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# ECCENTRICITIES

OF

## THE ANIMAL CREATION.

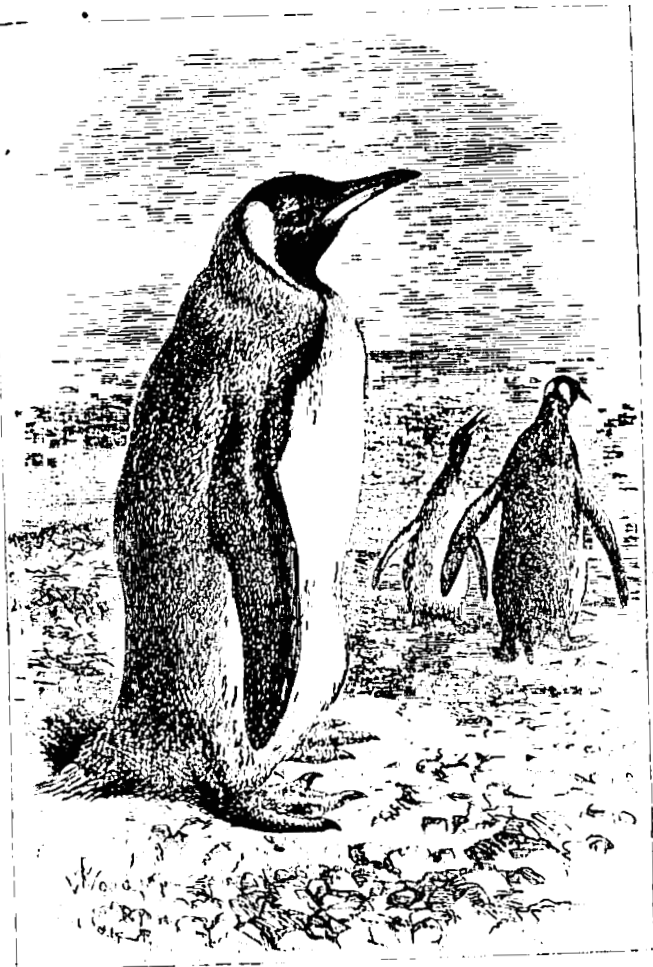
BY JOHN TIMBS,

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WITH EIGHT ENGRAVINGS.


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KING PENGUINS.

## THE RHINOCEROS IN ENGLAND.

HE intellectual helps to the study of zoology are nowhere more strikingly evident than in the finest collection of pachyderms (thick-skinned animals) in the world, now possessed by our Zoological Society. Here we have a pair of Indian Elephants, a pair of African Elephants, a pair of Hippopotami, a pair of Indian Rhinoceroses, and an African or two-horned Rhinoceros.

The specimens of the Rhinoceros which have been exhibited in Europe since the revival of literature have been few and far between. The first was of the one-horned species, sent from India to Emmanuel, King of Portugal, in the year 1513. The Sovereign made a present of it to the Pope; but the animal being seized during its passage with a fit of fury, occasioned the loss of the vessel in which it was transported. A second Rhinoceros was brought to England in 1685; a third was exhibited over almost the whole of Europe in 1739; and a fourth, a female, in 1741. A fifth specimen arrived at Versailles in

1771, and it died in 1793, at the age of about twenty-six years. The sixth was a very young Rhinoceros, which died in this country in the year 1800. The seventh, a young specimen, was in the possession of Mr. Cross, at Exeter Change, about 1814; and an eighth specimen was living about the same time in the Garden of Plants at Paris. In 1834 Mr. Cross received at the Surrey Gardens, from the Birman empire, a Rhinoceros, a year and a-half old, as already stated at page 21. In 1851 the Zoological Society purchased a full-grown female Rhinoceros; and in 1864 they received a male Rhinoceros from Calcutta. All these specimens were from India, and *one-horned*; so that the *two-horned* Rhinoceros had not been brought to England until the arrival of an African Rhinoceros, *two-horned*, in September, 1868.\*

The ancient history of the Rhinoceros is interesting, but intricate. It seems to be mentioned in several passages of the Scriptures, in most of which the animal or animals intended to be designated was or were the *Rhinoceros unicornis*, or Great Asiatic one-horned Rhinoceros. M. Lesson expresses a decided opinion to this effect: indeed, the description in Job (chap. xxxix.) would almost forbid the

\* The conveyance of a Rhinoceros over sea is a labour of some risk. In 1814 a full-grown specimen on his voyage from Calcutta to this country became so furious that he was fastened down to the ship's deck, with part of a chain-cable round his neck; and even then he succeeded in destroying a portion of the vessel, till, a heavy storm coming on, the Rhinoceros was thrown overboard to prevent the serious consequence of his getting loose in the ship.

conclusion that any animal was in the writer's mind except one of surpassing bulk and indomitable strength. The impotence of man is finely contrasted with the might of the Rhinoceros in this description, which would be overcharged if it applied to the less powerful animals alluded to in the previous passages.

It has also been doubted whether accounts of the Indian Wild Ass, given by Otesias, were not highly coloured and exaggerated descriptions of this genus; and whether the Indian Ass of Aristotle was not a Rhinoceros.

Agatharohides describes the one-horned Rhinoceros by name, and speaks of its ripping up the belly of the Elephant. This is, probably, the earliest occurrence of the name *Rhinoceros*. The Rhinoceros which figured in the celebrated pomps of Ptolemy Philadelphus was an Ethiopian, and seems to have marched last in the procession of wild animals, probably on account of its superior rarity, and immediately after the Cameleopard.

Dion Cassius speaks of the Rhinoceros killed in the circus with a Hippopotamus in the show given by Augustus to celebrate his victory over Cleopatra; he says that the Hippopotamus and this animal were then first seen and killed at Rome. The Rhinoceros then slain is thought to have been African, and two-horned.

The Rhinoceros clearly described by Strabo, as seen by him, was one-horned. That noticed by Pausanias as "the Bull of Ethiopia," was two-horned, and he describes the relative position of the horns.

Wood, in his "Zoography," gives an engraving of the coin of Domitian (small Roman brass), on the reverse of which is the distinct form of a two-horned Rhinoceros: its exhibition to the Roman people, probably of the very animal represented on the coin, is particularly described in one of the epigrams attributed to Martial, who lived in the reigns of Titus and Domitian. By the description of the epigram it appears that a combat between a Rhinoceros and a Bear was intended, but that it was very difficult to irritate the more unwieldy animal so as to make him display his usual ferocity; at length, however, he tossed the bear from his double horn, with as much facility as a bull tosses to the sky the bundles placed for the purpose of enraging him. Thus far the coin and the epigram perfectly agree as to the existence of the double horn; but, unfortunately, commentators and antiquaries were not to be convinced that a Rhinoceros could have more than one horn, and have at once displayed their sagacity and incredulity in their explanations on the subject.

Two, at least, of the two-horned Rhinoceroses were shown at Rome in the reign of Domitian. The Emperors Antoninus, Heliogabalus, and Gordian also exhibited Rhinoceroses. Cosmas speaks expressly of the Ethiopian Rhinoceros as having two horns, and of its power of moving them.

The tractability of the Asiatic Rhinoceros has been confirmed by observers in the native country of the animal. Bishop Heber saw at Lucknow five or six very large Rhinoceroses, of which he found that prints

and drawings had given him a very imperfect conception. They were more bulky animals, and of a darker colour than the Bishop supposed; though the latter difference might be occasioned by oiling the skin. The folds of their skin also surpassed all which the Bishop had expected. Those at Lucknow were quiet and gentle animals, except that one of them had a feud with horses. They had sometimes howdahs, or chaise-like seats, on their backs, and were once fastened in a carriage, but only as an experiment, which was not followed up. The Bishop, however, subsequently saw a Rhinoceros (the present of Lord Amherst to the Guicwar), which was so tamed as to be ridden by a Mohout quite as patiently as an elephant.

No two-horned Rhinoceros seems to have been brought alive to Europe in modern times. Indeed, up to a comparatively late period, their form was known only by the horns which were preserved in museums; nor did voyagers give any sufficient details to impart any clear idea of the form of the animal. The rude figure given by Aldrovandus, in 1639, leaves no doubt that, wretched as it is, it must have been taken from a two-horned Rhinoceros.

Dr. Parsons endeavoured to show that the one-horned Rhinoceros always belonged to Asia, and the two-horned Rhinoceros to Africa; but there are two-horned Rhinoceroses in Asia, as well as in Africa. Flacourt saw one in the Bay of Soldaque, near the Cape of Good Hope, at a distance. Kolbe and others always considered the Rhinoceros of the Cape as two-

horned; but Colonel Gordon seems to be the first who entirely detailed the species with any exactness. Sparrman described the Cape Rhinoceros, though his figure of the animal is stiff and ill-drawn. At this period it was well known that the Cape species was not only distinguished by having two horns from the Indian Rhinoceros then known, but also by an absence of the folds of the skin so remarkable in the latter.

We should here notice the carelessness, to call it by the mildest name, of Bruce, who gave to the world a representation of a two-horned Rhinoceros from Abyssinia, with a strongly folded skin. The truth appears to be that the body of the animal figured by Bruce was copied from that of the one-horned Rhinoceros given by Buffon, to which Bruce added a second horn. Salt proved that the Abyssinian Rhinoceros is two-horned, and that it resembles that of the Cape.

Sparmann exposes the errors and poetic fancies of Buffon respecting the impenetrable nature of the skin. He ordered one of his Hottentots to make a trial of this with his *hassagai* on a Rhinoceros which had been shot. Though this weapon was far from being in good order, and had no other sharpness than that which it had received from the forge, the Hottentot, at the distance of five or six paces, not only pierced with it the thick hide of the animal, but buried it half a foot deep in its body.

Mr. Tegetmeier has sufficiently described in the "Field" journal the African Rhinoceros just re-

ceived at the Zoological Society's menagerie in the Regent's-park, and which has been sketched by Mr. T. W. Wood expressly for the present volume.

It was captured about a year ago in Upper Nubia by the native hunters, in the employment of Mr. Casanova, at Kassala, and was sent, by way of Alexandria and Trieste, to Mr. Karl Hagenbeck, of Hamburg, a dealer in wild beasts, who sold it to the Zoological Society.

"This animal is very distinct from its Asiatic congeners; it differs strikingly in the number of horns, as well as in the character of its skin, which is destitute of those large folds, which cause the Indian species to remind the observer of a gigantic 'hog in armour'.

"The arrival of this animal will tend to clear up the confusion that prevails respecting the number of distinct species of African Rhinoceros. Some writers—as Sir W. C. Harris—admit the existence of two species only, the dark and the light, or, as they are termed, the 'white' and the 'black.' Others, as Dr. A. Smith, describe three; some, as the late Mr. Anderssen, write of four; and Mr. Chapman even speaks of a fifth species or hybrid.

"Three of these species are very distinctly defined—the ordinary dark animal, the *Rhinoceros bicornis*, in which the posterior horn is much shorter than the anterior; the *Rhinoceros keillou*, in which the two horns are of equal length; and the 'white' species, *Rhinoceros simus*. The last, among other characters, is, according to Dr. Smith,



THE TWO-HORNED AFRICAN RHINOCEROS.

distinguished by the square character of the upper lip, which is not prehensile.

"The young animal now (October, 1868) in the Zoological Society's garden, appears to belong to the first-named species, the largest specimens of which when full grown reach a height of 6ft., and a length of 13ft., the tail not included. Its present height is 3½ft., and length about 6ft. In general appearance the mature animal resembles a gigantic pig, the limbs being brought under the body. The feet are most singular in form, being very distinctly three-toed, and the remarkable trefoil-like *spoor*s that they make in the soil render the animal easy to track. The horns vary greatly in length in different animals; the first not unfrequently reaches a length of 2ft., the second being considerably shorter. These appendages differ very much from ordinary horns; they are, in fact, more of the nature of agglutinated hair, being attached to the skin only, and consequently they separate from the skull when the latter is preserved.

"The head is not remarkable for comeliness, especially in the mature animal, in which the skin of the face is deeply wrinkled, and the small eyes are surrounded with many folds. The upper lip is elongated, and is used in gathering the food. The adult animals are described by Sir W. C. Harris, in his 'Illustrations of the Game Animals of South Africa,' as 'swinish, cross-grained, ill-tempered, wallowing brutes.'"

Mr. Burchell, during his travels in Africa, shot

nine Rhinoceroses, besides a smaller one. The latter he presented to the British Museum. The animal is, however, becoming every day more and more scarce in Southern Africa; indeed, it is rarely to be met with in some parts. It appears that, in one day, two Rhinoceroses were shot by Speelman, the faithful Hottentot who attended Mr. Burchell. He fired off his gun but twice, and each time he killed a Rhinoceros! The animal's sense of hearing is very quick: should he be disturbed, he sometimes becomes furious, and pursues his enemy; and then, if once he gets sight of the hunter, it is scarcely possible for him to escape, unless he possesses extraordinary coolness and presence of mind. Yet, if he will quietly wait till the enraged animal makes a run at him, and will then spring suddenly on one side, to let it pass, he may gain time enough for reloading his gun before the Rhinoceros gets sight of him again, which, fortunately, owing to its imperfection of sight, it does slowly and with difficulty.

Speelman, in shooting a large male Rhinoceros, used bullets cast with an admixture of tin, to render them harder. They were flattened and beat out of shape by striking against the bones, but those which were found lodged in the fleshy parts had preserved their proper form, a fact which shows how little the hardness of the creature's hide corresponds with the vulgar opinion of its being impenetrable to a musket-ball. Mr. Burchell found this Rhinoceros nearly cut up. On each side of the carcass the Hottentots had made a fire to warm themselves; and round a


third fire were assembled at least twenty-four Bushmen, most of whom were employed the whole night long in broiling, eating, and talking. Their appetite seemed insatiable, for no sooner had they broiled and eaten one slice of meat than they turned to the carcass and cut another. The meat was excellent, and had much the taste of beef. "The tongue," says Mr. Burchell, "is a dainty treat, even for an epicure." The hide is cut into strips, three feet or more in length, rounded to the thickness of a man's finger, and tapering to the top. This is called a *shambok*, and is universally used in the colony of the Cape for a horsewhip, and is much more durable than the whips of European manufacture. The natural food of the Rhinoceros, till the animal fled before the colonists, was a pale, bushy shrub, called the Rhinoceros-bush, which burns while green as freely as the driest fuel, so as readily to make a roadside fire.

The horn of the Rhinoceros, single or double, has its special history by the way of popular tradition. From the earliest times this horn has been supposed to possess preservative virtues and mysterious properties—to be capable of curing diseases and discovering the presence of poison; and in all countries where the Rhinoceros exists, but especially in the East, such is still the opinion respecting it. In the details of the first voyage of the English to India, in 1591, we find Rhinoceros' horns monopolised by the native sovereigns on account of their reputed virtues in detecting the presence of poison.

Thunberg observes, in his "Journey into Caffraria," that "the horns of the Rhinoceros were kept by some people, both in town and country, not only as rarities, but also as useful in diseases, and for the purpose of detecting poisons. As to the former of these intentions, the fine shavings were supposed to cure convulsions and spasms in children. With respect to the latter, it was generally believed that goblets made of these horns would discover a poisonous draught that was poured into them, by making the liquor ferment till it ran quite out of the goblet. Of these horns goblets are made, which are set in gold and silver and presented to kings, persons of distinction, and particular friends, or else sold at a high price, sometimes at the rate of fifty rix-dollars each." Thunberg adds:—"When I tried these horns, both wrought and unwrought, both old and young horns, with several sorts of poison, weak as well as strong, I observed not the least motion or effervescence; but when a solution of corrosive sublimate or other similar substance was poured into one of these horns, there arose only a few bubbles, produced by the air which had been enclosed in the pores of the horn and which were now disengaged."

Rankin (in his "Wars and Sports") states this mode of using it: a small quantity of water is put into the concave part of the root, then hold it with the point downwards and stir the water with the point of an iron nail till it is discoloured, when the patient is to drink it.

#### STORIES OF MERMAIDS.

ESS than half a century ago, a pretended Mermaid was one of the sights of a London season; to see which credulous persons rushed to pay half-crowns and shillings with a readiness which seemed to rebuke the record—that the existence of a Mermaid is an exploded fallacy of two centuries since.

Mermaids have had a legendary existence from very early ages, for the Sirens of the ancients evidently belonged to the same remarkable family. Shakspeare uses the term Mermaid as synonymous with Siren:—

"O train me not, sweet Mermaid, with thy note,  
To drown me in thy sister's flood of tears;  
Sing, Syren, for thyself."—*Comedy of Errors*, iii. 2.

Elsewhere, Shakspeare's use of the term is more applicable to the Siren than to the common idea of a Mermaid; as in the "Midsummer Night's Dream," where the "Mermaid on a dolphin's back" could not easily have been so placed. A Merman, the