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XII.—THE RHINOCEROS.

NEXT to the mighty elephant, the rhinoceros is the largest and strongest of animals. There are several species of the rhinoceros, some of which are found in Asia, and others in different parts of Africa.

In the latter country there are four varieties,—the black rhinoceros, having a single horn; a black species, having two horns; the long-horned white rhinoceros; and the common white species, which has a short, stubby horn.

The largest of the African species is the long-horned, white, or square-nosed rhinoceros. When full grown, it sometimes measures eighteen feet in length, and about as many feet around the body. Its horn frequently grows to the length of thirty inches.

The black rhinoceros, although much smaller than the white, and seldom having a horn over eighteen inches long, is far more ferocious than the white species, and possesses a wonderful degree of strength.

The form of the rhinoceros is clumsy, and its appearance dull and heavy. The limbs are thick and powerful, and each foot has three toes, which are covered with broad, hoof-like nails. The tail is small; the head very long and large. Taken altogether, there are few—if any—animals that compare with the rhinoceros in ugliness. The eyes are set in such a manner that the animal can not see anything exactly in front of it; but the senses of hearing and smelling are so keen that sight is not required to detect an enemy, whether it be man or beast. The skin of the African rhinoceros is smooth, and has only a

few scattering hairs here and there. It is, however, very thick and tough, and can resist the force of a rifle-ball except when it is fired from a very short distance.

The largest known species of the rhinoceros is found in Asia. It lives chiefly in the marshy jungles, and on the banks of lakes and rivers, in India. Some of this species are over five feet in height, and have horns three feet in length and eighteen inches around the base. Unlike that of the African rhinoceros, the skin of the Asiatic species is not smooth, but lies in thick folds upon the body, forming flaps which can be lifted with the hand.

The food of the rhinoceros consists of roots, and the young branches and leaves of trees and shrubs. It ploughs up the roots with the aid of its horn, and gathers the branches and leaves with its upper lip, which is long and pointed, and with it rolls its food together before placing it in its mouth. The flesh of the rhinoceros is good to eat; and its strong, thick skin is made by the natives into shields, whips, and other articles.

Though clumsy, and apparently very stupid, the rhinoceros is a very active animal when attacked or otherwise alarmed. It is very fierce and savage,—so much so, that the natives dread it more than they do the lion. In hunting the rhinoceros, it is dangerous for a man to fire at one, unless he is mounted upon a swift horse, and can easily reach some place of safety. When attacking an enemy, the rhinoceros lowers its head and rushes forward like an angry bull. Though it may not see the object of its attack, its sense of smell is so acute that it knows when the enemy is reached. Then begins a furious tossing of

the head, and if its powerful horn strikes the foe, a terrible wound is the result. When wounded itself, the rhinoceros loses all sense of fear, and charges again and



again, with such desperate fury, that the enemy is almost always overcome.

A famous traveller in South Africa relates the follow-

ing incident that happened during one of his hunting excursions :

“ Having proceeded about two miles, I came upon a black rhinoceros, feeding within fifty yards of me. I fired from my saddle, and sent a bullet in behind his shoulder, upon which he rushed forward, blowing like a grampus, and then stood looking about him. Presently he started off, and I followed. I expected that he would come to bay, but it seems a rhinoceros never does that,— a fact I did not know at that time. Suddenly he fell flat upon the ground ; but soon recovering his feet, he resumed his course as if nothing had happened.

“ I spurred on my horse, dashed ahead, and rode right in his path. Upon this, the hideous monster charged me in the most resolute manner, blowing loudly through his nostrils. Although I quickly turned about, he followed me at such a furious pace for several hundred yards, with his horrid, horny snout within a few yards of my horse's tail, that I thought my destruction was certain. The animal, however, suddenly turned and ran in another direction. I had now become so excited with the incident, that I determined to give him one more shot any way. Nerving my horse again, I made another dash after the rhinoceros, and coming up pretty close to him, I again fired, though with little effect, the ball striking some thick portion of the skin and doing no harm. Not caring to run the chance of the huge brute again charging me, and believing that my rifle-ball was not powerful enough to kill him, I determined to give up the pursuit, and accordingly let him run off while I returned to the camp.”