AN HISTORY OF THE EARTH, AND ANIMATED NATURE.

BY

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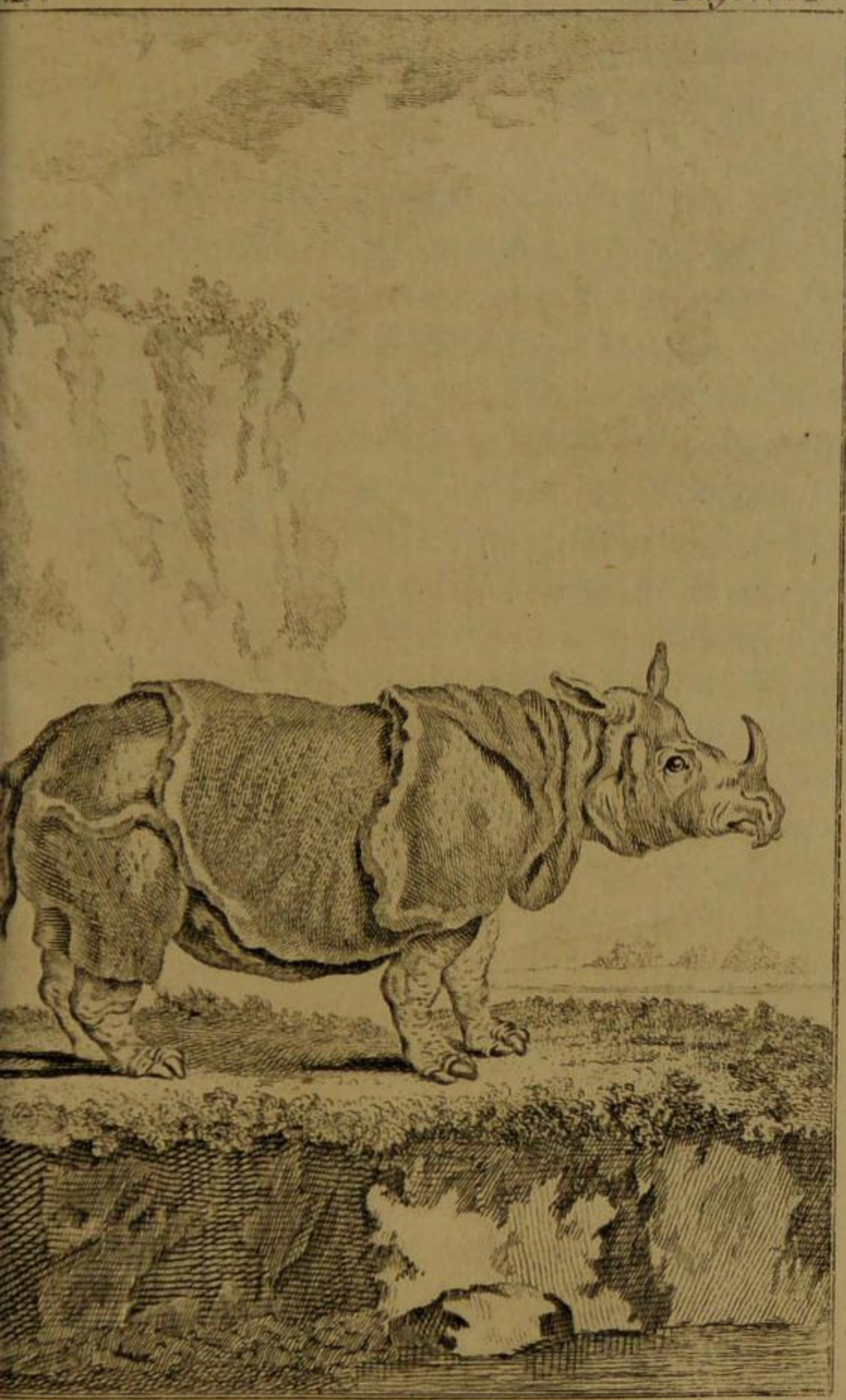

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The Rhinoceros.

CHAP. IX.

Of the Rhinoceros.

NEXT to the elephant, the Rhinoceros is the moſt powerful of animals. It is uſually found twelve feet long, from the tip of the noſe to the inſertion of the tail; from ſix to ſeven feet high; and the circumference of its body is nearly equal to its length. It is, therefore, equal to the elephant in bulk; and if it appears much ſmaller to the eye, the reaſon is, that its legs are much ſhorter. Words can convey but a very confuſed idea of this animal's ſhape; and yet there are few ſo remarkably formed: its head is furniſhed with an horn, growing from the ſnout, ſometimes three feet and an half long; and but for this, that part would have the appearance of the head of an hog; the upper lip, however, is much longer in proportion, ends in a point, is very pliable, ſerves to collect its food, and deliver it into the mouth: the ears are large, erect, and pointed; the eyes are ſmall and piercing; the ſkin is naked, rough, knotty, and lying upon the body in folds, after a very peculiar faſhion: there are two folds very remarkable; one above the ſhoulders, and another over the rump: the ſkin, which is of a dirty brown colour, is ſo thick

as to turn the edge of a ſcymitar, and to reſiſt a muſquet-ball: the belly hangs low; the legs are ſhort, ſtrong, and thick, and the hoofs divided into three parts, each pointing forward.

Such is the general outline of an animal that appears chiefly formidable from the horn growing from its ſnout; and formed rather for war, than with a propenſity to engage. This horn is ſometimes found from three to three feet and an half long, growing from the ſolid bone, and ſo diſpoſed, as to be managed to the greateſt advantage. It is compoſed of the moſt ſolid ſubſtance; and pointed ſo as to inflict the moſt fatal wounds. The elephant, the boar, or the buffalo, are obliged to ſtrike tranſverſely with their weapons; but the rhinoceros employs all his force with every blow; ſo that the tiger will more willingly attack any other animal of the foreſt, than one whoſe ſtrength is ſo juſtly employed. Indeed, there is no force which this terrible animal has to apprehend: defended, on every ſide, by a thick horny hide, which the claws of the lion or the tiger are unable to pierce, and armed before with a weapon that even the elephant does not chuſe to oppoſe. The miſſioners aſſure us, that the elephant is often found dead in the foreſts, pierced with the horn of a rhinoceros; and though it looks like wiſdom to doubt whatever they tell

us, yet I cannot help giving credit to what they relate on this occaſion, particularly when confirmed by Pliny. The combat between theſe two, the moſt formidable animals of the foreſt, muſt be very dreadful. Emanuel, king of Portugal, willing to try their ſtrength, actually oppoſed them to each other; and the elephant was defeated.

But though the rhinoceros is thus formidable by nature, yet imagination has not failed to exert itſelf, in adding to its terrors. The ſcent is ſaid to be moſt exquiſite; and it is affirmed, that it conſorts with the tiger. It is reported alſo, that when it has overturned a man, or any other animal, it continues to lick the fleſh quite from the bone with its tongue, which is ſaid to be extremely rough. All this, however, is fabulous: the ſcent, if we may judge from the expanſion of the olfactory nerves, is not greater than that of an hog, which we know to be indifferent; it keeps company with the tiger, only becauſe they both frequent watery places in the burning climates where they are bred; and as to its rough tongue, that is ſo far from the truth, that no animal of near its ſize has ſo ſoft a one. "I have often felt it myſelf," ſays Ladvocat, in his deſcription of this animal; "it is ſmooth, ſoft, and ſmall, like that of a dog; and to the feel it appears as if one paſſed the hand over velvet.

I have

I have often ſeen it lick a young man's face who kept it; and both ſeemed pleaſed with the action."

The rhinoceros which was ſhewn at London in 1739, and deſcribed by Doctor Parſons, had been ſent from Bengal. Though it was very young, not being above two years old, yet the charge of his carriage and food from India coſt near a thouſand pounds. It was fed with rice, ſugar, and hay: it was daily ſupplied with ſeven pounds of rice, mixed with three of ſugar, divided into three portions; it was given great quantities of hay and graſs, which it chiefly preferred; its drink was water, which it took in great quantities. It was of a gentle diſpoſition, and permitted itſelf to be touched and handled by all viſitors, never attempting miſchief, except when abuſed, or when hungry; in ſuch a caſe, there was no method of appeaſing its fury, but by giving it ſomething to eat. When angry, it would jump up againſt the walls of its room, with great violence; and made many efforts to eſcape, but ſeldom attempted to attack its keeper, and was always ſubmiſſive to his threats. It had a peculiar cry, ſomewhat a mixture between the grunting of an hog and the bellowing of a calf.

The age of theſe animals is not well known; it is ſaid by ſome, that they bring forth at three years old, and if we may reaſon from analogy,

it is probable they ſeldom live till above twenty. That which was ſhewn in London, was ſaid, by its keeper, to be eighteen years old, and even at that age he pretended to conſider it as a young one; however, it died ſhortly after, and that probably in the courſe of nature.

The rhinoceros is a native of the deſerts of Aſia and Africa, and is uſually found in thoſe extenſive foreſts, that are frequented by the elephant and the lion. As it ſubſiſts entirely upon vegetable food, it is peaceful and harmleſs among its fellows of the brute creation; but, though it never provokes to combat, it equally diſdains to fly. It is every way fitted for war, but reſts content in the conſciouſneſs of its ſecurity. It is particularly fond of the prickly branches of trees, and is ſeen to feed upon ſuch thorny ſhrubs as would be dangerous to other animals, either to gather, or to ſwallow. The prickly points of theſe, however, may only ſerve to give a poignant reliſh to this animal's palate, and may anſwer the ſame grateful ends in ſeaſoning its banquet, that ſpices do in heightening ours.

In ſome parts of the kingdom of Aſia, where the natives are more deſirous of appearing warlike than ſhewing themſelves brave, theſe animals are tamed, and led into the field to ſtrike terror into the enemy; but they are always an unmanageable and reſtive animal, and probably

more

more dangerous to the employers, than thoſe whom they are brought to oppoſe.

The method of taking them, is chiefly watching them, till they are found either in ſome moiſt or marſhy place, where, like hogs, they are fond of ſleeping and wallowing. They then deſtroy the old one with fire-arms, for no weapons, that are thrown by the force of man, are capable of entering this animal's hide. If, when the old one is deſtroyed, there happens to be a cub, they ſeize and tame it: theſe animals are ſometimes taken in pit-falls, covered with green branches, laid in thoſe paths which the rhinoceros makes in going from the foreſt to the river ſide.

There are ſome varieties in this animal, as in moſt others; ſome of them are found in Africa with a double horn, one growing above the other; this weapon, if conſidered in itſelf, is one of the ſtrongeſt, and moſt dangerous, that Nature furniſhes to any part of the animal creation. The horn is entirely ſolid, formed of the hardeſt bony ſubſtance, growing from the upper maxillary bone, by ſo ſtrong an apophyſe, as ſeemingly to make but one part with it. Many are the medicinal virtues that are aſcribed to this horn, when taken in powder, but theſe qualities have been attributed to it without any real foundation, and make only a

ſmall part of the many fables which this extraordinary animal has given riſe to.

CHAP. X.

Of the Hippopotamos.

THE Hippopotamos is an animal as large, and not leſs formidable, than the rhinoceros; its legs are ſhorter, and its head rather more bulky, than that of the animal laſt deſcribed. We have had but few opportunities in Europe of examining this formidable creature minutely, its dimenſions, however, have been pretty well aſcertained, by a deſcription, given us by Zerenghi, an Italian ſurgeon, who procured one of them to be killed on the banks of the river Nile. By his account it appears, that this terrible animal, which chiefly reſides in the waters of that river, is above ſeventeen feet long, from the extremity of the ſnout to the inſertion of the tail; above ſixteen feet in circumference round the body, and above ſeven feet high: the head is near four feet long, and above nine feet in circumference. The jaws open about two feet wide, and the cutting teeth, of which it hath four in each jaw, are above a foot long.

Its feet in ſome meaſure reſemble thoſe of the