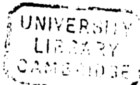
[Frontispiece caption]

SEA-LIONS IN CARL HAGENBECK'S TIERPARK, HAMBURG

No pains are spared to provide the animals in this famous Continental Zoo with surroundings that are as close to nature as possible.

[Photo: Carl Hagenbeck

Frontispiece]



Misc. 5.93.

WILD BEASTS TO-DAY

Being an account of the world's leading zoological gardens, the catching, transportation and doctoring of wild animals, the rearing of them on farms, and the work of conserving the rarer species in parks and reservations

BY

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had been cut for the discharge of the abscesses instead of coming out under the upper lip, or, under ordinary circumstances, their proper place.

While the elephant is not a bad patient on the whole, this cannot be said of the rhinoceros. A few years ago an operation was found to be necessary on a fine specimen of the Indian rhinoceros, known as Mogul. He had cataracts on both eyes and was nearly blind. Strictly speaking, the operation was a simple one, but Mogul failed to recognise it was for his benefit, and as he turned the scale at over two tons the surgeon's job was hardly a light one. Early one morning he was lassoed and securely hobbled and bound with strong ropes, and carted off to the operating theatre. The task now was to administer an anaesthetic, to which course Mogul had strong objections. It was an hour before he went off, and not until he had exhausted, in his fierce struggles, one and a half pounds of chloroform and three quarters of a pound of ether. But the operation was a complete success and forty minutes later Mogul was standing on his feet again.

Yet Mogul proved a better patient than did Victoria, a monster African rhinoceros at the New York Zoo. She had developed an abscess on the left jaw which it was desirable to lance. But she fought madly when they attempted to lasso her. It took an army of twelve keepers, not to mention the assistance of half a dozen veterinary surgeons, to secure her and prepare her for the theatre. Then she only went off after exhausting two and a half pounds of chloroform and ether. Within an hour of the operation she was her old self again.

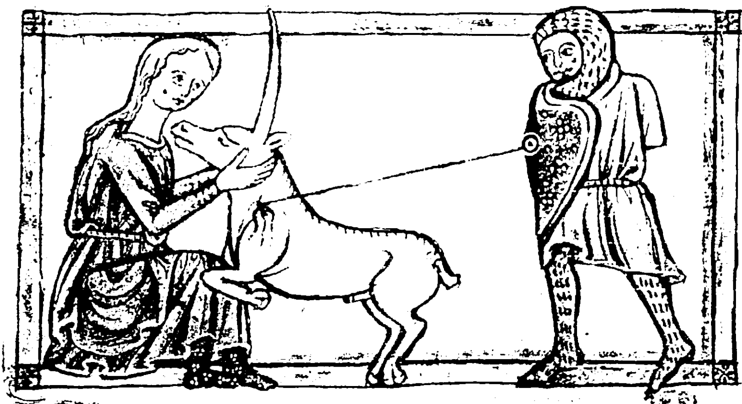
Sometimes the rhinoceros damages his horn and it has to be removed. After firmly securing a full-grown rhinoceros in the London gardens with ropes and chains, three strong and sharp saws had to be called into requisition

to remove a piece of the horn. Two broke in halves during the operation.

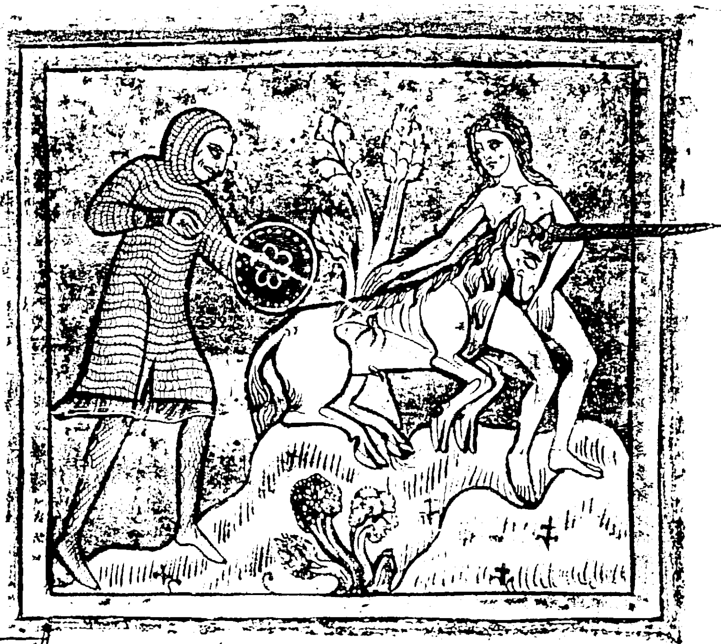
A little while back one of the young hippos at the London gardens developed a habit of taking a deep breath, sinking to the bottom of the pond, and after remaining there for some time would return and work his huge jaw as if he was chewing something. Then one day it was seen that one of his teeth were missing. So a careful watch was kept, and it was observed that he made his way to one particular spot where the concrete steps ran down to the bottom of the tank and there started trying to bite at something. The water was run off and it was discovered that the creature had actually bitten off a clear half-inch of concrete. It was an extraordinary feat and had cost the hippo eight inches of the best ivory. To prevent further damage to the hippo's remaining molars the steps were encased in wood and a floating log was put in the pool.

These strange African river horses are to be pitied when teething, as they are apt to have a very bad time of it during that period. One baby, Joan, refused to eat. Her gums were unusually inflamed and she tried to obtain relief by resting her jaws on the hot-water pipes. Then she was given a bath heated to seventy degrees, and the warmth was a great comfort to her. However, she used the concrete steps in a very sensible manner, for she cut her teeth on them and then left them alone. She was quickly rewarded when her appetite returned in double force.

To remove the fractured tooth from the mouth of a full-grown male hippopotamus at the London gardens some years ago, the surgeon prepared a powerful pair of forceps, more than two feet long. A strong oak fence was then fixed between the animal's pond and the iron railing. At an opportune moment the surgeon grasped the patient's



"DE UNICORNU VEL RINOCEROTE" *Early 13th. Century*



THE UNICORN, gentle in the presence of a maiden
Early 13 th. Century

S460.c.93.7

ANIMAL LORE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

By P. ANSELL ROBIN, D.Lit.

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"The Old Physiology in English Literature"

LONDON : JOHN MURRAY, *ALBEMARLE STREET, W.*

The history of the unicorn[1] presents some interesting features. Greek writers spoke of certain animals bearing a single horn, the Indian ass and the oryx (an African antelope), while Pliny mentions in addition an Indian ox. The unicorn was mentioned as a distinct animal first in the Septuagint translation of the Pentateuch, which is thought to have appeared in the third century B.C. The word is there used twice as a rendering of the word *re'm* or *reem*, which the English Revised Version translates "wild-ox." In one of these passages (Deut. xxxiii. 17) the context shows that the animal was two-horned. This use in the Septuagint of the word μονοκέρως (=Lat. *unicornis*) as a substantive indicates that before 200 B.C. an animal had begun to be called the unicorn, and Pliny's use of *Monocerotem* as a noun in a solitary passage (VIII, 76), while elsewhere he uses the adjective *unicornis*, probably recognises this. The legend of the unicorn was probably developed by commentators on the Septuagint, and the animal was included among the emblems of the *Physiologus*. When the unicorn was thus recognised as a separate beast, the stories of the one-horned Indian ass were transferred to it. Hence came the belief in its fierceness, and also in the virtues of its horn as an antidote or a preventive against poison. From the notion, recorded by Ælian (XVI, 20), that this fierce animal was wonderfully gentle to the female in the mating season, there was evolved the idea that it became gentle in the presence of a maiden and was lulled to sleep with its head on her bosom. This

[1] Odell Shepard's *Lore of the Unicorn*, recently published, gives compendious information about the legends connected with this fabulous animal. The account here given was written before I saw that book, and after reading it carefully I see no reason to make any alteration.

fancy seems to emerge first in the *Physiologus*,[1] which states: "They send to it a pure virgin all robed. And the Unicorn springs into the lap of the maiden and she subdues him and he follows her." This is repeated by Eustathius.[2]

But meanwhile the rhinoceros had become known in Europe. Though certainly known to the ancients, this animal is not mentioned under that name before Strabo, who wrote just before and after the beginning of the Christian era. It was not seen in Europe before 61 B.C., when Pompey the Great celebrated his triumph by exhibiting many Eastern animals. The first Latin writer to mention the rhinoceros was Pliny (VIII, 71), who mentions its combats with elephants. Ælian (XVII, 44) gives a detailed description of this kind of combat. The rhinoceros soon began to be regarded as the original of the unicorn, and the legends concerning the latter were transferred to it. Jerome, commenting on the "unicorn" in the Book of Job (xxxix.) says that, as the word is translated "rhinoceros" and "monoceros" by different writers, "we notice that the rhinoceros is the same as the monoceros, and is in Latin understood to be the unicorn." Thus, while the *Physiologus* speaks of the unicorn as caught only by a virgin, Isidore (seventh century) states this of the rhinoceros, and Neckam follows him, as also does Giraldus Cambrensis (*c.* 1187). Alanus, however, (*c.* 1200) keeps to the unicorn. Yet that this was generally believed of the rhinoceros in the thirteenth century is shown (1) by Bartholomew Glanvil, who identifies the two animals, and (2) by Marco Polo (1298), who in describing the rhinoceros says: "They

[1] Trans. Carlill (1927).

[2] Migne, *Patrol. Græc.*, XVIII, col. 744.

are not of that description of animals which suffer themselves to be taken by maidens, as our people suppose, but are quite of a contrary nature." Soon afterwards another European traveller, the Dominican Friar Jordanus (1321), differentiates the rhinoceros from the "real unicorns, only to be captured by maidens."[1] As the rhinoceros became ruled out by known facts, the legendary unicorn was again reinstated. That there was scepticism about its existence is shown by the exclamation of Sebastian in *The Tempest* (III, iii, 22), when he sees the "strange shapes" evoked by Prospero's magic: "Now I will believe that there are unicorns." Topsell, in his *History of Four-footed Beasts* (1607), protests against such scepticism. Even as late as 1801 we find a discussion in the *Monthly Review*, "On the probability of the existence of a unicorn."

The unicorn's horn in heraldry is shown growing out of the forehead, and is straight and spirally twisted. Now the earliest Greek descriptions make no mention of the spiral twist, the first such reference apparently being in Ælian (IV, 52), who, in describing the monoceros of India, says that it has a horn "growing out from between the eyebrows, not smooth, but having some natural twists or convolutions." It is probable that this "wreathèd horn" was suggested by a narwhal's tusk, either brought from the sub-arctic region or described by travellers. This animal, which is of the dolphin family, is not usually seen south of latitude 62° north, but has been seen very rarely on British coasts since the sixteenth century. Tusks (which were thought to be horns) have occasionally been thrown on the shores of

[1] Beazley, *Dawn of Mod. Geog.*, III, 226, 230.

Northern Europe. However, there is no evidence to show that the narwhal's tusk was known even by hearsay in Southern Europe or Southern Asia before the Christian era. The only known voyage to Northern seas before that period was that of the Greek Pytheas of Massilia (Marseilles) in 325 B.C., and it is not certain that he went further north than the coasts of Britain. The probabilities are that during the two centuries following Cæsar's invasion of Britain, Roman soldiers or traders brought to Southern Europe either specimens or descriptions of the narwhal's tusk, which was identified with the horn of the unicorn. In the sixteenth century Sir Humphrey Gilbert, in his *Discourse on the North-West Passage to Cathay* (1576), mentions that an alleged unicorn's horn had been found on the coast of Tartary (i.e. N. Russia); this he doubts, giving as one reason that, "as Albertus saith, there is a fish which hath but one horn in his forehead like to a unicorn." (He refers to Albertus Magnus, who wrote *c.* A.D. 1260.) He regards the unicorn as distinct both from the one-horned Indian ass and from the sea-unicorn (or narwhal). But in the next year Martin Frobisher, in his second voyage in quest of the North-West Passage, found on the shore of a bay north-west of Labrador, "a dead fish floating, which had in its nose a horn, straight and torquet [twisted], of length two yards lacking two inches, being broken in the top, where we might perceive it hollow, into which some sailors putting spiders they presently died. . . . By the virtue whereof we suppose it to be the sea-unicorn." Thus the efficacy of the unicorn's horn against poison was credited also to the narwhal's tusk.

The idea of an animal's horn used as a drinking-cup giving immunity from poison is as old as Ctesias, who attributes this virtue to the horn of the Indian ass. Ælian makes larger claims for it, saying that to drink out of the horn makes one immune from epilepsy and the effects of poison, and also cures poisoning by acting as an emetic. His contemporary Philostratus, recording this belief, says he would believe it if he found a king of the Indians to be immortal. In the sixteenth century (and probably long before) pieces of the so-called unicorn's horn were powdered and used medicinally, either against poison or as a cure for melancholy. The dramatist Webster, in his *White Devil* (II, i), refers to the use of spiders to test the anti-venomous power of the horn:

> *"As men, to test the precious unicorn's horn,*
> *Make of the powder a preservative circle,*
> *And in it put a spider, so these arms*
> *Shall charm his poison."*

As a cure for melancholy it is mentioned by Ben Jonson (*Every Man out of his Humour*, V, iv): "I am sorry for your heaviness . . . why, had you no unicorn's horn . . . about you?" Burton also (*Anat. Mel.*, II, 4, i, 1) mentions it among cures for "black choler."

The fierceness of the unicorn is alluded to by Shakespeare (*Timon of Athens*, IV, iii, 339): "Wert thou the unicorn, pride and wrath would confound thee and make thine own self the conquest of thy fury." His contemporary Chapman, in the play *Bussy d'Ambois*, boldly writes:

> *" As I once did see*
> *In my young travels through Armenia,*
> *An angry unicorn in his full career*
> *Charge with too swift a foot a jeweller*
> *That watch'd him for the treasure of his brow;*
> *And ere he could get shelter of a tree*
> *Nail him with his rich antler to the earth."*

It was said that experienced hunters, when charged by a unicorn, would slip behind a tree, in which the fierce animal then embedded his horn. This is the meaning of a passage in Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar* (II, i, 204):

> *"I can o'er sway him, for he loves to hear*
> *That unicorns may be betrayed with trees."*

Spenser describes this as a ruse employed by the lion when attacked by a unicorn (*Faerie Queene*, II, v, 10):

> *"Like as a lyon, whose imperiall powre*
> *A prowd rebellious unicorn defyes,*
> *To avoide the rich assault and wrathful stowre*
> *Of his fiers foe, him to a tree applyes,*
> *And when him ronning in full course he spyes,*
> *He slips aside; the whiles that furious beast*
> *His precious horne, sought of his enimyes,*
> *Strikes in the stocke, ne thence can be releast,*
> *But to the mighty victor yields a bounteous feast."*

The epithets "precious" and "rich" applied to the unicorn's horn are explained by the fact that it was sold by apothecaries at a price more than ten times as great as that of a similar weight of gold.[1] A passage in the *Kingis Quhair* of King James I of Scotland[2] alludes both

[1] *Chambers's Dict.*, quoted by Dyce.

[2] Skeat, *Specimens*, p. 42.

to the virtues of the horn and to the supposed capture by a virgin:

> " *The luvar [lover] unicorne*
> *That voidis venym with his evour [ivory] horne.*"

Another fabulous animal is mentioned once or twice in our literature, e.g. by Skelton in his poem *Phyllyp Sparowe* (294), in an imprecation on the cat that killed the sparrow:

> " *The mantycors of the montaynes*
> *Might fede them on thy braynes.*"

Professor Williams, in his edition of Skelton, quotes allusions in Caxton's *Mirrour of the Worlde* and in Sylvester's *Du Bartas*. The ultimate authority for this animal was Ctesias, whose description is given by Aristotle (*H.A.*, II, 501a): "He assures us that the Indian wild beast called the *martichoras* has a triple row of teeth in both upper and lower jaw; that it is as big as a lion and equally hairy, and that its feet resemble those of a lion; that it resembles man in its face and ears; that its eyes are blue and its colour vermilion; that its tail is like that of the land-scorpion; that it has a sting in the tail, and has the faculty of shooting off arrow-wise the spines that are attached to the tail; that the sound of its voice is something between the sound of a pan-pipe and that of a trumpet; that it can run as swiftly as a deer, and that it is savage and a man-eater" (trans. by D'Arcy Thompson). Pliny repeats the substance of this, calling the beast *mantichora* (VIII, 75), and quotes King Juba II as saying that it imitates human speech

(VIII, 107). Ælian (IV, 21) as usual elaborates this description, giving the name (as in Aristotle) *martichoras*: he says the word is Indian, and means "man-eater." This is approximately correct, the derivation being from Old Persian *martijaqâra*, lit. "man-slayer" (*N.E.D.*). Ælian says that Ctesias claimed to have seen one of these animals in Persia, whither it had been brought as a present to the king, but he throws doubt on the reliability of the witness. The animal was no doubt the Bengal tiger, described by panic-stricken witnesses after headlong flight.

In Chester's *Love's Martyr* (ed. Grosart, p. 112), there is a description of the onocentaur:

> "*The Onocentaur is a monstrous beast*
> *Supposed halfe a man and halfe an asse*
> *That never shuts his eyes in quiet rest*
> *Till he his foes deare life hath round encompast;*
> *Such were the Centaurs in their tyranny*
> *That liv'd by human flesh and villanie.*"

It is mentioned also by Skelton (*Phyllyp Sparowe*, 1295):

> "*By Hercules that hell did harow*
> *And with a venomous arow*
> *Slew of the Epidaures*
> *One of the Centaures*
> *Or Onocentaures*
> *Or Hippocentaures.*"

This fabulous animal began its literary existence only in the Septuagint. The Greek version of Isaiah (xiii. 22, xxxiv. 14) gives "onocentaurs" for the Hebrew word which is rendered in the Authorised Version "wild

beasts of the island" (not "satyrs" as Liddell and Scott say). That these translators of Isaiah did not invent the word is shown by a passage in Ælian (XVII, 9), who, after describing the onocentaur, says: "Pythagoras states these things, according to the testimony at any rate of Crates of Pergamum." Now Crates visited Rome and lectured there in 170 B.C. The accepted date for the Greek version of Isaiah is *c.* 180 B.C., but this is admittedly conjectural. In all probability the translators became acquainted with the writings or lectures of Crates, and seized upon the word onocentaur when they found difficulty in translating the Hebrew words for terrifying animals. This supposition would of course imply that Isaiah was not translated into Greek until after 170 B.C. The onocentaur was included among the animals mentioned in the *Physiologus*, and it is described or mentioned by Origen and in the Vulgate. Pliny knew nothing of it, but Ælian gives a full description. It has a human face surrounded by thick hair; it has hands, and the upper part of the body is human in form, but the lower part with the hind legs is very like that of the ass. No mention is made of a tail. The colour of the body is ashen-grey, somewhat white at the loins. The hands serve a double purpose: when speed is needed they are used as feet, and the animal vies in swiftness with other quadrupeds; but when it needs to pluck or grip anything they become hands again, and then it does not walk, but sits down. From this account it seems clear that the onocentaur as described by Ælian was (as Liddell and Scott suggests) a tailless ape. But of course without this description the name would suggest a monster differing from the classical centaur only in the

substitution of an ass's body for that of the horse. It is clear that both the English authors quoted above as mentioning the animal had the vaguest possible notions about it. Chester, in the passage cited, not only errs in classing it with the centaurs, but gives details which are apparently of his own invention.[1]

Sidney, in the *Arcadia*,[2] mentions a strange beast which he calls catoblepta: "His Impresa [Emblem] was a Catoblepta, which so long lies dead as the moone (whereto it hath so naturall a sympathie) wants her light." Here Sidney is either inventing an animal for his own purposes (as his contemporaries Lyly and Greene sometimes did), or he refers to the *catoblepas* of Pliny without knowing anything about it. This Ethiopian wild beast, according to Pliny (VIII, 77), was of moderate dimensions, except for a head so heavy that it hung down towards the ground—fortunately for the human race, because all who met its gaze expired immediately. Ælian (VII, 5) adds that it was like a bull, which suggests "an animal of the buffalo kind" (Liddell and Scott), or more probably the gnu. In fact, modern naturalists have adopted *catoblepas* as the generic name for the gnu. It may seem strange that Holland, in his translation of Pliny, should write in the headlines of the chapter, "of the serpents called Catoblepes," but we find this mistake also in Motteux' *Rabelais* (V, 30): "I saw some Catoblepases, a sort of serpents"; and Sir Thomas Browne, in his *Vulgar Errors* (III, vii), says: "Some thought the Catoblepas of Pliny to be a kind of Basilisk." The reason for this mistake was no doubt that the description of the catoblepas in Pliny is immediately

[1] Cf. Vinc. Bell., *Spec. Doctr.*, XVI, 97. [2] ed. Feuillerat, p. 455.