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# BERTHA'S JOURNAL

DURING

A VISIT TO HER UNCLE

IN

## ENGLAND.

CONTAINING A VARIETY OF INTERESTING AND  
INSTRUCTIVE INFORMATION.

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SEVENTH EDITION.

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'This new year's day, I hope you are all as well and happy as I am; and I am sure it will give you pleasure to know, my beloved friends, that we could indulge ourselves by going to church on Christmas-day, and receiving the sacrament. Do not imagine that in this banishment, as I fear you still consider it, these duties are neglected; far from it; we have a church near us, and, I thank God, the inclination to make use of it.'

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WEEK 31.

Balaam continued—Parable—Rhinoceros—Reem—Geology—Older Formations—Twigs flower in Water—Connexion of Botany and Gardening—Volcanoes.

*March 5th.—Sunday.* The subject of Balaam was continued this morning; and I took an opportunity of asking the meaning of the word *parable*, as it is used in Numbers xxiii. 7.

'It has more significations than one,' said my uncle, 'in both the Old and the New Testaments. It sometimes implies that sort of address to the people, which, from its tone of authority as well as from its elevated language, seems to have been the effect of inspiration. Thus Balaam is said to have taken up his parable, when, contrary to his own wishes and in a style approaching to poetry, he uttered his sublime prophecies. The Psalmist also, after saying, "I will open my mouth in a parable," gives a rapid, but magnificent sketch of the wonders that God performed for the children of Israel. Secondly, we find it applied in the Greek Septuagint (1 Kings iv. 32) to those short sententious sayings of Solomon, which in the English version are called proverbs. And in Ecclesiasticus, our translators have rendered the same Hebrew word in some places by "parables," and in others by "wise sentences." Thirdly, in the Gospel it is used in the sense of an apologue or fable; a mode of conveying instruction, or of explaining certain doctrines, which our Lord thought proper to adopt; and which had been frequently employed by the Prophets in the Old Testament.

'It was in the first of these three senses,' continued my uncle, 'that Balaam appears to have taken up his parable. Having stated why he had come to Moab, and having confessed that he could not curse those whom God had not

cursed, he immediately prophesies the increase and power of Israel. "Lo, this people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." Had he not been inspired, how could he, on a distant view of a people he had never seen before, have discovered the peculiarities which distinguished the Israelites and their posterity to the latest ages? Their religion and government were then unknown; yet he foretold their entire separation from all other nations; and the present state of the Jews, and all history confirm the truth of his prediction.'

I asked my uncle why Balak desired the prophet to go with him to *another* place to curse them?

My uncle said, 'that it was the opinion of the heathens, that if one victim failed, or if the Deity was unpropitious at one place, he should be importuned by a repetition of the sacrifice elsewhere. Balaam, therefore, to gratify the king, repeated the same experiment a second and a third time; but still with the same disappointment.'

Caroline made some remark on these words, 'He hath as it were the strength of the Unicorn?' and my uncle said, 'It is not known with certainty to what animal the strength of Israel is here compared; some have supposed the unicorn to be a kind of single-horned antelope, others think that it is the rhinoceros; but if any of you will remind me of the subject some other day, we will endeavour to see which is the best founded opinion. Balaam afterwards compares the power of Israel to that of the lion; and both seem to allude to the victories by which the Israelites should gain possession of the land of Canaan. It is remarkable, that the inspired language of Balaam very much resembles that which Jacob had used in his predictions respecting Judah. Such is the harmony and connexion between the prophecies of Scripture.'

6th.—We were resolved not to defer the subject of the unicorn; and this morning we began by searching for as much light on the subject as our books could give us, that we might be the better qualified to discuss it with my uncle.

I found in Perceval's Cape of Good Hope, that notwithstanding all the assertions he had heard of the existence of this animal in Southern Africa, he never met any person who had seen one. A horn, nearly three feet long, was indeed shown him, as being that of the unicorn, but it evidently belonged to a large species of antelope. My uncle after-

wards told us, that there is an antelope of this kind in the mountains of India, which the natives used to pretend had only a single horn; but since the conquest of Nepaul, those mountains have been visited by English officers, who have seen the animal alive with both its horns.

Frederick produced Mr. Barrow's description of a drawing he had seen at the Cape, representing a single horn projecting from the forehead of an animal, which, he says, resembles a horse, with an elegantly shaped body, marked, from the shoulders to the flanks, with longitudinal stripes or bands.

Mary had collected a great many facts about the rhinoceros; and she made it appear pretty clearly, that the allusion in Scripture to the strength and untameableness of the unicorn, are much more applicable to the rhinoceros than to any species of antelope, all of which are remarkably deficient in strength, and naturally timid. She found in some book that the derivation of the Scripture name *Reem*, both in the Hebrew and the Ethiopic, implies erectness; and though the rhinoceros is by no means a very erect animal, yet, his horn certainly is so, as it stands perpendicular to the face; and in that respect, it differs from the horns of all other animals. 'The upright direction of the horn,' Mary said, 'as well as the power and fierceness of the rhinoceros, would equally justify the metaphor in the Psalms, "My horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of a unicorn."' "

Caroline then brought forward her authorities to prove, that in Abyssinia, the name of the rhinoceros signifies the beast with *the horn*, implying that it has but one; whereas, in Nubia, the name expresses *horn upon horn*. But as the Septuagint translates the word *reem* into *monoceros*, or unicorn, we may suppose that if the rhinoceros had always two horns, the writers of the Septuagint, who probably must have seen the animal at Alexandria, at the exhibition given by Ptolemy Philadelphus, would not have called it *monoceros*.

We proceeded with our gleanings to my uncle, who seemed pleased with our industry. He observed, that notwithstanding the translation in the Septuagint, it was not quite certain that the reem or unicorn of the Hebrew Scriptures was always mentioned there as having but one horn; and he pointed out a passage in Deuteronomy, where horns in the plural are distinctly expressed. 'But,' said my uncle,

'it is classed' with the behemoth and leviathan, which are supposed to be the elephant and crocodile, and the savage rhinoceros seems to be a more suitable companion to those huge and terrific creatures than the delicate antelope. Every body knows that there are two species of that animal, the *R. unicornis*, and the *R. bicornis*; and that the latter is only found in certain parts of Africa. The former, or one-horned species, is common not only in Abyssinia, but all over Asia, and in Arabia is called by the name of *reem*, to the present day. Why then should we doubt that this untamed and destructive animal, which in every respect answers to the description in Scripture, should be the unicorn mentioned there; and having a horn, or horns, according to the different countries where the allusion was made?'

My uncle then showed us Sparrman's account of the two-horned rhinoceros which he killed and dissected at the Cape. The longest horn, which is close to the nose, measured about eighteen inches in length, and seven in diameter. The uppermost horn was much smaller, and much worn, and the Hottentots told the Doctor, that these animals had the power of turning the long horn aside out of the way, while they employed the other in rooting up the plants on which they feed. But my uncle does not believe that there is any truth in this assertion.

7th.—I have just had a little geological lecture, and hasten to write the substance while it is fresh in my memory.

In examining the materials of which our great mineral masses are composed, we are immediately struck by the difference of the *older formations*, which proceeded from causes that have long ceased to operate, and those *newer formations*, the causes of which are still at work under our own observation.

Compared with the former, these recent formations are of very limited extent; they consist of the sand and stones that are accumulated on the sea-coast by tides and currents; of the land washed away from one bank of a river, and thrown up on the opposite bank by the winding stream; of the earth and gravel, and fragments of rock, carried down by all rivers, and forming deposits at their mouths; and of the constant increase of marsh land, in consequence of the growth of aquatic plants. All these appear to have proceeded uninterruptedly from the period when our continents

assumed their present form, and may be all designated by the general term *alluvial*. There are vast alluvial formations at the mouths of the Ganges, the Nile, the Mississippi, the Amazon, and other great rivers; and an evident change has been effected by these means in many sea-coast countries, of which there are innumerable instances.

The overflowing of the Rhine, the Arno, and the Po, formerly dispersed the soil they carried down over the neighbouring land; but ever since it has been confined within dykes, their deposits have not only elevated the beds of these rivers, but are also rapidly pushing forward their mouths into the sea. The low alluvial plains through which they run were themselves produced by ancient deposits; and the progress of this continually increasing formation may be easily estimated from various historic records. From Strabo we learn that Ravenna was situated, in the time of Augustus, at the head of a bay connected with the Adriatic, and that it had then a good harbour; yet it is now three miles from the coast. By comparing the old maps with the present state of the Duchy of Ferrara, which is flooded annually by the Po, it appears that the coast has gained from the sea 14,000 yards in breadth since the year 1604, giving an average of sixty yards for its advance per annum. And the town of Adria, which in ancient times was a sea-port, is now sixteen miles inland!

The same causes have produced similar effects along the branches of the Rhine and Maëse; and for many leagues from their mouths the country exhibits the singular spectacle of having its largest rivers held up by dykes at the height of twenty or thirty feet above the level of the land. The alluvial depositions on the north coasts of Friesland and Groningen, and the increase of land which they have effected, are very considerable; the first dykes were formed in 1570; and in only one hundred years afterwards, the deposits had accumulated to the extent of nearly three miles on the outside of the dykes. A large part of the United Provinces has thus been actually formed by materials washed down from the interior of Germany; and many populous cities now stand where the sea once rolled its waves.

*8th.*—Of the various buds which are beginning to open, none advance so rapidly as those of the peach blossoms. On the 14th of February I first observed a little streak of