

A

VOYAGE

TO

COCHIN CHINA.

BY

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Prodesse quam conspici.

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CHAP. X.

Animals.—Reptiles.—Vegetable Productions.—Naval Architecture.—Ignorance of the Luçonians respecting Cochin China.—Arrival of the Marmion.—Monsoons and Seasons.—Imposing Ceremonies.—Dramatic Representations.—Murder.—Sensual Indulgences.—Departure from Manilla.

I WAS assured, by what I deemed very good authority, that the elephant would not live in Luçon, which had been proved by many experiments. This, if true, is a very singular fact; for in the same parallels of latitude, in both the Indian peninsula, they are indigenous, and in the Eastern peninsula they grow to an enormous size.

The horses in this island are well formed and hardy, though small and not very strong; they do not, however, exhibit the light, airy grace of the Arabian steed, or the finely proportioned limbs of the horses of Europe. They are docile, when care and attention are directed to their education; their food is of the best and most invigorating kinds; and they are never allowed to drink water only, but it is always mixed with a proportion of molasses, the aperient qualities of which are very conducive to health. The Indian buffalo abounds here, and is the only quadruped used for agricultural purposes. Bullocks are plentiful and cheap, and the milk from their cows, owing to the excellence of their

pastures, is of the best quality. Neither asses nor mules are used here; nor have they any sheep: goats are plentiful and fat. Their hogs are of the Chinese breed, and abound. Domestic fowls are in great abundance, and cheap. Of wild game there is no great variety; but herds of deer inhabit the mountains, and the rhinoceros is sometimes seen. Beasts of prey are unknown; but reptiles of various descriptions, and some of a large size, infest the forests and morasses. Among the latter is the *boa constrictor*, a serpent, who, by his strong muscular powers, is enabled easily to crush the frame of the largest bullock within his tremendous folds. The prey, thus reduced to a mangled corse, is lubricated by the tongue with the saliva of the monster, till it becomes a slippery, shapeless lump. He then proceeds to gorge the body, which, together with the horns, gradually disappears, till finally the whole mass is swallowed. Goats, deers, hogs, and fowls are also the food of this serpent. He is said not to be venomous. The skin of a large *boa constrictor* was offered me for sale, which measured twenty-five feet in length. The ourang-outang, or wild man of the woods, is found in the mountains. This is a large species of baboon, of which, as well as of the monkey tribe, there are many varieties in the islands.

The botanist and the ornithologist would find an ample and copious field for their researches in these islands; the flora, particularly, is said to be very interesting.

opaque: this is generally distilled into whiskey. Another kind is small, long, and semi-transparent, and is very delicate and nutritious. A third kind is covered with a thin red coat, and, in consequence of some parts of it being removed in the process of husking, appears variegated, red and white: this species is very fragrant, and is much esteemed. There is another kind, with a short round kernel, which is generally used for boiling. Besides all these kinds, which are propagated in low grounds, there are two sorts of upland or mountain rice, from which a most beautiful, fine, snowy, white flour is made; and used in making the cakes heretofore mentioned, and in various kinds of confectionary. These two latter species produce but one crop in a year: some of the others produce two crops in a year; and some, five crops in two years.

I have heard it asserted, that the coffee-tree is indigenous in Cochin China, and that considerable quantities are produced; this is a great mistake. Some of the missionaries have a few trees in their gardens procured from Java, from which they obtain a scanty supply for their own use. While in Saigon I received a present of about four pounds, in the cod, from a missionary, and this, he told me, was about one-fiftieth part of what was produced in the province that year. The Onamese have generally a great aversion to this article as a beverage. In consequence of the influx of strangers to the vicinity of the court, there is more coffee

raised in gardens in the division of Huè than elsewhere; but it is only in gardens.

It has been before mentioned, that there is a species of tea raised in the division of Huè.

There are no duties on the exportation of sugar, and some other articles, — and the impost on those articles on which duties are levied is small.

Of domestic animals, the Onamese have horses, of rather small size, but hardy and active, though somewhat vicious, and the natives are very tolerable cavaliers. They deck their caparisons with cowries, strips of cloth of various colours, and metal of different descriptions, principally brass. We never saw any asses or mules in the country. Buffaloes are plenty, and bullocks abundant. The natives, however, consume but little beef, preferring pork and other viands. The consumption of beef is confined almost exclusively to the Chinese population. Although bullocks abound in the country, the natives are strangers to the use of milk; and notwithstanding we daily saw a great many cows with “teeming udders,” we could not procure one that would answer the purpose of a milch cow, they being, from neglect and abuse of liberty, totally intractable.

Hogs of the celebrated Chinese breed are very plentiful, and pork and lard considerable articles of export to China. We saw but few goats, and those were generally mangy and miserable looking: they are not much esteemed by the natives. Ducks and dunghill fowls are in profusion; do-

mestic geese are not so plentiful. They have peacocks, pheasants, and partridges, —the two former of which they domesticate. It is difficult to conceive of the abundance of game in Don-nai: deer and antelopes are daily in the bazars, and hares occasionally; and this country of rivers is the paradise of aquatic fowls, of various descriptions, while the copses and rice-plantations are filled with birds of graniverous habits. The sportsman may in half an hour fill his game-bag to overflowing. The woods and mountains abound with wild beasts, such as elephants, tigers, rhinoceroses, &c.

These animals are all hunted by the natives; the elephant for his teeth; the tiger for his skin; and the rhinoceros for his horn. Ivory and rhinoceroses' horns are a regal monopoly. Some of these articles were offered us privately, which, to prevent trouble, we refused. The horn of the rhinoceros is formed much like a limpet-shell, but more pointed: at its base it is generally about six inches long, by four inches wide, and protrudes about six or eight inches. There is a shallow concavity occupying the whole base, resembling the limpet also in that respect. To judge of the goodness of a rhinoceros' horn, this concave part is held to the ear, and the greater the noise, resembling that of the waves on the sea-beach, the better the horn. This criterion certainly appears fallacious, if not ridiculous; but the Chinese, who are accustomed to purchase these articles, are always determined

by this test. The Onamese speak with great energy of the irresistible strength and amazing velocity of the rhinoceros. They say he moves so rapidly, that it is difficult for the eye to keep pace with him ; that no object in his way is any impediment to his rapid career ; that he beats down rocks, walls, and large trees, with great ease ; and that his track can be easily traced by the ruins in his rear. Speaking of this animal one day to the viceroy, he observed, " You now see him here, before you, in Saigon ;" and, snapping his fingers, " now he is in Canjeo." However hyperbolic these accounts appear to be, we may yet infer from them, that the rhinoceros is an animal of astonishing strength and speed. The common tiger of Cochin China is not greatly dreaded, but the royal tiger is a most terrific animal. The governor presented one of the latter to the commander of each ship: they were confined in very strong cages of iron-wood. That which I had was a beautiful female, about two years old, nearly three feet high, and five feet long : her skin is now in the museum of the East India Marine Society, at Salem ; for, in consequence of losing, by bad weather, the stock of puppies and kids provided for her on the homeward passage, we were obliged to shoot her.

A remarkable anecdote, relative to this animal, I cannot forbear relating. In Saigon, where dogs are " dog-cheap," we used to give the tigress one every day. They were thrown alive into her cage,

when, after playing with her victim for a while, as a cat does with a mouse, her eyes would begin to glisten, and her tail to vibrate, which were the immediate precursors of death to the devoted little prisoner, which was invariably seized by the back of the neck, the incisors of the sanguinary beast perforating the jugular arteries, while she would traverse the cage, which she lashed with her tail, and suck the blood of her prey, which hung suspended from her mouth.

One day, a puppy, not at all remarkable, or distinguishable in appearance from the common herd, was thrown in, who immediately, on perceiving his situation, set up a dismal yell and attacked the tigress with great fury, snapping at her nose, from which he drew some blood. The tigress appeared to be amused with the puny rage of the puppy, and with as good-humoured an expression of countenance as so ferocious an animal could be supposed to assume, she affected to treat it all as play; and sometimes spreading herself at full length on her side, at others, crouching in the manner of the fabled sphynx, she would ward off with her paw the incensed little animal, till he was finally exhausted. She then proceeded to caress him, endeavouring by many little arts to inspire him with confidence, in which she finally succeeded, and in a short time they lay down together and slept. From this time they were inseparable; the tigress appearing to feel for the puppy all the solicitude of a mother, and the dog, in return, treating her