

T A L E S

ABOUT

A N I M A L S.

BY JOHN TILLOTSON.

ILLUSTRATED WITH UPWARDS OF ONE HUNDRED STEEL
ENGRAVINGS,

BY LANDSEER, LE KEUX, SANDS, AND OTHERS.

London:

ALLMAN AND SON, 42, HOLBORN HILL.

1858.

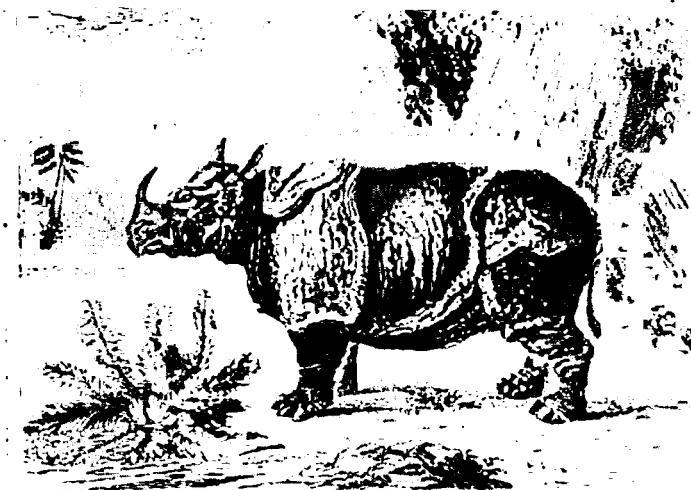
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The Rhinoceros.

Next in interest, as well as in size and strength to the elephant, is the Rhinoceros. There are six distinct branches to the rhinoceros family, of which the two-horned African species take the precedence. The Keitloa, the white rhinoceros, the one-horned or Indian species, the javanus, or native of Java, and the sumatran, make up the varieties. The accompanying illustrations represent the best known specimens, namely, the African or double-horned rhinoceros, and the Indian or single-horned species.

When the Dutch first settled at the Cape of Good Hope, the two-horned rhinoceros was a regular inhabitant of the pleasant thickets on Table Bay. The settlers, however, unsettled him, and he was consequently obliged to remove his lodging to a locality less liable to intrusion. It is not by any means a savage animal, nor has it much pugnacity on ordinary occasions. When beset, it would prefer flight to battle, but if actually attacked it rushes on its foes with impetuous fury. Travellers tell us that in its natural state the rhinoceros relies more for safety on

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THE RHINOCEROS.



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R. Sander. Amst. 1711

THE TWO HORNED RHINOCEROS.

its scent and hearing than on its sight, and that as it feeds on the brushwood and dwarf trees, it may frequently be heard "snuffing the air to ascertain the condition of its neighbourhood." Scores of birds settle on its back, and so long as these remain quiet, the rhinoceros tacitly understands that there is no danger "looming" in the distance: as soon as they take to flight, he decamps.

The one-horned Indian species is of great bulk, and its skin hangs in folds on its body. The horn, which in its distinctive character, is not ivory, but "a solid mass of fibres resembling those into which whale-bone may be separated." From the earliest times, it is said, the horn of the rhinoceros has been considered an antidote to poison, or as a means of detecting it. Hence, "goblets made of it, and set with gold and silver, were used by the Indian kings. If poison is poured into them, it is believed that the liquor effervesces and runs over the brim. Water drank from them, especially if stirred with an iron nail, is said to be medicinal. Nor is this belief in the virtues of the horn confined to India. In Africa, Vaillant relates that the natives believed the dried blood of the animal to contain wonderful medicinal virtues."

Although we have no faith in the curative properties of the rhinoceros horn, nobody can doubt its ability to kill. An anecdote is related of a rhinoceros who suddenly

attacked, with wanton ferocity, some horses at Dinapore. One of these horses was saddled, but a stroke from the horn of its infuriated antagonist penetrated through the saddle-flap and padding, broke two of the animal's ribs, and killed it on the spot.

The attack made by the rhinoceros on this occasion was entirely unprovoked. Two officers had encamped near Dinapore, and fastened their horses by head and heel ropes. The rhinoceros came down on them in the early morning, and the uproar it caused brought the officers from the tent.

The antipathy of the rhinoceros for the elephant, and of the elephant for the rhinoceros is very strong; and not unfrequently have these animals been found dead side by side. An Oriental sportsman tells us, that arriving one morning at the summit of a low range of hills, he obtained a distant view of a desperate engagement between an elephant and a rhinoceros. It appeared that the elephant was acting as a rear-guard to a small herd rapidly retreating, but the attack of the rhinoceros was so fierce that its adversary was compelled to fall back into the jungle, whither it was hotly pursued. What came of the battle he could not ascertain, but the sounds of strife lasted for a considerable time.

The power of the rhinoceros is chiefly displayed when

attacked, as in other cases he is commonly peaceable enough. A few years ago a party of Europeans, with their native attendants and elephants, when engaged in a rhinoceros hunt, were suddenly encountered by a herd of seven of them, led, as it appeared, by one larger and stronger than the rest. When the captain-general charged the hunters, the leading elephants, instead of using their tusks, which is their ordinary practice, wheeled round and received the blow of the rhinoceros' horn on their back parts; the blow was so forcible that they staggered and fell, and as soon as they had arisen, the rhinoceros was ready for a second attack, again rushed forward, and again brought them down. In this manner the fight, if so it might be called, continued until four out of the seven were killed, and the rest beat a retreat.

But the rhinoceros is not to be regarded only in this pugnacious character. Oftentimes he is mild enough and social enough, submitting himself to the discipline of mahouts or keepers with all the docility of the elephant, and only occasionally exhibiting those fits of furious passion which have gained for him a somewhat unenviable reputation. A rhinoceros in the Garden of Plants, Paris, was subject to these violent paroxysms, but was pacified by fruit and bread freely given to him by his keeper. An appeal to his appetite was sure to render the brute

quiet; and was found far more effectual than harsher means.

Bishop Heber, in his "Journey through India" observes: "At Lucknow there were five or six very large rhinoceroses, the finest of the kind I ever saw, and of which I found that the prints and drawings had given me a very imperfect conception. They are more bulky animals and of a darker color than I had supposed, and the thickness of the folds of their impenetrable skin much surpasses all that I had expected. These at Lucknow are quiet and gentle animals, except that one of them has a feud with horses. They seem to propagate in captivity without reluctance, and I should conceive, might be available to carry burdens as well as the elephant, except that as their pace is still slower than his, their use could only be applicable to very great weights and very gentle travelling. These have sometimes had howdahs on them, and were once fastened in a carriage, but only as an experiment which was never followed up."

The first rhinoceros ever seen in Europe was that of which Pliny speaks as having been presented by Pompey to the Roman people. According to Dion Cassius, Augustus caused another to be killed in the Roman circus, when celebrating his triumph over Cleopatra. Strabo states that he saw one at Alexandria, and he has left a

description of it. All these were of the one-horned species. At a later period the two-horned species were introduced, as appears from medals bearing their effigies struck in the reign of Domitian. During the time known as the dark ages, investigations in natural history and every other department of science and learning were utterly neglected, and the rhinoceros was as mythical to Europe as the phœnix or the salamander. On the revival of letters, however, and the extension of maritime discovery, a lively interest was manifested in the productions of foreign countries. In 1513 the king of Portugal presented the Roman pontiff with a rhinoceros captured in India; but, unfortunately, the ship was wrecked on its way to Italy: the pope lost his present, and the rhinoceros his life. All that was preserved was a rough sketch, engraved by Albert Durer; and down to a very recent date, nearly all our representations were taken from this rough draft.

In 1685 a rhinoceros was captured and brought to England. In 1739 and 1741 two others were exhibited in various parts of Europe. In 1800 a young one was brought from India, intended for a menagerie at Vienna, but died at London on the way, and was dissected by Mr. Thomas, who published the results of his investigations, and thus gave the public a better idea of the animal than

they had ever had before. They are now tolerably familiar to the sight-seers, as they figure in most of our zoological collections. A very fine representative of the race may be seen in the Regent's Park Gardens, and the stuffed hides of the animal may be noticed in the natural history collection of the British Museum.

The information we possess about the rhinoceros is enough to prevent our falling into such erroneous conceptions of its character as were entertained by the ancients. The unicorn is in fact nothing else than the Indian rhinoceros, and yet no one could form any idea of the real animal from that apocryphal creature in the Queen's arms, and who is described in the children's distich as "fighting for the crown."
