

# THE ANIMAL-LORE

OF

## SHAKSPEARE'S TIME

INCLUDING

*QUADRUPEDS, BIRDS, REPTILES, FISH  
AND INSECTS*

BY

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rubbing himself against the thorns causes the birds' eggs to fall out of their nests; and again, when he lifts his head, "then by a strong blast the thorns moveth and shaketh, and of the great noyse the birdes be affeard full sore and falleth out of the nest" (*Batman upon Bartholome*, p. 341). The synonym *donkey* is never used in the time of Shakspeare. It is impossible to write of this animal without recalling *Dogberry's* indignant exclamation, "O that I had been writ down an ass!" (*Much Ado About Nothing*, iv. 2, 90).

The Zebra, one of the most beautiful animals inhabiting the continent of Africa, is mentioned by  
**Zebra.** early travellers, though no specimen seems to have been brought to England, at least up to the time of Shakspeare. Edward Lopes, a Portuguese, in his report of the kingdom of Congo, states that—

"there breedeth in this country, another creature, which they call a zebra, commonly found also in certaine provinces of Barbary and Africa. It hath a most singular skin, and peculiar from all other creatures. For from the ridge of the chin downe towards the belly it is straked with rowes of three colours, blacke, white, and browne bay, about the breadth of three fingers a piece, and so meet againe together in a circle, every row, with his owne colour."

After giving a full description of the various parts of the animal the writer goes on to admire its speed, which, he says, is admirable:—

"insomuch as in Portugall and in Castile also, it is commonly used (as it were for a proverbe) as swift as a zebra, when they will signifie an exceeding quicknesse." (*Purchas*, vol. ii. p. 1001.)

Andrew Battell, an Englishman, writing a description of the same part of Africa, also mentions the zevera, or zebra.

**Rhinoceros.** John Huighen van Linschoten, in his description of a voyage to Goa, informs us that—

“the Abada, or Rhinoceros, is not in India, but only in Benegala and Patane. They are lesse and lower then the elephant. It hath a short horne upon the nose, in the hinder part somewhat bigge, and toward the end sharper, of a browne, blew, and whitish colour; it hath a snout like a hog, and the skin upon the upper part of his body is all wrinckled, as it were armed with shields or targets. It is a great enemie of the elephant. Some thinke it is the right unicorne, because that as yet there hath no other beene found, but onely by hear-say, and by the pictures of them. The Portugalls and those of Bengala affirme, that by the river Ganges in the kingdome of Bengala, are many of these rhinocerots, which when they will drinke, the other beasts stand and waite upon them, till the rhinoceros hath drunke, and thrust their horne into the water, for hee cannot drinke but his horne must be under the water, because it standeth so close unto his nose, and muzzle: and then after him all the other beasts doe drinke. Their hornes in India are much esteemed and used against all venome, poyson, and many other diseases.” (*Purchas*, vol. iv. p. 1773.)

Shakspeare has but one reference to this animal—  
“The arm’d rhinoceros, or the Hyrcan tiger” (*Macbeth*, iii. 4). For the epithet *armed* he may have been indebted to the foregoing description.

The Indian rhinoceros is a one-horned species, and is probably the original of the unicorn of the Greeks and Romans. It is, however, distinguished from that animal by Drayton:—

“The unicorn leaves off his pride and close  
There sets him down by the rhinoceros.”

(*Noah’s Flood*.)

In a pageant written by Thomas Heywood, on the occasion of the mayoralty of Sir Maurice Abbot, printed 1638, the following account is given of this curious animal:—

“The second show by land is an Indian beast called a rhinoceros, which being presented to the life, is for the rarenesse thereof, more fit to beautifie a triumph. His head, necke, backe, sides, and thighe, armed by nature with impenetrable skales; his hide or skinne of the colour of the boxe tree; in greatnesse equall with the elephant, but his legges are somewhat shorter; and enemy to all beasts of rapine

and prey, as the lyon, leopard, beare, wolfe, tiger, and the like; but to others, as the horse, asse, oxe, sheep, &c. which feede not upon the life and blood of the weaker, but of the grasse and hearbage of the field, harmlesse and gentle, ready to succour them, when they be any way distressed. Hee hath a short horne growing from his nose, being in continual enmity with the elephant before hee encounter him, he sharpeneth it against a stone." (*Lord Mayor's Pageants*, ed. Percy Society, vol. 9, p. 71.)

The enmity between these two animals, the elephant and rhinoceros, is a myth of ancient growth, which has survived to recent times. The amiability of the rhinoceros towards his weaker comrades is a trait of character for which this animal is indebted to the imagination of Heywood.

Mr. Timbs, in his *Eccentricities of the Animal Creation*, 1869, tells us that a specimen of the one-horned variety was sent from India, to Emmanuel, King of Portugal, in the year 1513:—

"The sovereign made a present of it to the pope; but the animal being seized during the passage with a fit of fury, occasioned the loss of the vessel in which it was transported."

The first rhinoceros brought to England was in the year 1684. It is noticed by Evelyn in his *Diary* as the rhinoceros or unicorn.

Another frequenter of the mudbanks of rivers in the East, the Hippopotamus, is thus described by a Portuguese who travelled in Ethiopia and along the southern coast of Africa:—

"In these rivers are many *zouo* or *zoo*, so they call the river-horses; greater then two of our horses together, with thick and short hinder-legs, having five clawes on each fore-foot, and foure on the hinder-foot; the footing large as it were of an elephant, the mouth wide and full of teeth, some of which are remarkable, each above two palmes or spans long, the two lower straight up, and those above turned like a bores tusks, all foure being above a great spanne eminent from the mouth. The head is as big as of three oxen. Their hides are much thicker