

## A TRACE OF DÜRER IN RABELAIS

The name of Albrecht Dürer would be sought for in vain from the first to the last page of Rabelais's works. Yet it is hidden, hitherto unidentified, behind a passage in the Fifth Book. In the thirtieth chapter, which describes the *Pais de Satin*, the land of the animals 'made of tapestry,' Rabelais says:

Je y veiz un rénocéros du tout semblable à celluy que Hans Cleberg m'avoit autresfoys montré, peu différent d'un verrat que autresfois j'avois veu à Legugé, excepté qu'il avoit une corne au mufle, longue d'une couldée et pointue, de laquelle il osoit entreprendre ung éléphant en combat et, d'icelle le pongnant soubz le ventre (qui est la plus tendre et débille partie de l'éléphant), le rendroit mort par terre.<sup>1</sup>

The commentaries have little to say about the passage. The description of the duel between elephant and rhinoceros was, of course, easily recognized as a borrowing from a familiar passage in Pliny's 'Natural History.'<sup>2</sup> The identification of "Hans Cleberg" was not difficult: Cleberg—or better Kleberger—(b. 1485, d. 1546) was a spectacular person in Rabelais's time, a merchant from Nuremberg who lived at Lyons from about 1526 on, a wealthy and charitable man, a friend of the arts and a benefactor of the poor, who achieved something like local immortality under the sobriquet of *le bon Allemand*.<sup>3</sup> It stands to reason that Rabelais, a physician at the *Hôtel-Dieu*, could easily have established con-

<sup>1</sup> I quote the text from Boulenger's edition (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1938), p. 861.

<sup>2</sup> Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, VIII, ch. 29. The description is not Pliny's own; it can be traced back to earlier Greek works such as Agatharchides, *On the Red Sea* (in Photios' *Bibliotheca*, cod. 250; p. 455 Bekker), Strabo XVI, ch. 4, sec. 15, and Diodorus Siculus III, ch. 35; but Pliny was instrumental in transmitting it to later ages.

<sup>3</sup> The literature on Kleberger is considerable. Incomplete bibliographical notes are in K. Schottenloher, *Bibliographie zur Deutschen Geschichte im Zeitalter der Glaubensspaltung*, I (Leipzig, 1933), 408, and Aimé Vingtrinier, *Catalogue de la Bibliothèque Lyonnaise de M. Coste* (1853), nos. 15430 ff.; cf. nos. 13617-13622. The most extensive study is by M. Eugène Vial, a series of nine essays in *Revue d'histoire de Lyon* XI-XIII (1912-1914). Relations to artists are in evidence in Kleberger's testament as quoted by Vial, *loc. cit.*, XII, 371, bequeathing 25 écus d'or to "Sebastien de Laye, peintre à Lyon, pour l'amytié qu'il lui porte." It will be seen below that de Laye was not the only artist with whom Kleberger was in personal touch.

tact with the great benefactor of the charitable institutions of Lyons.<sup>4</sup>

But, curiously enough, the puzzling question how this man Kleberger could demonstrate a rhinoceros to Rabelais has escaped most of the editors and commentators. Only the late L. Sainéan paid any attention to it, and his answer is undoubtedly wrong.<sup>5</sup> Sainéan introduces Kleberger in the new capacity of a "collector of zoölogical rarities" and owner of a private zoölogical garden, whose acquaintance was sought by Rabelais in his continual search for scientific, especially zoölogical, information. According to Sainéan, Rabelais saw a live rhinoceros in Kleberger's collection. This statement has no basis save the passage which it is intended to explain. Nowhere in the vast material concerning Kleberger is there any indication of an interest in rare animals. Kleberger's zoölogical collection is nothing but the product of a strained attempt at interpretation.

It is safe to assume that the presence of a living rhinoceros at Lyons in the first half of the sixteenth century would have left traces in local as well as general literature. The arrival of a specimen of this animal, which had been unknown to the Middle Ages, in Lisbon in 1515 created what may well be called a European sensation.<sup>6</sup> The history of a fight staged between this rhi-

<sup>4</sup> From 1532 on Rabelais stayed intermittently in Lyons. He first came to the city in June, 1532, was appointed physician at the *Hôtel-Dieu* on November 1, 1532, and remained in this position until the end of 1534, though his stay was interrupted by journeys to Chinon and Rome. We find him at Lyons again in 1536, 1537, and 1538.

<sup>5</sup> L. Sainéan, *La langue de Rabelais*, I (Paris, 1922), 41. See also Sainéan's more recent book: *Problèmes littéraires du seizième siècle* (Paris, 1927), 36, 81. Sainéan's article "L'histoire naturelle dans l'œuvre de Rabelais" in *RSS.*, III (1915), 218-219, does not contribute anything to the solution of the problem.

<sup>6</sup> The story has recently been retold in full, with the addition of interesting material from various printed sources and public records, by Senhor Abel Fontoura da Costa, *Desambulações da ganda de Modafar rei de Cambaia, de 1514 a 1516* (Lisbon, Divisão de publicações e biblioteca, Agência geral das colónias, 1937, 49 pp.). A copy is in the Library of Congress. On this book in Portuguese Mr. Campbell Dodgson bases his article, "The Story of Dürer's Ganda," in *The Romance of Fine Prints*, ed. by Alfred Fowler (The Print Society, Kansas City, 1938). Besides this famous rhinoceros of 1515, Sainéan, in *RSS.*, III (1915), 218, and *La langue de Rabelais*, I (1922), 20, believes he has discovered a second specimen brought to Europe during the sixteenth century and shown at the *joyeuse*

noceros and an elephant was reported as far as Nuremberg,<sup>7</sup> and it was in connection with this report that Albrecht Dürer came into possession of a sketch on which he based his famous drawing<sup>8</sup> and his even more famous woodcut<sup>9</sup> of the rhinoceros.

There is, then, a special relation between Nuremberg and the rhinoceros. But there also is a special relation between Nuremberg and Kleberger. And in both cases Dürer is the common denominator. In 1526 the wealthy businessman had his portrait painted by the great master from his own native town. The portrait,<sup>10</sup> a unique item in the long series of portraits painted by Dürer because of its peculiar classicistic style, is now in the

*entrée* of Henri II in Paris in 1549. But this turns out to have been merely a sculpture bearing an obelisk; see Pierre Champion, *Paris au temps de la Renaissance: Paganisme et Réforme* (Paris, 1936), p. 115. Since 1515, thanks to Dürer's woodcut (see below), the rhinoceros became something of a popular artistic theme, as shown by a number of existing replicas and derivations of Dürer's rhinoceros.

<sup>7</sup>The author of such a report, a German writer and printer who lived at Lisbon, is known only under the disguise of a Portuguese name, Valentim Fernandes; see K. Haebler, *Die deutschen Buchdrucker des 15. Jahrhunderts im Auslande* (Munich, 1924), p. 272 f. The letter, transmitted only in an Italian translation, was printed by Angelo de Gubernatis, *Storia dei viaggiatori italiani nelle Indie orientali* (Leghorn, 1875), p. 389.

<sup>8</sup>The best reproductions are in F. Lippmann, *Zeichnungen Albrecht Dürers in Nachbildungen*, III (1894), no. 257, and in *Publications of the Dürer Society*, IV (London, 1901), no. XII; the most recent ones in Fontoura, *op. cit.*, pl. 2; Tietze, *Kritisches Verzeichnis der Werke Albrecht Dürers* (Basel and Leipzig, 1937), p. 274, no. 639; *The Romance of Fine Prints, loc. cit.*, p. 44. The inscription, in Dürer's own hand, repeating the story from Pliny, is probably copied from a letter of Valentim Fernandes (see above); since it mentions "our king of Portugal" it must have been written by a Portuguese subject, and Fernandes was an *escudeiro* of the queen of Portugal.

<sup>9</sup>Eight different editions are in existence, listed most recently by Joseph Meder, *Dürer-Katalog* (Vienna, 1932), p. 254, no. 273. Only the first can be assigned with certainty to Dürer's lifetime (1515). Copies of this first state are, e. g., in the British Museum (reproduced in *Dürer Society Publications*, IV, no. XXVI; Fontoura, plate 2, reversed; *The Romance of Fine Prints, loc. cit.*, plate 1) and in the Metropolitan Museum, New York (cf. *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum*, xv, 1920, p. 34). Reproductions of one or the other state can easily be found in any collection of Dürer works.

<sup>10</sup>Tietze, *op. cit.*, no. 958; Max I. Friedländer, *Albrecht Dürer* (Leipzig, 1921), p. 190. A beautiful reproduction is in W. Waetzold, *Dürer und seine Zeit* (Vienna, 1935), no. 71.

Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. An inscription by Dürer's hand, running around the head, excludes all doubt:

E (ffigies) · IOANI · KLEBERGERS · NORICI ·  
AETA · SVAE · XXXX :

With these facts in hand the final conclusion is easy. Kleberger did indeed show a rhinoceros to Rabelais, but not a live one. He showed him the famous woodcut<sup>11</sup> by his late artist friend. The comparison of the rhinoceros with a boar in Rabelais's description is understandable only under the assumption that Rabelais never saw a living specimen. The picture by itself could not give him an idea of the real size of the animal. From the caption in Dürer's woodcut he could have learned that the rhinoceros is about the same size as an elephant except that its legs are shorter. He evidently paid no attention to the caption, and Kleberger failed to translate it for him. The fact that Dürer's caption gives the tale from Pliny as Rabelais does, should not be over-estimated in the philological search for affiliation. Rabelais knew his Pliny well enough to be able to find the data for himself, without benefit of Dürer's quotation.

Here, then, we have reconstructed a genuine, if remote, link between two of the great minds of the age. If someone should ever publish a new illustrated edition of "Pantagruel," applying more modern principles of illustration than Robida's, he might do well to include the two Dürer works, the Kleberger portrait and the woodcut of the rhinoceros.

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## PROUST AND RIBOT

*La chasse à la mémoire involontaire continue.* In a recent article<sup>1</sup> René de Messières adds to the accumulation of documents already published by Jean-Albert Bédé<sup>2</sup> and Justin O'Brien<sup>3</sup> to

<sup>11</sup> If Meder is right in his assumption that the second edition of the woodcut came out as late as 1540 or thereabouts, it is certain that the copy seen by Rabelais was one of the first edition.

<sup>1</sup> René de Messières, "Un document probable sur le premier état de la pensée de Proust," *RR.*, April, 1942.

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Albert Bédé, "Chateaubriand et Marcel Proust," *MLN.*, June, 1934.

<sup>3</sup> Justin O'Brien, "La mémoire involontaire avant Marcel Proust,"