

# Our Own Fireside

ANNUAL:

1871.

CONDUCTED BY THE

REV. CHARLES BULLOCK,

RECTOR OF ST. NICHOLAS', WORCESTER;

EDITOR OF "THE DAY OF DAYS" AND "HOME WORDS;" AUTHOR OF "THE WAY HOME,"  
"WORDS OF MINISTRY," ETC.

"Light in their dwellings."

EXODUS x. 23.

"There is a spot of earth supremely blest,  
A dearer, sweeter spot than all the rest:  
Where shall that land, that spot of earth be found?  
Art thou a man?—a patriot?—look around;  
Oh, thou shalt find, howe'er thy footsteps roam,  
That land thy Country, and that spot thy Home!"

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THE CHASE OF THE RHINOCEROS.

THE RHINOCEROS.

**O**F the existing species of the rhinoceros, two or three are found in various parts of Asia and its islands, and the remainder inhabit several portions of Africa.

The so called horn, which projects from the nose of the animal is a very remarkable structure. It is thus described by Mr. Wood in his "Illustrated Natural History":

"The rhinoceros horn is in no way connected with the skull, but is simply a growth from the skin, and may take rank with hairs, spines, or quills, being indeed formed after a similar manner. If a rhinoceros horn be examined,—the species of its owner is quite immaterial,—it will be seen to be polished and smooth at the tip, but rough and split into numerous filaments at the base. These filaments, which have a very close resemblance to those which terminate the plates of whalebone, can be stripped upwards for some length, and if the substance of the horn be cut across, it will be seen to be composed of a vast multitude of hairy filaments lying side by side, which, when submitted to the microscope, and illuminated by polarized light, glow with all the colours of the rainbow, and bear a strong resemblance to transverse sections of actual hair. At the birth of the young animal, the horn is hardly visible, and its full growth is the work of years.

As the horn is employed as a weapon of offence, and is subjected to violent concussion, it is set upon the head in such a manner as to save the brain from the injurious effects which might result from its use in attack or combat. In the first place, the horn has no direct connection with the skull, as it is simply set upon the skin, and can be removed by passing a sharp knife round its base, and separating it from the hide on which it grows. In the second place, the bones of the face are curiously developed, so as to form an arch with one end free, the horn being placed upon the crown of the bony arch, so as to diminish the force of the concussion in the best imaginable manner. The

substance of the horn is very dense, and even when it is quite dry it possesses very great weight in proportion to its size. In former days, it was supposed to bear an antipathy to poison, and to cause effervescence whenever liquid poison was poured upon it. Goblets were therefore cut from this material, and when gorgeously mounted in gold and precious stones, were employed by Eastern monarchs as a ready means for detecting any attempt to administer a deadly drug.

The skin of the rhinoceros (Mr. Wood continues), is of very great thickness and strength, bidding defiance to ordinary bullets, and forcing the hunter to provide himself with balls which have been hardened with tin or solder. The extreme strength of the skin is well known both to the Asiatic and African natives, who manufacture it into shields, and set a high value on the weapons of defence.

All the species of the rhinoceros are very tetchy in their temper, and liable to flash out into anger without any provocation whatever. During these fits of rage, they are dangerous neighbours, and are apt to attack any moving object that may be within their reach. In one well known instance, where a rhinoceros made a sudden dash upon a number of picketed horses, and killed many of them by the strokes of his horn, the animal had probably been irritated by some unknown cause, and wreaked his vengeance on the nearest victims. During the season of love, the male rhinoceros is always vicious, and like the elephant, the buffalo, and other animals in like condition, will conceal himself in some thicket, and from thence dash out upon any moving object that may approach his retreat.

Sometimes the rhinoceros will commence a series of most extraordinary antics, and seeming to have a spite towards some particular bush, will rip it up with his horn, trample it with its feet, roaring and grunting all the while, and will never cease until he has cut it into threads, and levelled it with the ground. He

will also push the point of his horn into the earth, and career along, ploughing up the ground as if a furrow had been cut by some agricultural implement. In such a case it seems that the animal is not labouring under a fit of rage, as might be supposed, but is merely exulting in his strength, and giving vent to the exuberance of health by violent physical exertion.

The rhinoceros is a good aquatic, and will voluntarily swim for considerable distances. It is fond of haunting the river banks and wallowing in the mud, so as to case itself with a thin coat of that substance, in order to shield itself from the mosquitoes and other mordant insects which cluster about the tender places, and drive the animal, thick skinned though it may be, half mad with their constant and painful bites. In Sumatra a curious result sometimes follows from this habit of mud wallowing, as may be seen from the following extract from the *Journal of the Indian Archipelago*. 'This animal, which is of solitary habits, is found frequently in marshy places, with its whole body immersed in the mud, and part of the head only visible. The Malays call the animal 'Badak-Tapa,' or the recluse rhinoceros. Towards the close of the rainy season they are said to bury themselves in this manner in different places; and upon the dry weather setting in, and from the powerful effects of a vertical sun, the mud becomes hard and crusted, and the rhinoceros cannot escape without considerable difficulty and exertion. The Semangs prepare themselves with large quantities of combustible materials, with which they quietly approach the animal, who is roused from his reverie by an immense fire over him, which, being kept well supplied by the Semangs with fresh fuel, soon completes his destruction, and renders him in a fit state to make a meal of.'

In every species of rhinoceros the sight appears to be rather imperfect, the animal being unable to see objects which are exactly in its front. The scent and hearing, however, are very acute, and seem to warn the animal of the approach of danger."

The Asiatic species of rhinoceros are remarkable for the heavy folds into which the skin is gathered, and which hang massively over the shoulders, throat, flanks, and hind quarters. Upon the abdomen the skin is comparatively soft, and can be pierced by a spear, which would be harmlessly repelled from the thick folds of

hide upon the upper portions of the body. In the Indian rhinoceros, this weight of hide is especially conspicuous, the skin forming great flaps, which can be easily lifted up by the hand. In a tamed state, the rhinoceros is pleased to be caressed on the softer skin under the thick hide, and in the wild state it suffers sadly from the parasitic insects that creep beneath the flaps, and lead the poor animal a miserable life, until they are stifled in the muddy compost with which the rhinoceros loves to envelop its body. The horn of the Indian species is large in width, but inconsiderable in length, being often scarcely higher than its diameter. Yet with this short, heavy weapon, the animal can do terrible execution, and is said, upon the authority of Captain Williamson, to repel the attack of an adult male elephant.

The height of this animal, when full grown, is rather more than five feet, but the average height seems scarcely to exceed four feet. In colour it is a deep brown-black, tinged with a purple hue, which is most perceptible when the animal has recently left its bath. The colour of the young animal is much paler than that of the mother, and partakes of a pinky hue.

The Javanese rhinoceros is not so large as the Indian, and is more gentle and tractable. It has even been trained to wear a saddle, and to be guided by a rider.

Four species of the African rhinoceros are mentioned by Mr. Wood. Two are black and two white. They differ also in form, dimensions, habits, and disposition.

The commonest of the African species is the borele or little black rhinoceros of Southern Africa. It has two horns, the foremost of considerable length, while the second is short, conical, and much like the weapon of the Indian animal. The pointed upper lip also overlaps the lower. The borele is very fierce, and more feared by the natives than even the lion. Although clumsy in shape it is quick and active, and will test the powers of a good horse to escape from its charge. When wounded, the black rhinoceros is a truly fearful opponent, and it is generally considered very unsafe to fire at the animal, unless the hunter is mounted on a good horse, or provided with an accessible place of refuge. An old experienced hunter said that he would rather face fifty lions than one wounded borele; but Mr. Oswall, the well known African sportsman, always preferred to shoot the rhinoceros on foot. The best place



to aim is just behind the shoulder, as if the lungs are wounded the animal very soon dies. There is but little blood externally, as the thick loose skin covers the bullet-hole, and prevents any outward effusion. When mortally wounded the rhinoceros generally drops on its knees.

The keitloa rhinoceros is a larger animal than the borele, and its horns are about equal in length. It is a terribly dangerous opponent, and its charge is so wonderfully swift that it can hardly be avoided. One of these animals that had been wounded by Mr. Andersson charged suddenly upon him, knocked him down, happily missing her stroke with her horns, and went fairly over him, leaving him to struggle out from between her hind legs. Scarcely had she passed than she turned, and made a second charge, cutting his leg from the knee to the hip with her horn, and knocking him over with a blow on the shoulder from her fore feet. She might easily have completed her revenge, by killing him on the spot, but she then left him, and rushing into a neighbouring thicket began to plunge about, and snort, permitting her victim to make his escape. In the course of the day the same beast attacked a half caste boy who was in attendance on Mr. Andersson, and would probably have killed him had she not been intercepted by the hunter, who came to the rescue with his gun. After receiving several bullets, the rhinoceros fell to the ground, and Mr. Andersson walked up to her, put the muzzle of the rifle to her ear, and was just about to pull the trigger, when she again leaped to her feet. He hastily fired and rushed away, pursued by the infuriated animal, which, however, fell dead just as he threw himself into a bush for safety. The race was such a close one, that as he lay in the bush he could touch the dead rhinoceros with his rifle, so that another moment would probably have been fatal to him.

The common white rhinoceros is still larger than the keitloa, and with the other species, the kobaoba, or long horned white rhinoceros, is remarkable for its square muzzle and elongated head. The foremost horn attains a measure of more than three feet when fully grown, the second is short and conical. In the case of the kobaoba the foremost horn is nearly straight, and sometimes exceeds four feet in length. Happily for the inhabitants of the regions where the white rhinoceros dwells, its temper is remarkably quiet, and devoid of

that restless irritability and sudden access of rage which is so distinguishing a quality of the two black species. Even when wounded it seldom turns upon its antagonist, but contents itself with endeavouring to make its escape. Sometimes however, probably when it has its young to protect, it will assume the offensive, and is then even more to be dreaded than its black relatives. The following anecdote, which was related by Mr. Oswell, the hero of the tale, to Mr. Andersson, affords an instance of this rare display of combativeness.

"Once as I was returning from an elephant chase, I observed a huge white rhinoceros a short distance ahead. I was riding a most excellent hunter—the best and fleetest steed that I ever possessed during my shooting excursions in Africa—at the time; but it was a rule with me never to pursue a rhinoceros on horseback, and simply because this animal is so much more easily approached and killed on foot. On this occasion, however, I made an exception to my rule.

"Turning to my after-rider, I called out: 'That fellow has got a fine horn; I will have a shot at him.' With that I clapped spurs to my horse, who soon brought me alongside the huge beast, and the next instant I lodged a ball in his body, but, as it turned out, not with deadly effect. On receiving my shot, the rhinoceros, to my great surprise, instead of seeking safety in flight, as is the habit of this generally inoffensive animal, suddenly stopped short, then turned sharply round, and having eyed me most curiously for a second or two, walked slowly towards me. I never dreamt of danger. Nevertheless, I instinctively turned my horse's head away; but, strange to say, this creature, usually so docile and gentle—which the slightest touch of the reins would be sufficient to guide—now absolutely refused to give me his head. When at last he did so it was too late; for notwithstanding the rhinoceros had only been walking, the distance between us was so inconsiderable, that by this time I clearly saw contact was unavoidable. Indeed, in another moment I observed the brute bend low his head, and with a thrust upwards, strike his horn into the ribs of the horse with such force as to penetrate to the very saddle on the opposite side, where I felt its sharp point against my leg.

"The violence of the blow was so tremendous as to cause the horse to make a complete

somersault in the air, coming heavily on its back. With regard to myself, I was, as a matter of course, violently precipitated to the ground. Whilst thus prostrated, I actually saw the horn of the infuriated beast alongside of me; but seemingly satisfied with his revenge, without attempting to do farther mischief, he started off at a canter from the scene

of action. My after rider having by this time come up, I rushed upon him, and almost pulling him from off his horse, leaped into the saddle; and, without a hat, and my face streaming with blood, was quickly in pursuit of the retreating beast, which I soon had the satisfaction to see stretched lifeless at my feet."

(To be continued).

## A THOUSAND AND ONE STORIES FROM NATURE.

ORIGINAL AND SELECTED.

BY THE REV. F. O. MORRIS, RECTOR OF NUNBURNHOLME, AND CHAPLAIN TO HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF CLEVELAND; AUTHOR OF A "HISTORY OF BRITISH BIRDS" (DEDICATED BY PERMISSION TO HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN), ETC., ETC.

CCCXXVIII.

WREN.



WAS much pleased to-day by detecting the stratagems of a common wren to conceal its nest from observation. It had formed a hollow space in the thatch, on the inside of my cow-shed, in which it had placed its nest by the side of a rafter, and finished it with its usual neatness; but lest the orifice of its cell should engage attention, it had negligently hung a ragged piece of moss on the straw work, concealing the entrance, and apparently proceeding from the rafter; and so perfect was the deception, that I should not have noticed it, though tolerably observant of such things, had not the bird betrayed her secret and darted out. Now from what operative cause did this stratagem proceed? Habit it was not; it seemed like an after-thought; danger was perceived, and the contrivance which a contemplative being would have provided was resorted to.

CCCXXIX.

Let me proceed to describe another strange nest in this parish. In the garden of Mr. H— there chanced to be an old sack thrown into the fork of a plum-tree, and in one of the folds of the sack a wren has this season built her nest. Mrs. H— observed that as the nest increased in bulk the fold of the sack expanded, and the nest slipped gradually down. Mrs. H— very kindly lent her assistance, and by an occasional underpinning with moss Mesdames H— and Wren made a very comfortable little home, at this time the safe depository of no end of wren's eggs.

CCCXXX.

WAGTAIL.

Mr. Weir sent Mr. Macgillivray an account of three pair of birds which built their nest in an old wall within a few yards of four men, who, during the most part of the day, were working at a quarry, where they were occasionally blasting the lime with gunpowder. There the female laid and hatched four eggs. She and the male became so familiar with the workmen that they flew in and out without showing the least signs of fear; but if he himself approached, so quickly did they recognise a stranger that they immediately flew off, and would not return until he had removed at least five or six hundred yards from their abode.

Also another pair built their nest under the platform at the top of a coal-pit, which was jarred against every time that the coals were drawn up. They became quite familiar with the colliers and other persons connected with the works, flying in and out only a few feet off them, without showing the least symptoms of fear. The nest was built within a few inches of where one of the men used to stand.

Mr. Jesse mentions another pair which built their nest in a workshop occupied by braziers, and, though the noise was loud and incessant there they securely hatched their young.

CCCXXXI.

A grey wagtail came and peeped in at our windows every morning, for three months together. It was an exquisitely beautiful bird. The colours of its plumage were as bright as

THE RHINOCEROS.

(Continued from p. 380.)



R. TEMES, in his "Eccentricities of the Animal Creation," has gleaned some very interesting historical information respecting the rhinoceros, from which we extract the following:—

"The specimens of the rhinoceros which have been exhibited in Europe since the revival of literature have been few and far between. The first was of the one-horned species, 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 its passage with a fit of fury, occasioned the loss of the vessel in which it was transported. A second rhinoceros was brought to England in 1685; a third was exhibited over almost the whole of Europe in 1739; and a fourth, a female, in 1741. A fifth specimen arrived at Versailles in 1771, and it died in 1793, at the age of about twenty-six years. The sixth was a very young rhinoceros, which died in this country in the year 1800. The seventh, a young specimen, was in the possession of Mr. Cross, at Exeter Change, about 1814; and an eighth specimen was living about the same time in the Garden of Plants at Paris. In 1834 Mr. Cross received at the Surrey Gardens, from the Birman empire, a rhinoceros, a year and a-half old. In 1851 the Zoological Society purchased a full-grown female rhinoceros from Calcutta. All these specimens were from India, and *one-horned*; so that the *two-horned* rhinoceros had not been brought to England until the arrival of an African rhinoceros, *two-horned*, in September, 1868.\* The conveyance of a rhinoceros over sea is a labour of some risk. In 1814 a full-grown specimen on his voyage from Calcutta to this country became so furious that he was fastened down to the ship's deck, with part of a chain-cable round his neck; and even then he succeeded in destroying a portion of the vessel, till, a heavy storm coming on, the rhinoceros was thrown overboard to prevent the serious

consequence of his getting loose in the ship.

"The ancient history of the rhinoceros is interesting, but intricate. It seems to be mentioned in several passages of the Scriptures, in most of which the animal or animals intended to be designated was or were the *Rhinoceros unicornis*, or great Asiatic one-horned rhinoceros. M. Lesson expresses a decided opinion to this effect; indeed, the description in Job (chap. xxxix.) would almost forbid the conclusion that any animal was in the writer's mind except one of surpassing bulk and indomitable strength. The impotence of man is finely contrasted with the might of the rhinoceros in this description, which would be overcharged if it applied to the less powerful animals alluded to in the previous passages.

"Agatharchides describes the one-horned rhinoceros by name, and speaks of its ripping up the belly of the elephant. This is probably the earliest occurrence of the name *rhinoceros*. The rhinoceros which figured in the celebrated pomps of Ptolemy Philadelphus was an Ethiopian, and seems to have marched last in the procession of wild animals, probably on account of its superior rarity, and immediately after the cameleopard.

"Dion Cassius speaks of the rhinoceros killed in the circus with a hippopotamus in the show given by Augustus to celebrate his victory over Cleopatra; he says that the hippopotamus and this animal were then first seen and killed at Rome. The rhinoceros then slain is thought to have been African, and two-horned.

"The rhinoceros clearly described by Strabo, as seen by him, was one-horned. That noticed by Pausanias as 'The Bull of Ethiopia,' was two-horned, and he describes the relative position of the horns.

"Wood, in his 'Zoography,' gives an engraving of the coin of Domitian (small Roman brass), on the reverse of which is the distinct form of a two-horned rhinoceros; its exhibition to the Roman people, probably of the very

\* "A Strange Ice-incident," which occurred to this rhinoceros in January of the present year, is narrated by Mr. Frank Buckland in the February Number of *Our Own Fireside*, p. 125.

animal represented on the coin, is particularly described in one of the epigrams attributed to Martial, who lived in the reigns of Titus and Domitian. By the description of the epigram it appears that a combat between a rhinoceros and a bear was intended, but that it was very difficult to irritate the more unwieldy animal, so as to make him display his usual ferocity; at length, however, he tossed the bear from his double horn with as much facility as a bull tosses to the sky the bundles placed for the purpose of enraging him. Thus far the coin and the epigram perfectly agree as to the existence of the double horn; but, unfortunately, commentators and antiquaries were not to be convinced that a rhinoceros could have more than one horn, and have at once displayed their sagacity and incredulity in their explanations on the subject.

"The tractability of the Asiatic rhinoceros has been confirmed by observers in the native country of the animal. Bishop Heber saw at Lucknow five or six very large rhinoceroses, of which he found that prints and drawings had given him a very imperfect conception. They were more bulky animals, and of a darker colour than the bishop supposed; though the latter difference might be occasioned by oiling the skin. The folds of their skin also surpassed all which the bishop had expected. Those at Lucknow were quiet and gentle animals, except that one of them had a feud with horses. They had sometimes howdahs, or chaise-like seats on their backs, and were once fastened in a carriage, but only as an experiment, which was not followed up. The bishop, however, subsequently saw a rhinoceros which was so tamed as to be ridden by a mahout quite as patiently as an elephant.

"Sparmann exposes the errors and poetic fancies of Buffon respecting the impenetrable nature of the skin. He ordered one of his Hottentots to make a trial of this with his *hasagai* on a rhinoceros which had been shot. Though this weapon was far from being in

good order, and had no other sharpness than that which it had received from the forge, the Hottentot, at the distance of five or six paces, not only pierced with it the thick hide of the animal, but buried it half a foot deep in its body.

"The horn of the rhinoceros, single or double, has its special history by the way of popular tradition. From the earliest times this horn has been supposed to possess preservative virtues and mysterious properties,—to be capable of curing diseases and discovering the presence of poison; and in all countries where the rhinoceros exists, but especially in the East, such is still the opinion respecting it. In the details of the first voyage of the English to India, in 1591, we find rhinoceros horns monopolised by the native sovereigns on account of their reputed virtues in detecting the presence of poison."

Thunberg observes, in his "Journey into Caffraria," that "the horns of the rhinoceros were kept by some people both in town and country, not only as rarities, but also as useful in diseases, and for the purpose of detecting poisons. As to the former of these intentions, the fine shavings were supposed to cure convulsions and spasms in children. With respect to the latter, it was generally believed that goblets made of these horns would discover a poisonous draught that was poured into them, by making the liquor ferment till it ran quite out of the goblet. Of these horns goblets are made, which are set in gold and silver, and presented to kings, persons of distinction, and particular friends, or else sold at a high price, sometimes at the rate of fifty rix-dollars each." Thunberg adds: "When I tried these horns, both wrought and unwrought, both old and young horns, with several sorts of poison, weak as well as strong, I observed not the least motion or effervescence; but when a solution of corrosive sublimate or other similar substance was poured into one of these horns, there arose only a few bubbles, produced by the air which had been inclosed in the pores of the horn and which were now disengaged."

## THE HIGHEST RAILWAY STATION.

The highest Railway Station in the world is on the Union Pacific Railway, at Sherman, 8,235 feet above the sea. In crossing the Sierra Nevada, down the western slope of the moun-

tains, the line makes a descent of 7,000 feet in the course of 105 miles. The changes of climate during a journey of this nature are very sudden and trying to delicate constitutions.—