



THE RHINOCEROS.

OF all the South African animals, not the least curious, perhaps, is the rhinoceros. He inhabits a large portion of the African coast — such localities, at least, as are suitable to his habits. Formerly, he was commonly found in the immediate vicinity of Cape Town, but, owing to constant persecution, is now rarely met with farther to the southward (I speak of the west coast) than about the 23d degree of latitude. In the interior, however, the tribe is still very numerous. “On one occasion,” says Captain Harris, “whilst walking from the wagon to bring the head of a koodoo that I had killed about a mile off, I encountered twenty-two rhinoceroses, and had to shoot four of them to clear the way.”

The rhinoceros is, moreover, an inhabitant of Bengal, Siam, China, and other countries of Asia, as also of Java, Sumatra, and Ceylon. But the three species indigenous to this quarter of the globe would seem to be quite different from any yet found in Africa. Almost all the Asiatic species have an exceedingly coarse hide, covered with large folds not unlike a coat of mail; whilst that of the African species is comparatively smooth. Two of the Indian rhinoceroses have only one horn; whereas all the African ones are provided with two.

Four distinct species are known to exist in South Africa, two of which are of a dark color, and two of a whitish hue, whence they are usually called the black and the white rhinoceros. One of the two species of black — the Bozele, as it is called by the Bechuanas — is the common small rhinoceros.

ros ; the other (called Keitloa) is the two-horned black rhinoceros, as it is termed by naturalists.

It is with regard to their horns that the two species chiefly differ from each other ; for, whilst the anterior (or foremost) horn of the Monoochoo has an average length of two or three feet, curving backwards, that of the Kobaaba not unfrequently exceeds four feet, and is slightly pointed forward. This rhinoceros is also the rarer of the two, and is only found in the more interior parts of South Africa.

The chief characteristics of the white rhinoceros are—its superior size, the extraordinary length of its head, (which is not far from one third of the whole length of the animal's body,) its square nose, and the greater length of the anterior horn.

The black and white rhinoceros, though nearly allied to each other, differ widely in their mode of living, habits, &c. The chief subsistence of the former animal consists of the roots of certain bushes, which are ploughed up by its strong horn, and the shoots and tender boughs of the wait-a-bit thorn ; whilst the white rhinoceros feeds solely on grasses. In disposition there is a marked difference between them ; for whilst the black is of a very savage nature, the white is of a comparatively mild disposition, and, unless in defence of its young, or when hotly pursued, or wounded, rarely attacks a man.

The general appearance of the African rhinoceros is not unlike that of an immense hog shorn of his hair, or rather bristles ; for, with the exception of a tuft at the extremity of the ear and the tail, it has no hair whatever ; and, as if in mockery of its giant form, its eyes are ludicrously small — so small, indeed, that at a short distance they are imperceptible.

From the peculiar position of his eyes, which are deep-set in the head, he can only see what is immediately before him. His senses of hearing and smelling are most acute. From his clumsy appearance, one would never suppose that he could dart about as he does, like lightning. He often attains the age of a hundred years.

In India, the hunting of the rhinoceros is famous sport. The people go out mounted on elephants, and usually find five or six of these animals in a drove. The rhinoceros often attacks the elephant, and endeavors to get his horn under him, so as to rip him open. But the elephant, finding what he would be at, turns his rear to the assailant, who gives him a punch behind, and tumbles his huge enemy upon his knees, while the men fire their guns and pepper the rhinoceros with their bullets. Their hides, however, are so very thick, that it is very difficult to kill them. One will often receive twenty bullets before he falls.