut through the middle, is said to exhibit on each side, the rude figure of a man, whose outlines are marked by little white strokes.† Many of the Indian princes drink out of cups made of this horn, because they imagine that when it holds any poisonous draught, the liquor will ferment till it runs quite out of the goblet. Those made of the horns of the young are esteemed the best. Professor Thunberg, when at the Cape, tried these horns, both wrought into goblets and unwrought, both old and young horns, with several sorts of poison, weak as well as strong, but observed not the least motion or effervescence; but when a solution of corrosive sublimate was poured into one of them, there arose indeed a few bubbles, which were produced by the air that had been inclosed in the pores of the horn, and was now disengaged from it.‡ Martjal informs us that the Roman ladies of fashion used these horns in the baths to hold their essence-bottles and oils.§ The Javanese make shields of the skin.

The female produces but one young.

The Single-horned Rhinoceros is a native of several parts of India, as well as of the islands of

* Shaw, i. 199.

† Grose, i. 273.

‡ Thunberg, i. 246.

§ Lib. xiv. Ep. 53.

Ceylon, Java, and Sumatra. It is also found in Ethiopia.

THE TWO-HORNED RHINOCEROS.*

This species differs from the last principally in the appearance of its skin, which, instead of vast, and regularly marked armour-like folds, has merely a very slight wrinkle across the shoulders, and on the hinder parts, with a few fainter wrinkles on the sides, so that, in comparison with the common Rhinoceros, it appears almost smooth. What, however, constitutes the specific or principal distinction is the nose being furnished with two horns, one of which is smaller than the other, and situated above it. These horns are said to be loose when the animal is in a quiet state, but to become firm and immoveable when enraged.†

In its habits and manner of feeding this animal differs but little from the Single-horned Rhinoceros, Vaillant says that when these animals are at rest, they always place themselves in the direction of the wind, with their noses towards it, in order that they may discover by their smell what enemies they have to dread. From time to time, however, they move their heads round to take a look behind them, and to be assured that they are safe on all sides; but it is only a look, and they soon return to their former position.‡ When they are enraged they tear up the ground with their horn, and throw the earth

* SYNONYMS.—Rhinoceros Bicornis. Linn.—Shaw's *Gen. Zool.* pl. 61.—Brew. *Quad.* 156.

† Shaw, i. 202.

‡ New Travels in Africa, iii. 42.

and stones furiously, and to a vast distance, over their heads.

Mr. Bruce's description of the manners of the Two-horned Rhinoceros, is highly worthy of notice. He informs us, that, "besides the trees capable of most resistance, there are, in the vast forests within the rains, trees of a softer consistence, and of a very succulent quality, which seem to be destined for his principal food. For the purpose of gaining the highest branches of these, his upper lip is capable of being lengthened out so as to increase his power of laying hold with it, in the same manner as the Elephant does with his trunk. With this lip, and the assistance of his tongue, he pulls down the upper branches, which have most leaves, and these he devours first; having stripped the tree of its branches, he does not therefore abandon it, but, placing his snout as low in the trunk as he finds his horns will enter, he rips up the body of the tree, and reduces it to thin pieces like so many laths; and, when he has thus prepared it, he embraces as much of it as he can in his monstrous jaws, and twists it round with as much ease as an ox would do a root of celery, or any such pot-herb or garden-stuff.

"When pursued, and in fear, he possesses an astonishing degree of swiftness, considering his size, the apparent unwieldiness of his body, his great weight before, and the shortness of his legs. He is long, and has a kind of trot, which, after a few minutes increases in a great proportion, and takes in a great distance; but this is to be under-

stood with a degree of moderation. It is not true that in a plain he beats the Horse in swiftness. I have passed him with ease, and seen many, worse mounted, do the same; and though it is certainly true that a horse can very seldom come up with him, this is owing to his cunning, and not to his swiftness. He makes constantly from wood to wood, and forces himself into the thickest parts of them. The trees that are dead or dry, are broken down, as with a cannon shot, and fall behind him and on his side in all directions. Others, that are more pliable, greener, or fuller of sap, are bent back by his weight and the velocity of his motions. And, after he has passed, restoring themselves like a green branch to their natural position, they often sweep the incautious pursuer and his horse from the ground, and dash them in pieces against the surrounding trees.

“The eyes of the Rhinoceros are very small; he seldom turns his head, and therefore sees nothing but what is before him.* To this he owes his death, and never escapes if there is so much plain as to enable the Horse to get before him. His pride and fury then make him lay aside all thoughts of escaping, but by victory over his enemy. He stands for a moment at bay; then, at a start, runs straight forward at the Horse, like the Wild Boar, which, in his manner of action, he very much resembles. The Horse easily avoids him by turning

* The account of Mr. Bruce differs in this particular from that of M. Vaillant, before quoted, and it is impossible for us to say which of the two is nearest the truth.

short to one side ; and this is the fatal instant ; the naked man, with the sword, drops from behind the principal horseman, and, unseen by the Rhinoceros, who is seeking his enemy, the Horse, he gives him a stroke across the tendon of the heel, which renders him incapable of further flight or resistance.

“ In speaking of the great quantity of food necessary to support this enormous mass, we must likewise consider the vast quantity of water which he needs. No country but that of Shangalla, which he possesses, deluged with six months rain, and full of large and deep basons, made in the living rock, and shaded by dark woods from evaporation, or watered by large and deep rivers which never fall low, or to a state of dryness, can supply the vast draughts of this monstrous creature: but it is not for drinking alone that he frequents wet and marshy places ; large, fierce, and strong as he is, he must submit to prepare himself against the weakest of all adversaries. The great consumption he constantly makes of food and water necessarily confine him to certain limited spaces : for it is not every place that can maintain him ; he cannot emigrate or seek his defence among the sands of Atbara.”*

This adversary is a Fly (probably of the genus *Cæstrus*) which is bred in the black earth of the marshes : it persecutes him so unremittingly, that it would in a short time subdue him, but for a stratagem which he practises for his preservation. In the night when the Fly is at rest, the Rhinoceros

* Travels to the source of the Nile.

chuses a convenient place, and there rolling in the mud, clothes himself with a kind of case, which defends him against his adversary the following day. The wrinkles and plaits of his skin serve to keep this muddy plaster firm upon him, all but about his hips, shoulders, and legs, where it cracks and falls off by motion, and leaves him exposed in those places to the attacks of the Fly. The itching and pain which follow, occasion him to rub himself in those parts against the roughest trees, and this is one cause of the numerous pustules or tubercles which we see upon him.

He enjoys the rubbing of himself so much, and groans and grunts so loud during this action, that he is heard at a considerable distance. The pleasure he receives from this enjoyment, and the darkness of the night, deprive him of his usual vigilance and attention. The hunters, guided by his noise, steal secretly upon him, and, while lying on the ground, wound him with their javelins mostly in the belly, where the wound is mortal.

It is by no means true that the skin of this Rhinoceros, as it has been often represented, is hard or impenetrable like a board. In his wild state he is slain by javelins thrown from different hands, some of which enter many feet into his body. A musket shot will go through him, if it meet not with the intervention of a bone; and the Shangalla, an Abyssinian tribe, kill him by the worst and most artificial arrows that ever were used by any people practising that weapon, and cut him to pieces afterwards with the very worst of knives.

In order to shew the amazing strength of the Rhinoceros, even after being very severely wounded, we shall quote Mr. Bruce's account of the hunting of this animal in Abyssinia: "We were on horse-back (says this gentleman,) by the dawn of day in search of the Rhinoceros, many of which we had heard making a very deep groan and cry as the morning approached; several of the Agageers (hunters) then joined us, and after we had searched about an hour in the very thickest part of the wood, one of them rushed out with great violence, crossing the plain towards a wood of canes that was about two miles distant. But though he ran, or rather trotted with surprising speed, considering his bulk, he was, in a very little time transfixed with thirty or forty javelins; which so confounded him, that he left his purpose of going to the wood, and ran into a deep hole, ditch, or ravine, a *cul de sac*, without outlet, breaking above a dozen of the javelins as he entered. Here we thought he was caught as in a trap, for he had scarce room to turn; when a servant, who had a gun, standing directly over him, fired at his head, and the animal fell immediately, to all appearance dead. All those on foot now jumped in with their knives to cut him up, and they had scarce begun, when the animal recovered so far as to rise upon his knees; happy then was the man that escaped first; and had not one of the Agageers, who was himself engaged in the ravine, cut the sinew of the hind-leg, as he was retreating; there would have been a very sorrowful account of the foot-hunters that day.

“ After having dispatched him, I was curious to see what wound the shot had given, which had operated so violently upon so huge an animal; and I doubted not it was in the brain. But it had struck him no where but upon the point of the foremost horn, of which it had carried off above an inch; and this occasioned a concussion that had stunned him for a minute, till the bleeding had recovered him.”

It has been often asserted that the tongue of the Rhinoceros is so hard and rough, as to take away the skin and flesh wherever it licks any person that has unfortunately fallen a victim to its fury.* Dr. Sparrman says, however, that he thrust his hand into the mouth of one that had just been shot, and found the tongue perfectly soft and smooth.

The cavity which contained the brain of one of these huge animals, was only six inches long and four deep; and, being filled with pease, was found to hold barely a quart; while a human skull, measured at the same time, took above two quarts to fill it.

The Hottentots, and even some of the inhabitants of the Cape, set a high value on the dried blood of the Rhinoceros, to which they ascribe great virtues in the cure of many disorders of the body. The flesh is eatable, but it is very sinewy.

* Kolben, ii. 103.