

NATURAL HISTORY
OF
QUADRUPEDS.

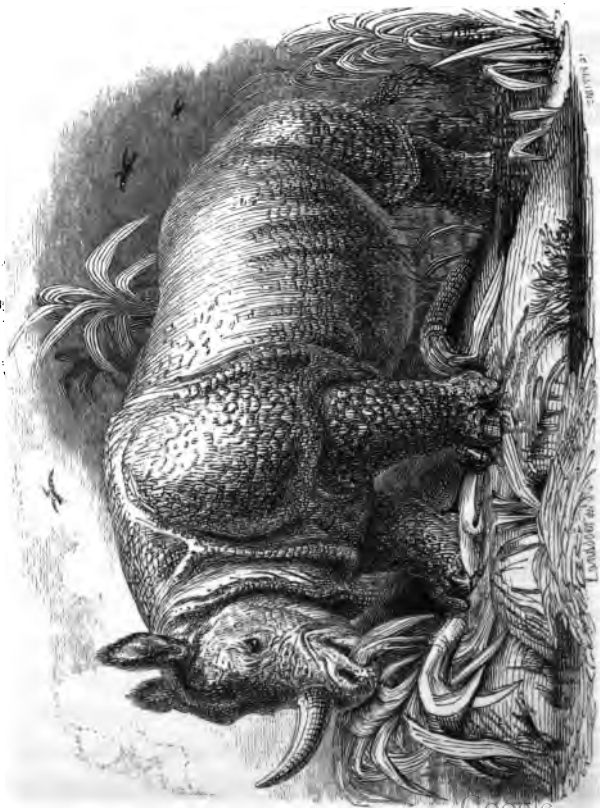
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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
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THE SUBJECTS ON STEEL ETCHED BY HIMSELF.

PART I.

LONDON:
JOHN HARRIS, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.
1834.



RHINOCEROS.

sport, however, is not without its danger, particularly to the horse, which frequently has his legs cut and his bowels torn open by the tusks of this animal, which is a formidable opponent."

Africa also produces a fierce race of the wild hog, which is distinguished by a pair of large lobes, or wattles, beneath the eyes. The tusks of the upper jaw bend upwards in a semicircular form towards the forehead. When attacked by a man on horseback, it will rush upon the horse with great force and swiftness, breaking his legs, and often destroying both him and his rider.

THE RHINOCEROS.

SOME naturalists enumerate five species of the rhinoceros, while others, founding their divisions on the number of horns, reckon but

two, the one-horned and the two-horned rhinoceros.

The single-horned rhinoceros is the largest of terrestrial animals, excepting the elephant, and is surpassed in strength and power by none. He is generally about twelve feet long from the snout to the insertion of the tail, and the circumference of the body is nearly equal to the length. None of the quadrupeds, perhaps, with the exception of the hippopotamus, has so unwieldy and uncouth an appearance as the rhinoceros. The general outline of the trunk is very like that of the hog genus. The head is large and long; the ears pretty large, upright, and pointed; the eyes very small and set far back, and from the nose rises a horn, slightly curved, sharp-pointed, and very strong, which is sometimes three feet in length, and eighteen inches round at the base. The upper lip hangs over the lower, in the form of a lengthened lip, which appears to an-

swer the purpose of a small proboscis, and, being extremely pliable, is used by the animal for laying hold of the shoots of trees and vegetables, and pulling them to the mouth. The naked skin of the trunk falls into several deep folds or plaits: there is one of these about the neck, another passes over the shoulders to the fore-legs, bearing a sort of resemblance to a shield, and a third from the hind part of the back to the thighs. The belly is pendulous like that of a hog. The legs are very short, strong, and thick, and each furnished with three massive toes. The tail is slender, flattened at the end, and covered on the sides with stiff, thick, black hairs.

This animal is a native of the same countries as the elephant. He frequents shady woods, and cool sequestered spots near water, where he delights to roll in the mud, living entirely on vegetables. A formidable and often successful antagonist of the elephant,

whom he gores with his powerful horn, either in the flank or the belly, and by nature protected by the thickness of his hide from the claws even of the lion, the rhinoceros is not slow to turn upon his hunters; but he rarely attacks other animals when unmolested. When excited, he employs his natural powers and astonishing strength wildly, but awkwardly. Mr. Burchell indeed tells us, that the African hunters who have the courage to await his furious charge with vigilance and coolness, may contrive to slip aside and even to reload their guns before the exasperated animal can regain his view of them—an object which he accomplishes slowly and with difficulty.

The temper of the rhinoceros, like that of the hog, which he resembles in many points of his structure and appetite, is vicious and uncertain. His courage seems to be the exertion of the lowest degree of brute instinct. Like the hog, too, he possesses an exquisitely keen

scent, and his pursuers must approach him against the wind to get even within musket-shot. He ravenously devours all sorts of sweet fruits and sugar-canes that he can get at; and to the husbandman his motions are as destructive as his appetite. After bathing in the day-time in the rivers, or wallowing in the mud upon their banks, he destroys at night by his monstrous bulk and with his clumsy feet all the products of cultivation through which his passage lies.

The hide of the rhinoceros is said to be so hard as to turn the sharpest sword, and to be impenetrable even by musket-balls, excepting under the belly. For this reason the hunters are obliged to follow the animal at a distance, and to watch it until it lies down to sleep, before they can gain an opportunity of wounding it in the vulnerable part. The flesh is eaten by the natives of the countries which the rhinoceros inhabits; the skin is employed

for making shields; and in some provinces of India almost every part of the animal is used medicinally. The horn is appropriated to many purposes, especially to making drinking-cups for the Indian princes, from a superstitious notion that if any poisonous liquor is poured into them, it will effervesce and boil over.

The rhinoceros has been sometimes domesticated and brought into the field of battle by the Asiatics; but he is so unmanageable that his presence is a disadvantage rather than a benefit, for when wounded he is as likely to turn on his masters as on the enemy.

In 1743 Dr. Parsons published a detailed account of one of these animals that was brought from Bengal to England. Though he was only two years old the expense of his food and voyage amounted to nearly one thousand pounds sterling. He was gentle in disposition, and would suffer any part of his

body to be touched without shewing displeasure ; but when hungry, or struck, he became fierce and mischievous, and an immediate supply of food was the only method of pacifying him.

Another rhinoceros brought to England in 1790 was purchased for the menagerie, Exeter Change. The docility of this animal was equal to that of a tolerably tractable pig. He would obey his master's orders, walk about his room to exhibit himself, and allow his visitors to pat him. His voice bore some resemblance to the bleating of a calf, and was commonly excited when he perceived persons with fruit or any other favourite food in their hands. His usual food consisted of clover, ship-biscuit, and a prodigious quantity of greens, with ten to fifteen pailfuls of water a day ; and he was extremely fond of sweet wines. In October 1792 this animal, when rising suddenly, dislocated one of his fore-legs, and this acci-

dent produced an inflammation, which caused his death, about nine months afterwards, in a caravan near Portsmouth.

The two-horned rhinoceros, in size and in many of its general habits, closely resembles the species already described; but it differs considerably in external appearance. The skin, instead of the regular armour-like folds which mark the other, has only a slight wrinkle on the shoulders and on the hind parts, so as to appear almost smooth, though the surface, especially in the larger individuals, is rough and tuberculated. Its chief distinction, however, consists in the two horns, one smaller than the other, and placed higher up on the front. Sparrman has observed that these horns are not attached to the skull-bone, but fixed to the nose by a strong apparatus of muscles and tendons, so that the animal can fix or relax them at pleasure: thus they are said to be loose when the animal is quiet, but

to become fixed and immoveable when he is enraged.

This species is found in various parts of Africa, and Bruce has given us an account of it which is highly interesting. He says that besides the trees capable of most resistance there are in the vast forests within the rains trees of a softer consistence, and of a very succulent quality, which seem to be destined for his principal food. For the purpose of reaching the higher branches, his upper lip is capable of being lengthened out so as to increase his power of laying hold with it in the same manner as the elephant does with his trunk. With this lip and the assistance of his tongue, he pulls down the upper branches, which have most leaves, and devours them first. After he has stripped the tree of its branches, he does not abandon it, but, placing his snout as low on the trunk as he finds his horns 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 takes up as much of it as he can in his monstrous jaws, and twists it round with as much ease as an ox would do a root of celery.

When pursued and in fear he displays an astonishing degree of swiftness, considering the unwieldiness of his body, his great weight before, and the shortness of his legs: but it is not true that in a plain he can outstrip the horse; for though a horse can seldom come up with him, this is owing to his cunning, and not to his speed. He makes constantly from wood to wood, and forces himself into the thickest part of them. The trees that are dead or dry are broken down, as with a cannon-shot, and fall around him in all directions. Others that are more pliable, greener, and full of sap, are bent back by his weight; and after he has passed, recovering their natural position, they often sweep the incautious pur-

suer and his horse to the ground, or dash them furiously against the surrounding trees.

The eyes of the rhinoceros are very small ; he seldom turns his head, and therefore sees nothing but what is before him. To this he owes his death ; for, if the horse of the hunter can but get before him, his pride and fury seem to inspire him with the determination to escape only by victory over his enemy. He stands for a moment at bay, and then starts forward at the horse like a wild boar, which in his action he very much resembles. The horse easily avoids him by turning aside. This is the critical moment. A man armed with a sword drops from behind the principal horseman, and, unseen by the rhinoceros, who is looking round for the horse, he gives him a cut across the tendon of the heel, which renders him incapable of further flight or resistance.

The great consumption of food and water

made by the rhinoceros, necessarily confines him to such countries where both abound: but it is not for drink alone that he frequents wet and marshy places, but for a defence against the weakest of all his foes. This is a fly, to prevent the incessant persecution of which he resorts to this stratagem. At night, when the fly is at rest, the rhinoceros, rolling in the mud, clothes himself with a kind of case, which protects him from his winged enemy for the following day. The wrinkles and folds of his skin serve to keep this plaster of mud firm upon him, excepting about the hips, legs, and shoulders, where by motion it cracks and falls off, leaving those parts exposed to the attacks of the fly. The consequent itching and pain impel him to rub himself against the roughest trees, and this is supposed to be one cause of the numerous pustules or tubercles with which he is covered. He seems to derive great pleasure from rubbing himself, and dur-

ing this action he groans and grunts so loud as to be heard at a considerable distance. The hunters, guided by the noise, steal secretly upon him while lying on the ground, and wound him with their javelins, mostly in the belly, which is the most vulnerable part. The skin of this species is by no means so hard and impenetrable as it has been represented. He is easily killed by javelins, which enter many feet into his body, or by arrows; and a musket-ball will go through him, if not obstructed by a bone.

The following account of a rhinoceros hunt, by Mr. Bruce, shows the amazing strength of the animal, even after being severely wounded. "We were on horseback by the dawn of day, in search of the rhinoceros, many of which we had heard making a very deep groan and cry as the morning approached. Several of the agageers (hunters) then joined us; and, after we had searched about an hour in the very

thickest part of the wood, one of them rushed out with great violence, crossing the plain towards a wood of canes two miles distant. But though he ran, or rather trotted, with surprising speed, considering his bulk, he was in a very little time transfixed with thirty or forty javelins, which so confounded him, that he left his purpose of going to the wood, and ran into a deep hole or ravine without outlet, breaking above a dozen javelins as he entered. Here we thought that he was caught as in a trap, for he had scarcely room to turn ; when a servant who had a gun, standing directly over him, fired at his head, and the animal immediately fell, to all appearance dead. All those on foot now jumped in with their knives to cut him up ; but the moment they began, the animal recovered so far as to rise upon his knees. Happy then was the man that escaped first ; and had not one of the agageers in the ravine cut the sinews of the hind leg as he

was retreating, there would have been a very sorrowful account of the foot hunters that day. After having dispatched him, I was curious to see what wound the shot had given to operate so violently on so huge an animal, and I doubted not it was in the brain; but it had struck him nowhere but in one of the horns, of which it had carried off about an inch, and thus occasioned a concussion, which had stunned him for a minute, till the bleeding had recovered him."

THE HIPPOPOTAMUS.

OF all the animals classed under the order of Pachydermata, or thick-skinned, the hippopotamus is the most clumsy and unwieldy, and perhaps of all the quadrupeds, strictly speaking, he has the largest mouth. His enormous and unshapely head is thick and