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CURIOUS FACTS IN THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE RHINOCEROS.

ILLUSTRATED BY A SPLENDID ENGRAVING ON STEEL.

THIS animal was well known to the ancients. Several of the sacred writers make frequent allusions to the *Reem*, or unicorn, as an animal familiarly known to the people to whom their writings were directly addressed. They have not, indeed, condescended to a minute description; but the terms in which they have mentioned it sufficiently indicate the species. Pliny mentions the rhinoceros as an animal that appeared in the Roman circus, in games exhibited by Pompey. He was opposed to the elephant, and showed himself no unequal antagonist. In addition to this information, the Roman natural historian fables, that the elephant and the rhinoceros are natural enemies, and that the latter carefully whets his horn upon stones, to tear up the belly of the former. Though not described by Aristotle, the rhinoceros is mentioned by the historians of Alexander, as one of the strange animals discovered by his army in their progress into India. But from the time when they ceased to be exhibited on the Roman amphitheatres, till within the sixteenth century, no animals of this species appeared in Europe. It was forgotten that any had ever appeared. Those who were acquainted with what the ancients relate concerning the rhinoceros, concluded, or at least suspected, either that no such species of animals had ever existed, or, that although they might once have existed, they were now extinct. In the sixteenth century, the existence of the species was fully ascertained. A number of individuals have since been, at different times, introduced into Europe, and the enterprise of our indefatigable countrymen, Macomber, Welch and Co., have at length rendered its appearance and its habits in captivity, as familiar to us as those of any other denizen of the forest.

To look at it in the menagerie, one would suppose it to be stupid and unwieldy, and nearly as manageable as the domestic hog. But there is as much difference between the rhinoceros in the menagerie and the rhinoceros in its native wilds, as there is between the well-fed porker and the wild boar. But, in captivity, the rhinoceros cannot exhibit any of the peculiarities which render it so remarkable in its natural state. It is true, we can test the delicacy of its only distinct organ of touch, the upper lip, which is flexible, advancing over the lower, and capable of great extension. We can also observe its favorite articles of food, and make out that it is naturally sluggish, and not ferocious, though very untractable, and liable to paroxysms of rage. We can also demonstrate the absurdity of the fables propagated by Buffon and other naturalists, respecting the utter insensibility and impenetrability of all parts of its skin. We infer, from the shortness of its legs, the depression in its back, and the pendulous position of its belly, that it must be slow in its motions, and by no means formidable to the other beasts when roused to anger.

A view of the rhinoceros in its native wilds would lead us to very different conclusions. Here

we should find it active, keen of scent, and alive to the slightest sound, perceiving the approach of an enemy at a great distance, and when apprized of the vicinity of man by his approach in a windward direction, instantly anticipating his attack, and rushing towards him with a force which nothing can resist. We should learn that the tiger, who will readily attack an elephant and seize it by the trunk, dares not face a rhinoceros, for fear of having its bowels torn out with that formidable horn, which is solid, and sometimes measures three feet in length and eighteen inches in circumference at the base. The same mode of attack and defence renders the rhinoceros a not less formidable antagonist to the elephant, who cannot prevent it from running directly under, piercing its body with the horn. The discharge of blood and other fluids from the wound in this case, however, is said to give considerable annoyance to the rhinoceros by blinding it, for the moment, the animal's eyes being placed very unfortunately for such an encounter. Its vision, at the best, is but imperfect; a circumstance which is compensated by extraordinary acuteness of hearing and smell. Its food in its native countries, India, Abyssinia, Æthiopia, and various districts of India, is wholly vegetable. It is particularly fond of the *stæbe rhinocerotis*, the fetid stapelia, rice, the sugar cane, and a great many rough and spinous plants. The consumption and havoc which it occasions in cultivated fields are prodigious, and at the same time unredeemed by its services or the value of its carcass, which is very trifling.

In looking over Lieutenant White's Voyage to the China Sea, we find a notice of the rhinoceros, among the other animals of Cochin China, in which there are some curious particulars, with which we shall conclude the present article.

He is speaking of the elephant, the tiger, and the rhinoceros, and proceeds as follows:

"These animals are all hunted by the natives: the elephant for his teeth; the tiger for his skin; and the rhinoceros for his horn. Ivory and rhinoceros' horns are a regal monopoly. Some of these articles were offered us privately, which, to prevent trouble, we refused. The horn of the rhinoceros is formed much like a limpet shell, but more pointed; at its base it is generally about six inches long, by four inches wide, and protrudes about six or eight inches. There is a shallow concavity occupying the whole base, resembling the limpet also in that respect. To judge of the goodness of a rhinoceros' horn, this concave part is held to the ear, and the greater the noise—resembling that of the waves on the sea beach—the better the horn. This criterion certainly appears fallacious, if not ridiculous; but the Chinese, who are accustomed to purchase these articles, are always determined by this test. The Onamese speak with great energy of the irresistible strength and amazing velocity of the rhinoceros. They say he moves so rapidly that it is difficult for the eye to keep pace with him; that no object in his way is any impediment to his rapid career; that he beats down rocks, walls, and large trees with great ease, and his track can be easily traced by the ruins in his rear. Speaking of this animal one day to the viceroy, he observed, 'You now see him here, before you, in Saigon,' and, snapping his fingers, 'now he is in Canjeo.' However hyperbolic these accounts appear to be, we may yet infer from them that the rhinoceros is an animal of astonishing strength and spirit."

THE DELUGE.

SUGGESTED BY SEEING MARTIN'S CELEBRATED PICTURE ON THAT SUBJECT.

BY MISS HELEN MATTHEWS, ELEVEN YEARS OF AGE.

THE torrent in its mighty rush
Swept groves and vales away;
Clouds scared the morning's dimpled blush,
Scarce opened into day.
The wretched mortals vainly fled
To towering rocks on high;
And parents saw their children dead,
And heaved not e'en a sigh!
The husband, with his dying breath,
Did the great God blaspheme!
His wife, in agonies of death,
Cried, "hush that dreadful theme."
In vain—the forked lightnings fly,
Strike the blasphemer down;
An awful voice, heard from on high,
Cries, 'tis th' Almighty's frown!

One tear of penitence to heaven
Is dear as a pure gem;
But few, alas! to God are given,
They form his diadem!
Nor none that dreadful day had flowed,
To wash away their crime;
No, no! their hearts with anger glowed,
They thought but of *that* time.
All perished in one boundless sea;
The small bird fled to seek
A resting place, where land might be,
And heard but one wild shriek!
An ocean 'twas of floating souls,
In one dark dreadful tomb,
Borne from their friends, who watch'd its rolls,
And shared their frightful doom!

New York, 1838.