

# Natural History

in

# Shakespeare's Time:

being

Extracts illustrative of the Subject  
as he knew it.

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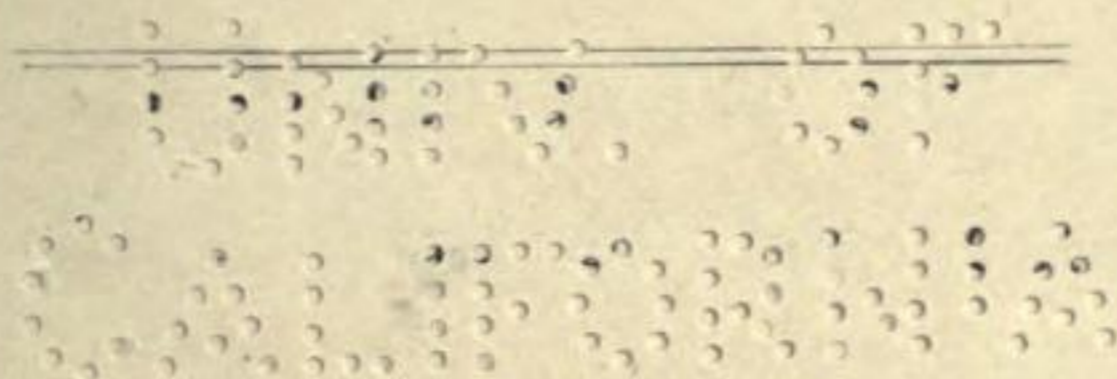
H. W. Seager, M.B., &c.

Also Pictures thereunto belonging.

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*“Lege, disce.”*



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A ROBIN REDBREAST finding the dead body of a man or woman will cover the face of the same with moss; and as some hold opinion, he will cover also the whole body.

*Lupton*, "Notable Things," bk. i. § 37.

#### V. Ruddock.

### Reremouse, Rearmouse.

MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, ii. 2, 4.

#### V. Bat.

### Rhinoceros.

MACBETH, iii. 4, 101.

RHINOCEROS, the unicorn, is a wild beast by kind, and may not be tamed in no wise; and if it hap that he be taken in any wise, he may not be kept in no manner; for he is so impatient and so angry that he dieth anon.

*Bartholomew (Berthelet)*, bk. xviii. § 90.

A RHINOCEROS,—his hide or skin of the colour of the box-tree; an enemy to all beasts of rapine and prey, as the lion, leopard, bear, wolf, tiger, and the like; but to others as the horse, ass, ox, sheep, etc.—which feed not upon the life and blood of the weaker, but of the grass and herbage of the field,—harmless and gentle, ready to succour them, when they be any way distressed.

*Thos. Heywood*, "London's Gate to Piety" (1638).

ALL the later Physicians do attribute the virtue of the Unicorn's horn to the Rhinoceros' horn, but they are deceived.

*Topsell*, "Four-footed Beasts," p. 463.

#### V. Unicorn.

### Rice.

WINTER'S TALE, iv. 3, 11.

THE plants of Rice did grow in my garden. In England we use to make with milk and Rice a certain food or pottage. Many other good kinds of food is made with this grain, as those that are skilful in cookery can tell.

*Gerard's "Herbal," s.v.*

[*Troilus and Cressida*, iii. 2, 185, and *Winter's Tale*, *ut supra*]. He cometh in springing time and warneth of novelty of time with groaning voice. And in winter he loseth his feathers, and then he hideth him in hollow stocks. And against summer, in springing time, when his feathers spring again, he cometh out of his hole in the which he was hid, and seeketh convenable place and stead for to breed in. The Turtle layeth eggs twice in springing time, and not the third time, but if the first eggs be corrupt. Also the blood of her right wing is medicinable, as the blood of a swallow, and of a culvour or dove.

*Bartholomew (Berthelet)*, bk. xii. § 34.

AMATIDES is a precious stone; if a cloth be touched therewith, the cloth withstandeth fire and burneth not, though it be put therein; but it receiveth brightness and seemeth the more clear. And withstandeth all evil doing of witches.

*Ibid.*, bk. xvi. § 19.

It is supposed that in the maw of the cock Turtle-dove this stone is to be found, and hath virtue to increase concord and love.

*Batman's addition to Bartholomew, ut supra.*

If the heart of a Turtle-dove be worn in the skin of a wolf, the wearer will never thenceforth be wanton. If its heart be burnt, and put on the eggs of any bird, never will it be possible that they should be hatched. And if its feet be hung on a tree, from thenceforth it will not bear fruit. And if a hairy place be anointed with its blood, and the water in which a mole has been boiled, the black hairs will fall off.

*Albertus Magnus*, "Of the Virtues of Animals."

## Unicorn.

A living drollery! Now I will believe  
That there are unicorns.

TEMPEST, iii. 2, 22.

JULIUS CÆSAR, ii. 1, 204.

AN Unicorn is a right cruel beast, and hath that name for he hath in the middle of the forehead an horn of four

foot long ; and that horn is so sharp and so strong, that he throweth down all, or thirleth [pierceth] all that he reseth [rageth] on. And this beast fighteth oft with the elephant. And the Unicorn is so strong, that he is not taken with might of hunters ; but a maid is set there as he shall come, and she openeth her lap, and the Unicorn layeth thereon his head, and leaveth all his fierceness, and sleepeth in that wise, and is taken as a beast without weapon, and slain with darts of hunters. The Unicorn froteth [rubs] and fileth his horn against stones, and sharpeth it, and maketh it



ready to fight in that wise. And his colour is bay. There be many kinds of Unicorns, for some be Rhinoceros [q.v.], and some *Monoceron*, and *Ægloceron*. And *Monoceron* is a wild beast, shaped like to the horse in body, and to the hart in head, and in the feet to the elephant, and in the tail to the boar, and hath heavy lowing, and an horn strutting in the middle of the forehead of two cubits long. And in Ind be some one-horned asses, and such an ass is called *Monoceros*, and is less bold and fierce than other Unicorns. And *Ægloceron* is a manner of Unicorn, that is

a little beast like to a kid. Also in Ind be one-horned oxen with white specks and bones, and with thick hoofs as horses have.

*Bartholomew (Berthelet)*, bk. xviii. § 90.

TRADES that lay dead and rotten, and were in all men's opinion utterly damned, started out of their trance, as though they had drunk of Aqua Cœlestis, or Unicorn's horn, and swore to fall to their old occupations.

*Dekker*, "The Wonderful Year 1603."

SOME hunt the Unicorn for the treasure on his head, and they are like covetous men, that care not whom they kill for riches.

*Ibid.*, "Lanthorn and Candlelight," ch. iii.

IN St. Mark's church they will show you two Unicorns' horns, of which the red is the male, and the yellow the female.

"A true Description of what is most worthy to be seen in Italy," etc. (*circa* 1590).

[Topsell ("Four-footed Beasts," pp. 551, 552) takes those who do not believe in the Unicorn very seriously to task for their unbelief, not to say atheism. He inclines to the belief that the Unicorn is the wild ass of India, but is not sure, because "the feet of the wild asses are whole and not cloven like the Unicorn's, and their colour white in their body, and purple on their head; and the horn differeth in colour from the Unicorn's, for the middle of it is only black, the root of it white, and the top of it purple; and the Indians of that horn do make pots, affirming that whosoever drinketh in one of those pots shall never take disease that day, and, if they be wounded, shall feel no pain, or safely pass through the fire without burning, nor yet be poisoned in their drink, and therefore such cups are only in the possession of their kings, neither is it lawful for any man except the king to hunt that beast. Now in the kingdom of Basman, which is subject to the great Cham, there are Unicorns somewhat lesser than Elephants, having hair like oxen, heads like boars, feet like elephants, one horn in the middle of their foreheads, and a sharp, thorny tongue, wherewith they destroy both man and beast, and they muddle in the dirt like swine. In a certain region of the new-found world, under the equinoctial, there is a living creature, with one horn (which is crooked and not great), having the head of a dragon, and a beard upon his chin, his neck long and stretched out like a serpent's, the residue of his body like to a hart's, saving that his feet, colour, and mouth, are like a lion's."]

THE horn, growing out of the forehead betwixt the eyelids is neither light nor hollow, nor yet smooth like other horns, but hard as iron, rough as any file, revolved into many plights, sharper than any dart, straight and not crooked, and everywhere black except at the point. His horn, being put into the water, driveth away the poison, that he may drink without harm, if any venomous beast shall drink therein before him. This cannot be taken from the beast being alive, forasmuch as he cannot possibly be taken by any deceit. The horn of this beast being put upon the table of kings, and set among their junkets and banquets, doth bewray the venom (if there be any such therein) by a certain sweat which cometh over it. There are found in Europe to the number of twenty of these horns pure, and so many broken.

These beasts are very swift, and their legs have no articles. There was nothing more horrible than the voice or braying of it, for the voice is strained above measure. He feareth not iron, nor any iron instrument. He is an enemy to the lions, wherefore as soon as ever a lion seeth an Unicorn, he runneth to a tree for succour, that so when the Unicorn maketh force at him, he may not only avoid his horn, but also destroy him; for the Unicorn in the swiftness of his course runneth against the tree, wherein his sharp horn sticketh fast; then when the lion seeth the Unicorn fastened by the horn, without all danger he falleth upon him and killeth him. These things are reported by the King of Ethiopia in an Hebrew epistle unto the Bishop of Rome. [Topsell describes the way of catching the Unicorn given in the quotation above from Bartholomew, and adds: "Concerning this opinion we have no elder authority than Tzetzes, who did not live above five hundred years ago, and therefore I leave the Reader to the freedom of his own judgement to believe or refuse this relation."] Rich men do usually cast little pieces of this horn in their drinking-cups, either for the prevention or curing of some certain disease. It being cast in wine doth boil. [He avers that spurious Unicorn's horn, made of ivory, was sold by apothecaries and others.] The price of that which is true is reported at this day to be of no less value than gold. For experience of the Unicorn's horn, to know whether it be right or not,—put silk upon a burning coal,

and upon silk the aforesaid horn, and if so be that it be true the silk will not be a whit consumed.

*Topsell*, "Four-footed Beasts," pp. 551-9.

WE are so far from denying that there is any Unicorn at all, that we will affirm there are many kinds thereof. In the number of quadrupeds, we will concede no less than five; that is, the Indian ox, the Indian ass, the rhinoceros, the oryx, and that which is more eminently termed *Monoceros* or *Unicornis*. Some in the list of fishes; and some Unicorns we will allow even among insects [here follow two folio pages of argument about the origin and genuineness of the horns].

*Sir Thos. Browne*, "Vulgar Errors," bk. iii. ch. xxiii.

[*Fynes Moryson*, in his "Itinerary," describes "two whole Unicorns' horns, each more than four foot long, and a third, shorter," which were in the Treasury of St Mark at Venice (part i. bk. ii. ch. i.), and "great Unicorns' horns, and the chief kinds of precious stones" in Naples (*ibid.*, ch. ii.).]

THE Unicorn is hunted for his horn,  
The rest is left for carrion.

*Middleton and Rowley*, "A Fair Quarrel," iii. 2.

OF the Unicorn none hath been seen these hundred years last past.

*Purchas*' "Pilgrims," p. 502 (ed. 1616).

[But the ingenious gentlemen who edited the "British Apollo" would not go so far as to deny (in 1710) the existence of the Unicorn.]

## Urchin.

TEMPEST, i. 2, 326.

## V. Hedgehog.

## Venom.

SOME [beasts] have slaying tongues and venomous, through malice and wodeness of the humour that hath mastery therein; as the tongues of serpents, adders, dragons, and of a wode hound, whose biting is most venomous, his tongue