



THE RHINOCEROS

IS, next to the elephant, the largest terrestrial animal now known. Its body, many naturalists have supposed, is equal to that of the elephant in bulk, but its legs being shorter, it is not so tall as that noble animal.

The length of the rhinoceros from the muzzle to the insertion of the tail, is usually about twelve feet, and the circumference of its body nearly equal to its length. Its belly is large, and hangs near the ground; its legs short, round, and very strong; its hoofs are divided into three parts, each pointing forward. The head of this animal is large; its ears long and erect; and its eyes small, sunk, and without vivacity: The upper lip is long, and overhangs the lower, and is capable of great extension; it is so pliable that the rhinoceros can move it from side to side, twist it round like a stick, collect its food, or seize with it any thing it would carry to its mouth.

But the peculiar feature which distinguishes this animal from all others, is its horn. This formidable weapon is placed upon its nose; it consists of a substance of the nature of horn; it is pliant and flexible when split into small pieces; it is of a dusky greyish colour, and semitransparent; its fibres are coarser than those of horn, rather resembling whalebone in this respect. This horn has no core, like those of cattle, sheep, and many other animals, but is solid throughout its whole length. With this powerful weapon it defends itself from every adversary. The tiger will rather attack the elephant, whose trunk it can lay hold of, than the rhinoceros, which it cannot face without danger of having its bowels torn out.

The body and limbs of the rhinoceros, are covered with a skin so hard and impenetrable, that he fears neither the claw of the tiger, nor the more formidable proboscis of the elephant; it will turn the edge of a scimitar, and even resist the force of a musket ball. The skin, which is of a blackish colour, forms itself into large folds at the neck, the shoulders and the crupper, by which the motion of the head and limbs is facilitated. Round the neck, which is very short, are two large folds; there is also a fold from the shoulders, which hangs down upon the fore legs, and another from the hind part of the back to the thighs. The body is every where covered with tuberosities or knots, which are small on the neck and back, but larger on the sides. The thighs, legs, and even

the feet, are full of these incrustations, which have been mistaken for scales by some authors; they are, however, only simple indurations of the skin, without any uniformity in their figure, or regularity in their position. Between the folds the skin is penetrable and delicate, and soft to the touch as silk, and of a light flesh colour; the skin of the belly is of the same consistency.

The rhinoceros prefers thistles and shrubs, to soft or delicate pasturage. It is fond of the sugar cane, and eats all kinds of grain. It is a solitary animal, loves moist and marshy places, and it wallows in the mire like a hog, and seldom quits the banks of rivers. It is found in Bengal, Siam, China, and other countries of Asia; on the isles of Java, Sumatra, Ceylon, &c.; in Ethiopia, and the country as low as the Cape of Good Hope; but in general the species is not numerous, and is much less diffused than the elephant.

The female produces but one at a time, and at considerable intervals. During the first month, the young rhinoceros does not exceed the size of a large dog; at the age of two years, the horn is not more than an inch long; at six years it is nine or ten inches long; and grows to the length of three feet and a half, sometimes four feet. The horn is much esteemed by the natives as an antidote against poisons, and was formerly an article of value in the *materia medica*; but it is now fallen into disuse.

The rhinoceros is not in general ferocious, nor even extremely wild, yet it is totally untractable.

and seems to be subjected to certain paroxysms of fury which nothing can appease. Emmanuel king of Portugal sent one of them to the Pope, *anno* 1513 which, being seized with one of these paroxysms at sea, destroyed the vessel in which they were transporting it.

This animal has an acute and very attentive ear. It will listen with a deep and long continued attention to any kind of noise, and though it be eating, lying down, or obeying any pressing demands of nature, it will raise its head, and listen till the noise ceases.

His sense of smelling is so exquisite that the hunters are obliged to avoid being to windward of him. They generally follow him at a distance, and watch till he lies down to sleep; they then approach with great precaution, and discharge their muskets all at once into the lower part of the belly.

From the particular conformation of his eyes, the rhinoceros can only see what is immediately before him. When he pursues any object, he proceeds directly towards it, overturning every obstruction. From these peculiarities of his conformation and habits, the hunters sometimes are enabled to run him down by fatigue. One man on horseback presents himself and provokes the rhinoceros to follow him. He directs his course towards the place where another man is stationed to relieve him; when they come together the first man steps to a side behind the first cover he can find, and thus escapes the sight of the rhinoceros, and takes

his stand in a convenient place to shoot at him as he passes. If he misses his aim, the second man follows the same course when he comes up to the third, and so on, till they either kill him, or tire him so much as to render him unable to pursue them longer, when they watch the opportunity of dispatching him while at rest. His flesh is eaten, and much relished by the natives of India and Africa.

The rhinoceros with one horn is the most common; but there is another species of this class of animals which has two horns, as is well known from specimens of these that are to be found in European cabinets; but the precise nature of the animal itself which produces this double horn is not yet sufficiently ascertained. Two naturalists have of late described this animal. Mr Sparman the Swedish naturalist and Mr Bruce, but their descriptions are so exceedingly dissimilar, as to leave the reader in doubt which of them should most be credited. The Swedish naturalist represents the two horned rhinoceros as being a very different animal from that already described. Its skin is smooth, having none of those plaits or folds, that so peculiarly characterise the common rhinoceros; whereas, Mr Bruce represents it as having these folds, and being precisely the same with that which has been delineated by Buffon and other naturalists, unless in what respects the horn only. They both however, agree, in saying that the second horn is placed on the nose exactly behind the first, being

shorter and blunter than it is. They also agree in admitting that the animal has a power of moving those horns, in such a way as to admit of its using the shortest horn only, for digging or tearing up objects it wishes to overturn; a circumstance that does not seem to be easily comprehended. In time the facts respecting this animal will be more fully explained.

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

HISTORY OF PORTUGAL.

[Continued from p. 22.]

J. C.

The following LETTER is from another Portuguese Gentleman on the same Subject.

MAY 18. 1784.

I HAVE the honour of receiving your letter of the 4th instant; and if I have not sooner written to you, it was only because I wished to think deliberately, on the letter of Mr _____ before I communicated my ideas on that subject. I now communicate them to you.

In the first place, all the world knows, that in order to write the history of any nation, it is necessary to be fully acquainted with its language, to be able to read with ease the authors, and original manuscripts, and memoirs that tend to illustrate the subject. The Portuguese language has experienced the same changes as almost all others; so that the writings of the time of John I. are different from those of the days of Emmanuel;