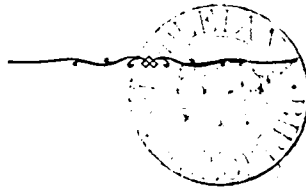


STORIES
ABOUT
ANIMALS.

BY
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PREBENDARY OF ST. PAUL'S, AND RECTOR OF STOKE NEWINGTON.



CASSELL, PETTER, & GALPIN,
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TO HIS

Eleven Little Grandchildren,

THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

THE RECTORY,

STOKE NEWINGTON.

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CONVERSATION V.

HIPPOPOTAMUS—RHINOCEROS—ELEPHANT AND RHINOCEROS.

G. Here is a picture of a hippopotamus, or river-horse.

Johnie. Why, he's not a bit like a horse. Did you ever see such a thick-skinned, big-mouthed, ugly beast ?

G. But we are not to suppose him ugly because he is unlike man. From his point of view, I dare say his wife and children are much handsomer to him than any of you children. If he thinks at all, I dare say he thinks you are little ugly, thin-legged animals, frightened at the very sight of cold water, while his baby will plunge in and stay under I don't know how long.

Mary. I believe the beast likes the water, for he is generally in it when I see him at the Zoological Gardens.

Johnie. What big dreadful teeth he has !

G. But he only uses them for mowing and cutting down grass, and crunching little shoots of trees. If you want to see his great queer mouth to advantage, go to the side of his pond, and lift up a bun. You see him, almost covered with the water, coming to the place where you stand ; then lifting up his huge form out of the water, he opens his great pink-coloured mouth, and within you see the rows of enormous teeth. You throw in your bun and it disappears down the red lane immediately, while the huge mouth is opened to receive another. Observe that he slips through the water the more easily because his hide constantly sends out a thick oily substance ; so that a gentleman who one day patted his back, found that he had spoiled a pair of new kid gloves.

Look at this picture of the Indian rhinoceros. He is so called from that big thing generally termed a horn, though some say that it is more like a bundle of hairs that have grown together. I do not pretend to decide. When you grow older, search for yourselves. All writers about animals that are good for anything, read all that they can about the animals they describe. Some of them have lived in the countries where they abound ; some of them, passing through the countries, ask questions of people that have seen the

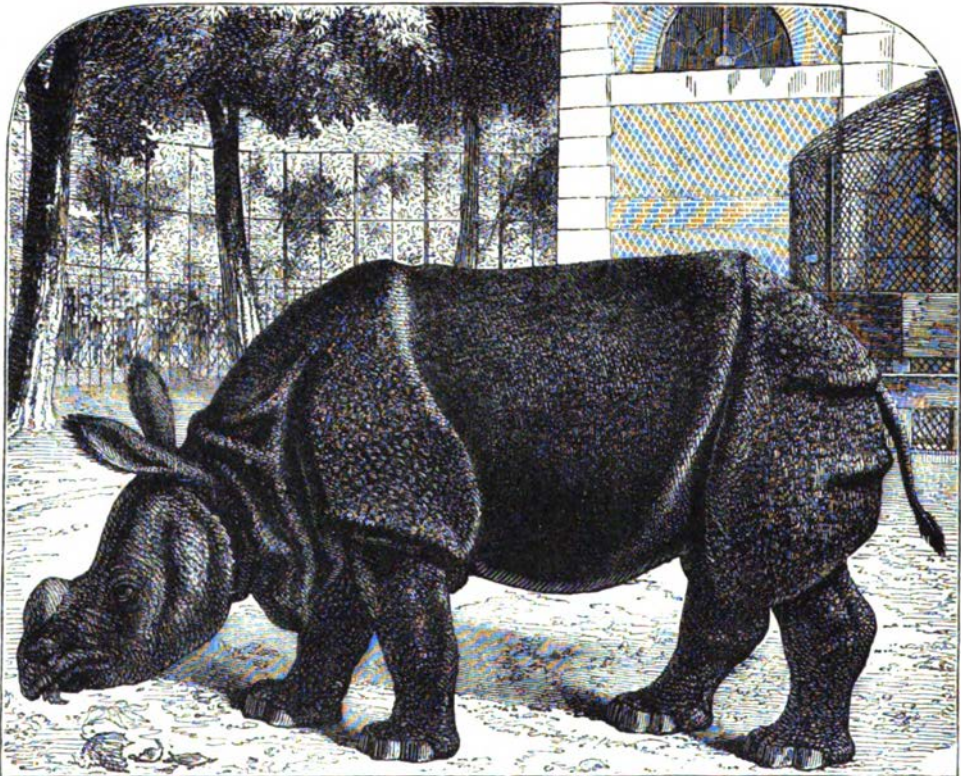
beasts or creeping things they want to know about. Thus, when I was at Cape Town, I tried to get all sorts of information about the birds, and the beasts, and fishes, and other animals. And so in New Zealand, Australia, and the Brazils. When I was in Switzerland a year or two ago, I went out



THE HIPPOPOTAMUS.

of my way to see the great St. Bernard dog Barry, that had saved many lives, whose stuffed skin is in the Museum at Berne. I also went to see the pit where the bears are kept. You know the city of Berne, the chief town in Switzerland, is named after the bears. Its proper meaning is bear-town. So now we will go back to the rhinoceros.

The animal has sometimes two horns, one by the side of the other ; sometimes two horns, one behind the other ; and sometimes one horn. The variety with the one horn is supposed to be the " unicorn " mentioned in the



THE RHINOCEROS.

Bible. It is a very strong animal ; old writers speak of it as ripping up the belly of the elephant with its horn. Sometimes it was called the bull of Ethiopia. The cruel Romans used to put a rhinoceros with a bear in fight, but the former would toss the bear on his horn with the greatest ease. It is

to be observed that the horn is not a growth of the skull, but merely fastened to the thick hide. About a hundred and fifty years ago, one of these big



INDIAN RHINOCEROS.

beasts was brought to London from Bengal. He was a very costly animal ; though only two years old, a thousand pounds were expended in providing him with food and drink. What do you think he ate every day ? Why seven pounds of rice mixed with three pounds of sugar, divided into three

portions. He also ate plentifully of hay, but he much preferred fresh vegetables, grass, and herbs. He drank a great deal of water. He was so quiet and well-behaved, that he let people handle him, unless he was annoyed, or wanted his breakfast. The well-known specimen in the Zoological Gardens in London couldn't bear the noise of the roller used in keeping the gravel pathway in order which adjoined his den ; his hearing was very quick, so that even while enjoying his dinner he stops, and starts aside, to listen.

Mr. Bingley gives the following account of a rhinoceros brought to England in 1790. It was then about five years old. It was somewhat tamed ; it would walk about when desired to do so by its keeper ; it would let visitors pat its back. His daily allowance was twenty-eight pounds of clover, the same quantity of ship biscuit, and an enormous amount of greens. It was fond of sweet wines, and would drink four or five bottles in a few hours. He made nothing of drinking fifteen pails of water in the course of a day. If he saw a person with fruit or any food that he was fond of, he would ask for a share, in a very pretty manner for so huge a beast, making a noise something like the bleating of a calf. He died of inflammation, caused by slipping the joint of one of his fore legs. Some doctors made openings in his skin, in order to relieve his pain. These were always found quite healed up in the course of twenty-four hours. His death happened near Portsmouth, and the mayor ordered him to be buried on the common at Southsea. A fortnight afterwards some naturalists dug up the remains to preserve the skin and the most valuable of the bones, but the diggers were nearly overpowered by the stench of the body.

There is no doubt that the elephant and rhinoceros sometimes fight together madly, when they are in a wild state. Some years ago there was a specimen in the Regent's Park Gardens, that contrived to get into the den of an old elephant there. They were afterwards the best friends in the world, and it was amusing to see how quiet the rhinoceros would stand whilst his great friend scrubbed his back with his trunk, and occasionally gratified himself by a sly pull at his tail, to make the rhinoceros turn his head, if his attention was taken off by visitors.

We have said that the horn is not fastened to the skull, but simply connected with the skin. It is not generally known that it can be removed by passing a sharp knife round its base. The skin is so strong and thick, that it can only be pierced by bullets of a peculiar make. The negroes of Africa

know this perfectly well, and make it into shields and bucklers. His playful antics are sometimes useful ; thus he will poke his horn into the ground, and then driving it along at a great rate, pushing with all his mighty force and strength, he will make a furrow broader and deeper than that of a plough. Those who have watched his habits tell us that he does this, not because he is in a passion, but in the pure enjoyment of health and spirits ; just as when a little boy or girl, or dog or kitten, scampers about a lawn.

Thick as the hide of some varieties is, it is not thick enough to protect its folds from the sting of the mosquito. To escape from the bite of this and other like insects, it wallows in the mud. This mud, baked by the sun, becomes as hard as a crust, and when the beast wants to get out of his shelter, he can only do so after a violent struggle. The Indians know this, and seeing his nose just peeping out of the dried mud, they light a large fire round him in every direction. From these flames he cannot escape, so that he is slowly baked, like a pie in a dish. When he is dead the hunters come up and devour the best limbs, which they are said to enjoy very much.

