

The NATURAL HISTORY of the RHINOCEROS.

NEXT to the elephant, the rhinoceros is accounted the largest quadruped. It is usually of the size of a small or middling elephant, and has a rough, hard, wrinkled skin, very thick, and almost proof against any weapon; resembling, in colour and appearance, the bark of an old elm. Some part of it is spotted with black and grey, and in many places it folds over in deep furrows, which appear like scales. From its nose proceeds a pyramidal horn, (from whence it takes its name) growing upwards, and ascending in a curve. It is perfectly solid, and without cavity, and in colour is of a lighter or darker brown, or even black, according to his age. So is the length and weight of it. When full grown, it measures between three and four feet from the root, and weighs near five hundred pounds. This horn or snout seems formed to turn up the earth, in order to its feeding on the roots of plants, as well as for its defence; for it can be turned upwards, downwards, or sideways: yet it is of so firm and hard a substance, that the point will pierce into any thing like a sword; and the rhinoceros is said to sharpen it against a flint, or other hard stone, that he may be prepared whenever he is attacked by an enemy. The eyes are small, and placed pretty forward. The ears large, and not unlike to those of an ass. They stand erect on the upper part of the head. The back is not prominent, like an elephant's, but hollow, and seems as if adorned with a natural saddle. The sides are swelled out on each side, and the belly sinks down pretty much. The legs are short, and thick in proportion. The feet are round behind, having hoofs forwards, which, by two divisions, are separated into three parts on each foot; but they have not the little hoofs in the hinder part of the foot, such as we see in swine, deer, sheep, and many other animals. The tail is in shape like that of an ox, and has sometimes black hairs at the end; the ears have also some scattered hairs on them.

This large creature is found in the island of Java, in divers parts of the East Indies, and in Africa. The ancients have spoke very little of it. Pliny contents himself with saying it has a horn on its nose, that it whets it against a stone before it engages

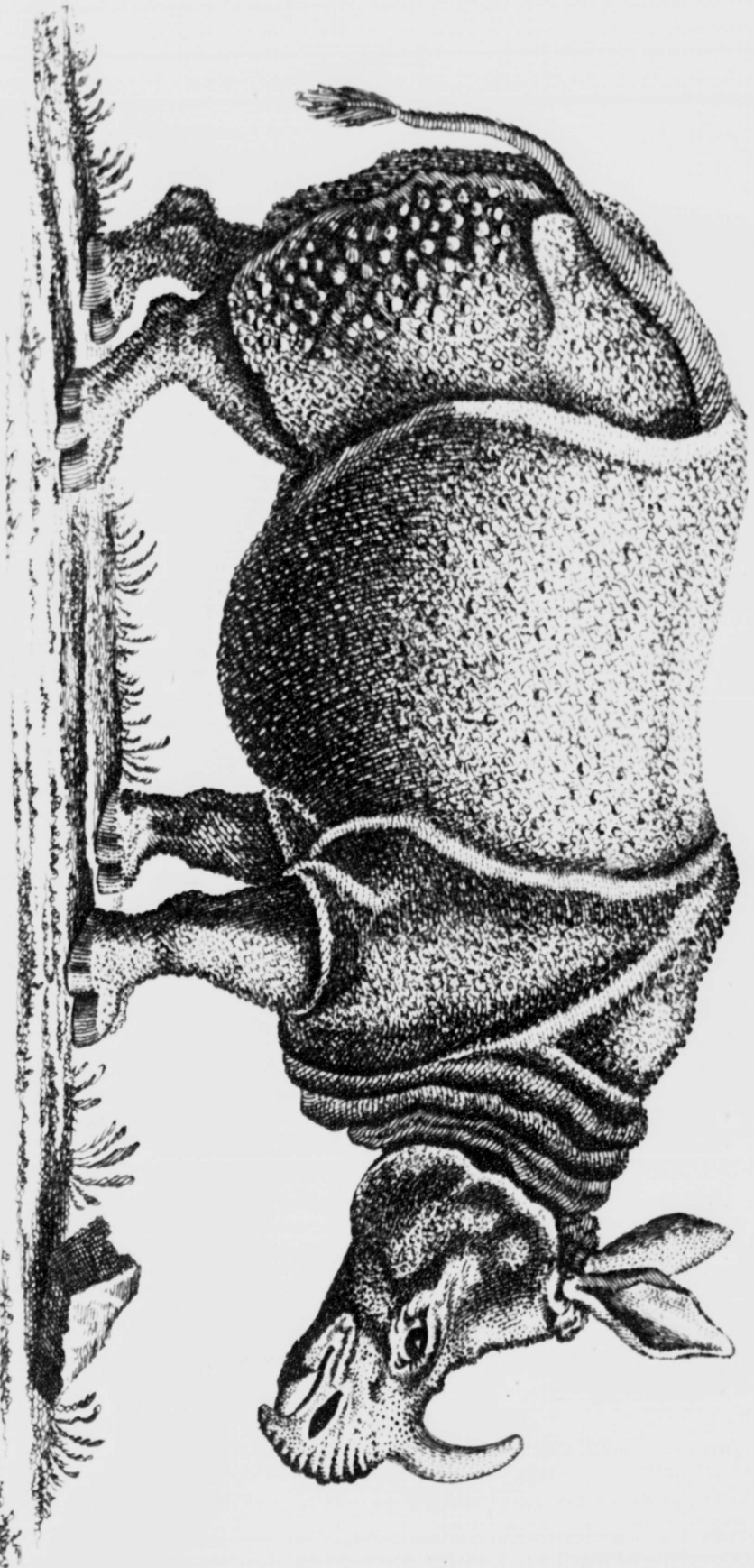
with the elephant, there being a natural antipathy between these two great animals, and that they are nearly of the same bigness; but that the rhinoceros has shorter legs, and that the skin is the colour of a box-tree. Ælian, who has given a detail of very common animals, did not think it necessary to describe the rhinoceros, because all the world had seen it in the shows which the emperor exhibited for the amusement of the people. Strabo says, that he saw the rhinoceros at Alexandria; but as superficial as Pliny, though he cites Artime-dorus. Dio Cassius only tells us, that these creatures appeared at Rome in the triumph of Augustus.

Le Compte, among other particulars mentioned above, tells us, that the rhinoceros, which he accounts one of the most extraordinary animals in the world, resembles the wild boar, but is prodigiously larger; that he has a large head, and small mouth; and that he renders himself by his horn very terrible to the tygers, buffaloes, and elephants. M. D'Herbelot tells us, on the authority of the famed Sharif Al Edrisi, that there are a great number of these creatures in the isle of Rami, on the Indian sea, about three days sailing from that of Serendib, from which the Indian kings are furnished with its wonderful horn to drink out of, it having the singular virtue of sweating at the approach of any poison. He adds, that the horn, being split in two in the middle, represents the profile or outlines of a man, as if drawn with chalk, and some of them also those of birds.

The tongue of this animal is covered with a rough membrane, resembling a file, which flays every thing he licks. As we have animals here which make a grateful repast upon thistles, whose small points are agreeable to the nervous filaments of the tongue, so the rhinoceros eats with pleasure the branches of trees, bristled all over with the largest thorns. Travellers relate that they have frequently given him those whose points were very sharp and long, and it was wonderful to see with what greediness and dexterity he immediately licked them up, and chewed them in his mouth, without the least seeming inconvenience. Sometimes, indeed, his mouth

would

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would be a little bloody; but that seemed even to render the taste more agreeable; and these small wounds, to appearance, made no other impression on his tongue than the particles of salt and pepper do on ours. If they touch any flesh with their tongue, it carries all before it, leaving the bone quite bare; so that this is a very dangerous weapon.

Though the greatest part of his body is swept up in armour, and those who attack him are exposed to great danger, yet the Indians hunt him as they do other animals, because his carcase is of great use to them; and, however hard it may be, the Moors eat his flesh, which they account a fine repast. The inhabitants attribute a variety of physical virtues to every part of this creature, from the tip of the horn to the calcined bones and hoofs, in which the Portuguese do not fall short of them; but there is good reason, perhaps, to doubt of many of them. That the horn sweats at the touch of poison, and is esteemed for many other qualities, seems to be universally allowed; and whether some other parts may not be used with success, as a cure for particular diseases, we have no authorities to contradict; and, on the other hand, we have not sufficient to vouch for the veracity of those numerous virtues attributed to every part of the rhinoceros. At the Cape of Good-Hope the Europeans hang up the fresh blood in the guts to dry in the sun, and afterwards take it in wine, coffee, or tea, to open obstructions, and for inward fores. Their flesh is often eat among the Hottentots; and Kolben says he himself eat some, and found the taste very agreeable.

Father Borri relates, that when he was at Nuocmen, in the province of Pulucambin Cochin-china, the governor went out to hunt a rhinoceros, that was in a wood near their dwelling-place. The governor had with him above a hundred men, some on foot, some on horseback, and eight or ten elephants. The beast came out of the wood, and, seeing so many enemies, was so far from giving any tokens of fear, that he furiously encountered them all, who, opening and making a lane, let the rhinoceros run through. He came to the rear, where was the governor, mounted on an elephant, waiting to attack him. The elephant endeavoured to lay hold with his trunk, but could not, by reason of the rhinoceros's swiftness and leaping; and

besides, the elephant was forced to be strictly upon his guard, lest the rhinoceros should slip his horn into his belly, and rip him up, as they often do in their fights with each other. The governor, well knowing that he could not pierce the rhinoceros on the back, by reason of the thickness of his hide in that part, or any where but on the sides near the belly, watched an opportunity when he should take a leap, and by that means expose the place which alone was penetrable. This the creature presently did, to avoid a stroke aimed at him by the elephant, and the governor immediately cast a dart, which dexterously struck him through from side to side; upon which the beast fell down, amidst a loud shout of the people, who were very numerous, and had begun to be in pain for the governor's safety. They then laid the body upon a pile of wood, and setting fire to it, leaped and danced about, whilst the hard skin was burning and the flesh roasting, cutting pieces as fast as it roasted, and eating them with great satisfaction. Of the heart, liver, and brain, they made a more dainty dish, and presented it to the governor, who was upon a rising ground, diverting himself with their merriment. Father Borri, who was present at the whole scene, obtained the hoofs by the governor's leave. In all engagements between the elephant and rhinoceros, the victory to the latter chiefly depends upon the good fortune of striking the former with his horn in the belly; for if he fails in this, or misses his aim, the elephant is generally too hard for him, by means of his proboscis.

As the rhinoceros is but seldom seen, we may conclude either that they are as scarce as the elephants are numerous, or else, which is more probable, they chiefly harbour in deserts and unfrequented places, their common diet being thistles, docks, and other such like coarse fare. Some have imagined that the rhem, so often mentioned in Scripture, was no other than this animal; but, on a close examination, there are but little grounds for such a supposition. Others imagine, that the beast commonly called the unicorn is no other than the rhinoceros; though, if authors may be credited, there are various one-horned animals in Africa, which have an equal, and some a far better, right to this conjecture, as coming nearer to the commonly received notion of the figure and shape of the uni-

corn. Others, on the contrary, and particularly Dale, think that the rhinoceros is the only one-horned quadruped, and that the accounts of all the others are fictitious.

Very few of these animals have been brought to Europe. There was a female one shewn in London in the year 1752; but this was not near full-grown, being no more than five feet and an half in stature, and the horn was but short.

The rhinoceros is among the number of those animals, which if a Hottentot can have the happiness of killing, he has the dignity of an hero conferred upon him. The performance of the ceremony, and the cleanliness of it, may prove entertaining, and therefore we here subjoin it, though not properly belonging to the natural history of this beast.

“The rhinoceros being killed, the Hottentot runs to his village, acquaints all his neighbours of his good fortune, and then goes to his hut, and squats down in the middle of it. Presently comes an ancient Hottentot, deputed by the village, and compliments him in their name; at the same time giving notice of their expecting his coming to receive the honours due to his exploit. The hero rises upon the message being delivered, and attends the deputy to the middle of the village, where he squats down on a mat, spread for the solemnity, in the center of the men, who all squat round him in a circle. The deputy

then advances, pronounces certain words, and then pisses upon him from head to foot. The deputy afterwards lights a pipe of tobacco, and, having smoked two or three whiffs, delivers it to be smoked out in turns by the assembly, and the ashes are scattered by the deputy on the hero, who instantly rises, and the whole circle which him, receives the personal compliments and thanks of the village for the signal service and honour rendered to his country by his bravery: and thus ends the ceremony. Straightway the hero returns to his hut, where he is three days sumptuously entertained, at the expence of the village, with the nicest rareties, (that is, what they term nice); during which time he is called to no public action; nor is his wife admitted till the evening of the third day, when the hero receives the lady with the greatest marks of fondness and affection: a fat sheep is killed, and the neighbours are entertained, who congratulate the lady upon her being restored to the arms, and become a partner in her husband's glory, &c.”

On the whole, the rhinoceros is a very noble and famous creature; and though vastly inferior to the elephant in strength, docility, and those other qualities peculiar to that famed animal, yet superior to it in comeliness of shape, and beauty of skin; and both alike serve to display the wonders of Providence in the creation.

Some REFLECTIONS on the SPIRIT of PARTY.

Medio tutissimus ibis.—

All neither wholly false, nor wholly true.

POPE.

To the Authors of the BRITISH MAGAZINE.

GENTLEMEN,

THE happy spirit of unanimity, which hath lately subsisted amongst us, may appear to render any reflections on the spirit of party unseasonable; yet, as Christianity pronounces a blessing on the peacemaker, it seems no unreasonable deduction, that he who honestly endeavours to establish and confirm such principles as tend to peace, will be intitled to an adequate degree of the Divine Blessing. Perhaps the subject I have chosen hath been already sufficiently exhausted by authors, whom I

have never been so fortunate as to meet with or peruse; and tracts have been written on it much more copious, diffuse, and full, than any I am equal to. However, I have ventured to draw up a few loose immethodical thoughts, and address them to you, flattering myself they will neither be disagreeable to you, nor incompatible with your plan. I shall say but little of the spirit of party as it regards politics, consequently a discussion of the German war (which I wish happily and honourably ended) must not be expected