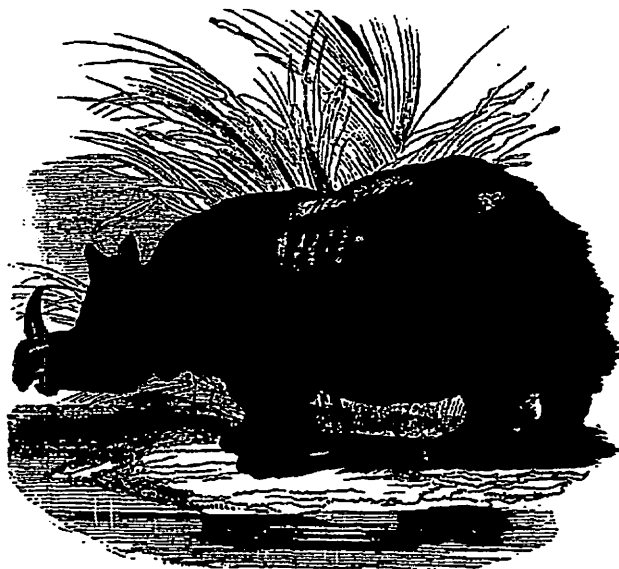


THE RHINOCEROS.

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THE RHINOCEROS.

The Rhinoceros is found in Asia and Africa, in Bengal, Siam, in Sumatra, in Java, and about the Cape of Good Hope. But in general the species is not so numerous, or so universally spread as that of the Elephant. The Rhinoceros, without being ferocious or carnivorous, or even very wild, is nevertheless untamable. He is of the nature of a hog, without tractableness. He lives to the age of seventy or eighty years.

After the Elephant, the Rhinoceros is the most powerful of all quadrupeds. He is at least twelve feet in length, from the extremity of the snout to the tail; six or seven feet in height; and the circumference of his body is very nearly equal to his length; he is therefore like the Elephant in bulk; and if he appears much smaller, it is because his legs are much shorter in proportion than those of the Elephant; but he differs widely from that sagacious animal, in his natural faculties, and his intelligence; having received from Nature merely what she grants in common to all animals; deprived of all feeling in the skin, having no organ answering the purpose of hands, nor distinct for the sense of feeling, he has nothing instead of a trunk but a small upper lip, in which centres all his dexterity. He is superior to other animals only in strength, size, and the offensive weapon which he carries upon his nose, and which is peculiar to him. This weapon is a very hard horn, solid throughout, and placed more advantageously than the horns of ruminating animals; these only protect the superior parts of the head and neck, while the horn of the Rhinoceros defends all the exterior parts of the snout, and preserves the muzzle, the mouth, and the face from insult; so that the tiger attacks more readily the Elephant, in seizing his trunk, than the Rhinoceros, which he cannot attack in front without running the danger of being killed, for the body and limbs are covered with an impenetrable skin; and this animal fears neither the claws of the tiger nor the lion, nor even the fire and weapons of the huntsman; his skin is a dark leather, of the same color, but thicker and harder than those of the elephant; he does not feel the sting of flies; he cannot contract his skin; it is only folded by large wrinkles on the neck, the shoulders, and the buttocks, to facilitate the motions of the legs, which are mas-

sive, and terminate in large feet, armed with three great claws. The skin of the two-horned Rhinoceros is much more easily penetrable than that of the single-horned. He has the head larger in proportion than the elephant, but the eyes still smaller, which he never opens entirely, and they are so situated that the animal can see only what is in a direct line before him. The upper jaw projects above the lower, and the upper lip has a motion, and may be lengthened six or seven inches; it is terminated by a sharp edge, which enables this animal, with more facility than other quadrupeds, to gather branches and grass, and to divide them into handfuls, as the elephant does with his trunk. This muscular and flexible lip is a sort of trunk very incomplete, but which is equally calculated for strength and dexterity. Instead of those long ivory teeth which form the tusks of the elephant, the Rhinoceros has his powerful horn, and two strong incisive teeth in each jaw. These incisive teeth, which the elephant has not, are placed at a great distance from each other in the jaws of the Rhinoceros. He has, beside these, twenty-four smaller teeth, six on each side of each jaw. His ears are always erect; they are, for the form, like those of a hog, only they are larger in proportion to his body; they are the only hairy parts of it. The end of the tail is like that of the elephant, furnished with a tuft of large bristles, very hard and very solid. Huge and seemingly unwieldy as the Rhinoceros is, he has the power of running with very great swiftness.

The Rhinoceros which arrived in London in 1739 had been sent from Bengal. Although he was young, (being but two years old,) the expenses of his food and his voyage amounted to near one thousand pounds sterling; he was fed with rice, sugar, and hay. They gave him daily seven pounds of rice, mixed with three pounds of sugar; which they divided into three parts. He had also a great quantity of hay and green grass, to which he gave the preference. His drink was nothing but water, of which he drank a great quantity at once. He was of a quiet disposition, and let his manager touch him on all parts of his body. He grew unruly when he was struck or was hungry; and in both cases he could not be appeased without

giving him something to eat. When he was angry, he leaped forward with impetuosity to a great height, beating furiously the walls with his head; which he did with a prodigious quickness, notwithstanding his heavy appearance.

This Rhinoceros when he was two years old was not much lighter than a young cow who has not yet borne young; but his body was very long, and very thick. The tongue of this young Rhinoceros was soft, like that of a calf; his eyes had no vivacity; they were like those of a hog in form, and were placed very low; that is, nearer the opening of the nostrils.

Mr. Parsons says, that he has observed a very particular quality in this animal; he heightened with a sort of continual attention to any noise; so that, if he was even sleepy, employed in eating, or in satisfying other urgent wants, he started instantly, raised up his head, and gave attention till the noise had ceased.

It is certain that some Rhinoceroses have but one horn on the nose, and others two. In the two-horned Rhinoceros, one of the horns is smaller than the other, and is situated above it. When the animal is quiescent these horns are loose, but they become fixed when it is irritated. There are single horns of three feet and a half, and perhaps of more than four feet in length. Commonly, these horns are brown, or olive color; yet some are gray, and even white. They have only a small concavity, in form of a cup, at their basis, by which they are fastened to the skin of the nose; the remaining part of the horn is solid, and very hard. It is with this weapon that the Rhinoceros is said to attack, and sometimes to wound mortally, the largest elephants, whose long legs give to the Rhinoceros, who has them much shorter, an opportunity of striking them with his horn under the belly, where the skin is tender and more penetrable; but when he misses the first blow, the elephant throws him on the ground, and kills him.

The horn of the Rhinoceros is more valued by the Indians than the ivory of the elephant; not so much on account of the matter, of which they make several works with the chisel, as for the substance, to which they attribute diverse virtues and medicinal properties. The white ones, as the most rare, are also those which they value most. Cups made of this horn are used to drink out of by many of the Indian princes, under the erroneous idea that when any poisonous fluid is put into them, the liquor will ferment, and run over the top.

Without being useful, as the elephant, the Rhinoceros is very hurtful, by the prodigious devastation which he makes in the fields. The skin is the most valuable thing of this animal. His flesh is excellent, according to the taste of Indian and Negroes. Kolben says, he has often eaten it with great pleasure. His skin makes the best and hardest leather in the world; not only his horn, but all the other parts of his body, and even his blood, his urine, his excrements, are esteemed as antidotes against poison, or a remedy against several diseases; probably, however, all those virtues are imaginary.

The Rhinoceros feeds upon herbs, thistles, prickles, shrubs, and he prefers this wild food to the sweet pasture of the verdant meadows; he is very fond of sugar-canes, and eats all sorts of corn. Having no taste whatever for flesh, he does not molest small animals, neither fears the large ones,

living in peace with them all, even with the tiger, who often accompanies him, without daring to attack him : I doubt, therefore, whether the battles betwixt the elephant and the Rhinoceros have any foundation ; they must, however, seldom happen, since there is no motive for war on either side ; and, besides, no sort of antipathy has been observed between these animals. Some have even been seen in captivity, living quietly together, without giving offence or provocation to each other.

We have seen that this animal has a good ear ; it is also affirmed that he has the sense of smelling in perfection ; but it is pretended he has not a good eye, and sees only before him : that his eyes are so small, and placed so low, and so obliquely, and have so little vivacity and motion, that this fact needs no other confirmation. His voice, when he is calm, resembles the grunting of a hog ; and when he is angry, his sharp cries are heard at a great distance. Though he lives upon vegetables, he does not ruminate ; thus it is probable, that, like the elephant, he has but one stomach, and very large bowels, which supply the office of the paunch. His consumption, though very great, is not comparable to that of the elephant ; and it appears, by the thickness of his skin, that he loses less than the elephant by his perspiration.

It is supposed by some that the Rhinoceros is the unicorn of the scriptures. It is generally admitted that the various qualities therein assigned to that animal are combined in the Rhinoceros, viz. rage, untamableness, and strength. The Rhinoceros, likewise, has a single horn, thus corresponding in this particular. There is, however, as has been seen, a species of this animal which has two horns ; and it appears that the unicorn sometimes had two : " His horns are like the horns of a unicorn." We leave the subject for each one to judge for himself, remarking as we leave it, that there have been various opinions as to the unicorn, some supposing it to be the wild goat, others the wild bull, others again the wild ass, and so on.