

THE
CHURCH SCHOLAR'S
READING-BOOK.

VOLUME THE FIRST,

CONTAINING

ANECDOTES;

APOLOGUES, FABLES, TALES, AND NARRATIVES

NATURAL HISTORY;

NATURAL PHENOMENA.

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M.DCCC.XL.

NATURAL HISTORY.

BEASTS.

CAMEL and Dromedary.
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Hind, Roe, &c.
Rein-deer.
Covering of animals.
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Mole.
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Ceylon Deer.

will shoot at it with surprising accuracy. In its natural state, it will hit a fly at the distance of from three to six feet.—SIR CHARLES BELL *on the Hand*.

A RHINOCEROS ATTACKED BY ELEPHANTS.

THE Rhinoceros is the least intelligent of the larger quadrupeds. Fierce and intractable, it is at all times very formidable, as well to animals, as to man. Being protected by nature with a skin like a coat of armour, it commits the greatest devastations with impunity. It is a native both of Asia and of Africa, though the species found in the two countries greatly differ; the Rhinoceros of Africa having two horns on the snout, while that of Asia has only one. Of the former, Mr Bruce says, "When pursued, and in fear, the Rhinoceros possesses an astonishing degree of swiftness, considering his size, the apparent unwieldiness of his body, his great weight before, and the shortness of his legs. He is long, and has a kind of trot, which, after a few minutes, increases, in a great proportion, and takes in a great distance. It is not true that on a plain he beats the horse in swiftness. I have passed him with ease, and seen many more mounted do the same; and though it is certainly true that a horse can very seldom come up with him, this is owing to his cunning, not to his swiftness. He passes constantly from wood to wood, and forces himself into the thickest parts of them. The dry trees are broken down as with a cannon-shot, and fall about him in all directions. Others that are more pliable, greener, and fuller of sap, are bent back by its weight and the velocity of his motion; and, after he has passed, restoring themselves like a green branch to their natural position, they sweep the incautious

pursuer and his horse from the ground, and dash them in pieces against the surrounding trees."

Of the two species of this animal, one is called the *bicornis*, or two-horned, and the other the *unicornis*, or one-horned: the latter has been supposed to be the unicorn of Scripture. The former is, I believe, peculiar to Africa: it is never known in India, where the one-horned Rhinoceros alone is found. Its size is only inferior to that of the elephant, although it is considerably smaller. Its bulk, however, is greater in proportion to its height; and, from its superior courage and activity, it is a much more formidable creature. Its head resembles that of a pig; and it has two small, dull eyes, which give it an appearance at once stupid and intractable. Its length, not including the tail, is from eleven to twelve feet, and the circumference of its body about the same; though it is said sometimes to exceed this standard. It occasionally, though rarely, attains to the height of seven feet, and is amazingly strong; while its skin is so hard and thick, as to be generally impervious to a musket-ball. The hide is curiously divided into sections, and the different divisions are adapted with such exquisite precision, as to have the appearance, at a short distance, of a beautiful coat of mail. It is extremely rough, and offers so complete a resistance to the touch, as not to yield in the slightest degree to the strongest pressure. The only vulnerable parts are the belly, the eyes, and near the ears.

This animal is of very sequestered habits: it traverses the most impenetrable jungles alone, and is the terror of every creature with which it comes in contact, although it seldom attacks unless provoked by aggression. The horn upon its nose, which is thick and pointed, curves upwards towards the forehead, form-

ing an acute angle with the bone of the snout, and projecting from it about thirty inches. It is a most fearful weapon; so much so, that even the colossal elephant has been frequently laid prostrate by a well-directed stroke from the armed head of this terrible adversary. The horn does not adhere to the bone, but when the Rhinoceros is in its ordinary state, stands loose between the nostrils; the moment, however, the animal is excited to resistance by the approach or attack of a foe, the muscular tension is so great that the horn instantly becomes immoveably fixed, and he is able to dart it into the trunk of a tree to the depth of several inches.

The upper lip of the Rhinoceros is of great length, and remarkably pliant, acting like a sort of proboscis, by which he grasps the roots of trees, and other esculent substances, and it is capable of contraction or expansion, as circumstances may require. "With this lip," says Bruce, "and the assistance of his tongue, he pulls down the upper branches which have most leaves, and these he devours first. Having stripped the tree of its branches, he does not directly abandon it; but, placing his snout as low in the trunk as he finds his horn will enter, he rips up the body of the tree, and reduces it to thin pieces, like so many laths; and when he has thus prepared it, he embraces as much as he can of it in his monstrous jaws, and twists it round with as much ease as an ox would do a root of celery."

The female generally produces only a single young one at a birth, which attains to a full state of maturity in about fifteen years. The Rhinoceros is so stupid, and of so savage a disposition, that it seems to exist merely to gratify a voracious appetite. It is the terror of its native woods, and if it had been a gregarious animal, would have

been a terrible scourge to the countries in which it is found. When excited, it displays paroxysms of fury which render it highly dangerous for any one to approach. As it is of a temper much less mild than the elephant, it is far more formidable when exasperated, on account of its greater activity and more desperate ferocity.

The voraciousness of this creature is extraordinary; it will consume as much as an elephant, and is always very fierce if intruded upon whilst feeding. A young Rhinoceros, only two years old, sent from Bengal in 1739, cost a thousand pounds sterling for food, including the expenses of its passage.

When the Rhinoceros and Elephant meet, which is not very often the case, the conflict is terrific. The former will stand his ground, even though surrounded by a herd of elephants, by which indeed he is generally destroyed, though not without making a desperate resistance. He will frequently inflict a mortal wound upon one or two before he is subdued. The Elephant, therefore, always approaches him with extreme reluctance: if the Rhinoceros succeeds in making good his stroke at his huge adversary, it generally proves fatal; his horn, ploughing through the side, exposes the intestines, and the gigantic creature falls dead. If, however, the Elephant is successful in preventing the rush of his enemy, he receives him upon his tusks, which inflict too severe a wound to enable the Rhinoceros to renew the encounter. The timidity of the Elephant generally causes it to have the worst in conflicts with this mailed foe, so that the latter is seldom molested, and consequently roams at large as the monarch of the jungle; even the tiger and the lion shun him, as an enemy not to be provoked without peril.

The following account of the Rhinoceros is extremely curious, being by the celebrated Baher, Emperor of the Moguls, and is to be found in his autobiography, translated by Dr Leyden and Mr Erskine.

"The Rhinoceros," writes this remarkable man, "is a huge animal; its bulk is equal to that of three buffaloes. The opinion prevalent in our countries, that a Rhinoceros can lift an Elephant on its horn, is probably a mistake. It has a single horn over its nose, upwards of a span in length, but I never saw one of two spans. Out of one of the largest of these horns I had a drinking-vessel* made, and a dice-box, and about three or four fingers' bulk of it might be left. Its hide is very thick: if it be shot at with a powerful bow, drawn up to the arm-pit with much force, and if the arrow pierces at all, it enters only three or four fingers' breadth. They say, however, that there are parts of his skin that may be pierced, and the arrows enter deep. On the sides of its two shoulder-blades and of its two thighs, are folds which hang loose, and appear at a distance like cloth hangings dangling over it. It bears more resemblance to the horse than to any other animal†. As the horse has a large stomach, so has this;—as the pastern of the horse is composed of a single bone, so also is that of the Rhinoceros;—as there is a gumeck‡ in the horse's fore-leg, so is there in that of the Rhinoceros. It is more ferocious than the elephant, and cannot be rendered so tame or obedient. There are numbers of them in the jungles of Pershawer and Hash-

naghar, as well as between the rivers Sind and Behreh, in the jungles. In Hindostan too they abound, on the banks of the river Sirwush. In the course of my expedition into Hindostan, in the jungles of Pershawer and Hashnaghar, I frequently killed the Rhinoceros. It strikes powerfully with its horn, with which, in the course of these hunts, many men and horses were gored."—J. H. C.

LOCAL DISTRIBUTION OF ANIMALS.

FROM a brief view of the local distribution of animals and their various haunts, we see the care of Divine Providence, that no place, however, at first sight, apparently unfit, might be without its animal as well as vegetable population: if the hard rock is clothed with its lichen, the lichen has its inhabitant: and that inhabitant, besides affording an appropriate food to the bird that alights upon the rock, or some parasite that has been hatched in or upon its own body, assists in forming a soil upon it. There is no place so horrible and fetid from unclean and putrid substances, that is not cleansed and purified by some animals that are either its constant or nomadic inhabitants. Thus life, a life attended in most cases, if not all, with some enjoyment, swarms everywhere,—in the air, in the earth, under the earth, in the waters,—there is no place, in which the will of an Almighty Creator is not executed by some being that hath animal life. What power is manifested in the organization and structure of these infinite hosts of existences! what wisdom in their adaptation to their several functions! and what goodness and stupendous love in that universal action upon all these dif-

* The Rhinoceros' horn was supposed to sweat on the approach of poison, a quality which fitted it, in a peculiar manner, for being made into a drinking cup for an eastern king.

† It has more the appearance of a huge overgrown hog.

‡ A marginal note on the Türki copy, translates *gumeck*, marrow.

§ The Goggra.
The Rhinoceros is now almost entirely expelled from the countries about the Indus.