

CURIOSITIES  
OF  
NATURAL HISTORY,

BY  
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1821-1880

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ASSISTANT SURGEON SECOND LIFE GUARDS; LATE HOUSE SURGEON OF  
ST. GEORGE'S HOSPITAL.

*from the Fourth London Edition.*



NEW YORK:  
RUDD & CARLETON, 130 GRAND STREET,  
(BROOKS BUILDING, COR. OF BROADWAY.)

MDCCCLIX.

feat. There was poor piggy, the blood flowing in streamlets from several small punctures in that part of his body destined, at no very distant period, to become ham, in vain attempting, by dismal cries and by energetic waggings of his curly tail, to appease the pain of the charge of small shot which had so unceremoniously awaked him from his porcine dreams of oatmeal and boiled potatoes. But where was the rat? he had disappeared, unhurt; the buttocks of the unfortunate pig, the rightful owner of the premises, had received the charge of shot intended to destroy the daring intruder.

To appease piggy's wrath, I gave him a bucket-full of food from the hog-tub: and, while he was thus consoling his inward self, wiped off the blood from the wounded parts, and said nothing about it to anybody: no doubt, before this time, some frugal housewife has been puzzled and astonished at the unwonted appearance of a charge of small shot in the centre of the breakfast ham, which she procured from Squire Morland, of Sheepstead, Berks.

The frequenters of the Zoological Gardens in Regent's Park, may, if the room be quite quiet, and the sun warm, observe numerous rats in the den of the rhinoceros. I have frequently watched them playing about, and running backwards and forwards over his thick armor-like hide, as he lies

basking in the pleasant sunshine. He evidently thinks them quite beneath his notice, for he makes no efforts to drive them away, beyond occasionally flapping his great ear when they tickle him in any tender part. They come to the rhinoceros' house for the same purpose that they go to the pig-sty, viz., to get what they can from the leavings of their superiors. The keeper informs me that he not unfrequently finds dead rats crushed quite flat in the straw under the place where the rhinoceros has been sleeping. The poor rat has but a small chance of escape when the huge carcase of the great beast comes plump down upon him, and settles itself there for a good long sleep. Rats, too, are also found killed in the same manner in the straw bed of the elephant. These rats probably come out of the straw thatch which covers the building where the rhinoceros and elephant live; they are common also in the deer-house, where they come for the oats, of which they are particularly fond. If any person wishes to keep rats alive a long time in a cage, let him give them plenty of oats and plenty of water, for the absence of water will kill them in a very few hours. A fine full-grown rat was brought to me; it appeared in perfect health and vigor, and when I went near it, it ran about the cage uttering its peculiar cry of alarm, and fixing itself in an attitude of defence up in one corner of