

VI. *A Letter from James Parsons, M. D. F. R. S. to the Right Honourable the Earl of Morton, President of the Royal Society; on the the double Horns of the Rhinoceros.*

My Lord;

Read Feb. 27, 1766. **W**HEN I had the honor of laying my natural history of the Rhinoceros before this learned Society in 1743, which is printed in number 470, page 523, of the Transactions, I had not an opportunity of shewing a double horn to the members; I have, therefore, taken this first occasion to entertain the present members with a sight of a noble specimen of the horns of an African Rhinoceros, brought from the Cape of Good Hope, by my curious and worthy friend William Maguire esquire, among many other curiosities; presuming that few of the Society have ever seen a pair of the like kind. But what renders this subject the more particular, and worthy of observation, is that, by means of knowing there is a species of this animal, having always a double horn upon the nose, in Africa, Martial's reading is supported against the criticism of Bochart, who changed the true text of that poet, in an epigram upon the strength of this animal; for when Domitian ordered an exhibition of wild beasts, as it was the custom
of

of several emperors. The poet says: The Rhinoceros toss'd up a heavy bear with his double horn:

Namque gravem gemino cornu sic extulit ursum.

and as Bochart knew nothing of a double horn, he changed this line both in reading and sense, thus:

Namque gravi geminum cornu sic extulit eorum.

as if two wild bulls were tossed up into the air, by the strong horn of the Rhinoceros.

Mr. Maittaire adopted the notion of a single horn, but was of opinion that the *geminum eorum* of Bochart ought to have been plural, *geminos euros*, as being more elegant; and he was followed by Doctors Mead and Douglas, with this difference, that these changed the *euros* for *ursos*, as imagining they were rather bears than bulls, that were thrown up by this noble animal.

Our then worthy president Martin Folkes Esquire, had seen my account of this subject, at the end of which, I endeavoured, however presumptuously, to defend Martial's reading against Bochart and the other eminent persons mentioned; and desired I would let it be read and printed, which I very readily agreed to, as his request did me much honour.

Before my paper was printed, Mr. Maittaire and Doctor Douglas died; and the learned Doctor Mead was the surviving critic, upon this line, of the three. Upon this occasion, therefore, I have a double pleasure; first, in amusing the present gentlemen with a most curious specimen in natural history; and, secondly, in remembering, in this place, the nice candor and generosity of Doctor Mead upon that subject. For, about four months after the paper was printed, he received a present of several cu-

rious shells, seeds, &c. and with them the bones of the face of a young Rhinoceros, with two horns *in situ*, all intire, by a captain, of an African trader, who brought them from *Angola*.

As soon as he saw the horns, he sent to invite me to breakfast, and there, in company, ingenuously gave up his past opinion, and declared for Martial; and, indeed, I must add to the praise of that great man, that, as I was happy in being frequently at his house, I was witness to many such instances of the most disinterested candor and generosity, where any part of science was the topic, among his select friends.

This anecdote I thought proper to mention upon the present occasion; nor can too much be said to his honour, among all lovers of philosophical learning. I am,

Your Lordship's
most obedient Servant,

James Parsons.

P. S. The figure of the double horn of the Rhinoceros here described is seen in TAB. II. The dimensions are as follows; viz. The length of the anterior horn, measuring with a string along the convex fore part, is 20 inches; perpendicular height 18; circumference $21\frac{1}{2}$ at the base; the posterior horn is in perpendicular height $19\frac{3}{4}$; circumference round the base 18; length of both bases together upon the nasal bones 14; and the weight of both together is 14 pounds 10 ounces.

The Rhinoceros of the year 1739, described in the Transactions, was three years old; and the horn not three inches high; and hence by comparing that with this, one may imagine this to be many years old, perhaps above twenty; and that this animal lives to a great age.

It is also plain that the horns are perpetual as are those of oxen.

*The Double Horn of an
African Rhinoceros, brought
from the Cape of Good Hope,
by William M. Gurne Esq.*

