

THE ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS—THE RHINOCEROS.

Within the last week a fine young rhinoceros has been added to the collection. It has been obtained through the kindness of Sir C. Trevelyan, who, when here on official business two years since, visited the gardens, and was so well pleased with their management that he has taken a great interest in them, and soon after his arrival in Calcutta succeeded in obtaining for the society, at a comparatively very small cost, the animal the subject of the present notice. It is not very many years since a rhinoceros brought to Europe was sold for the enormous sum of nine hundred guineas. Our readers probably all know that the rhinoceros is the finest specimen of the order of animals to which the name "pachydermata" is given, from two Greek words signifying "thick skin," and the name of the animal itself is equally significant, "rhinoceros," from two Greek words signifying "nose horn." It would be well if all our natural history names were equally significant. The order is small in number. Of the families in the order the most remarkable are the elephant, the hippopotamus, the rhinoceros, and the pig. These four divisions are well marked, they have all thick skins, walk on their toes, and differ in the number of their toes, which may be easily remembered thus. Pig walks on two toes, rhinoceros on three toes, hippopotamus on four, and elephant on five toes. The weight of the rhinoceros is out of all proportion to its magnitude. The young one in the gardens weighs at present three quarters of a ton, and when full grown will, probably, reach three tons or more. In sagacity it ranks next to the elephant, between whom and it, in their native haunts, a deadly feud exists, although they may be considered blood-relatives, but so it is sometimes with man as with the "pachydermata." A combat between two herds of these animals is a fearful sight, each combatant weighing three or four tons, and the mode of attack a charge. The rhinoceros is the assailant—when he charges with his fearful horn in front, impelled by such a weight, it would seem sufficient to pass through an "iron plated," and it would bring certain destruction if the elephant received the charge in front or in the chest; but the elephant is too sagacious, he wheels as the rhinoceros charges, and suddenly kneeling on his hind legs, receives the blow obliquely on his hind quarters. The rhinoceros glances off from the target. He is very awkward in turning, and before he has time to repeat the charge is struck or trampled on by the elephant, or they make their escape. The visitor may freely handle the rhinoceros in the gardens. He is perfectly quiet, and his eye, though small, is remarkably black, brilliant, and intelligent. The weight of the head of a full grown rhinoceros is very great, it is more than four men can lift. At first sight there would appear to be very little resemblance between the rhinoceros, the elephant, and the pig, and yet in a very important part of their organization, the nose, there is a similarity marking them as belonging to the same natural family. In the wild hog, and in all its varieties of the common pig, the masked pig (to be seen at the gardens) the babroussa or hog deer, the paccary, &c., the nose is a tactile organ of great sensibility and power. By means of it the pig is enabled to scent the truffle, and it is by using the pig as a hunting animal this much prized esculent is generally obtained. In Ireland, where the pig was heretofore usually allowed to roam at large, the cottager found the instinct and power of the pig's nose so injurious to the potato and cabbage garden that he cut the sinews of the nose, or ringed the animal, which was done by inserting in the most sensitive part of the pig's nose a ring analagous to a lady's ear-ring, and which gave the animal such pain in rooting that the pig rooted no longer. The pig's nose elongated to a certain extent is the upper snout of the rhinoceros—elongated to a great length, becomes the proboscis of the elephant. If the visitor to the gardens will hold a piece of cabbage or a lump of sugar (but let him give no other food, lest he poison the animal) to the rhinoceros, he will observe that the animal projects the upper lip, and that on the centre of the upper lip, and projecting downwards is a short finger which he doubles down on the morsel, and with which he lays hold of it. If a small bunch of grass be given to him he in like manner doubles this finger round it. This extremity of the rhinoceros's upper lip, or nose, is, in fact, the extremity of the proboscis of the elephant, minus the long proboscis. The horn of the rhinoceros is, of all its appendages, the most extraordinary. There is nothing exactly analogous to it in the rest of the animal kingdom. It is not similar to the bony tusk of the wild bear, or elephant, which grows like a tooth from the socket in the jaw. It has no analogy with the horn of the sheep, or the goat, or the buffalo, which consists of a covering, or veneer of horn, laid upon a core of spongy bone—nor with the horn of the stag, which is an annual growth of bone, springing from the bone of the skull, and annually cast. The horn of the rhinoceros is supported upon, but not attached to a body prominence over the nostril—it is a growth from the skin alone, which in this animal is of enormous strength and thickness. At its root the horn is formed by myriads of bristles growing up from the skin. They grow so close together that they become blended into a substance like horn. They grow in shape, at first, like a limpet shell—the outer circle is rough, the bristles lightly connected. The animal rubs the projecting growth against trees. The outer circle is rough and jagged, the inner portion becomes compressed, and continues growing harder and higher until at last the "skin horn" has risen to the height of three or four feet, pointed conical, and hard, with a base as large as a supper plate. A formidable weapon it then is. Ladies' riding whips, elastic and semi-transparent, are manufactured out of it, and are among the reminiscences frequently sent home from South Africa. In confinement, this remarkable appendage, the horn, is seldom, if ever, seen. The animal is usually confined either within a small space or by a fence of strong oak bars, against which he constantly rubs his nose, and thus destroys the growing horn. The council of the society have adopted another form of fence for this rhinoceros, which, it is hoped, may obviate the loss of the horn. The fence round his inclosure is to consist, not of upright oak bars against which he would wear down his horn, but of horizontal wire ropes, such as are used in rigging. It is hoped that this may be the means of preserving this singular appendage, the rhinoceros horn. In the inclosure with the rhinoceros will be seen a section of the horn, showing its structure and mode of growth, which can be seen with a glass of low power.