

III.

NOTE ON THE HORN OF A RHINOCEROS STATED TO HAVE BEEN
FOUND IN A MARL PIT IN FORFARSHIRE. BY JOHN ALEXANDER
SMITH, M.D., SEC. S.A. SCOT.

In my paper on "The Ancient Cattle of Scotland" I referred to the recorded statements in regard to a Horn of a Rhinoceros found in a marl pit of the Loch of Forfar. I need not repeat the details here more than to say, that in 1823 it was presented to the museum of the University here, by Mr Henry Stephens, well known afterwards as the author of the "Book of the Farm"; it was exhibited at the same time to the Wernerian Society by Professor Jameson, and was also afterwards referred to by Professor Fleming, D.D., in his "Remarks illustrative of the Influence of Society on the Distribution of British Animals," published in "The Edinburgh Philosophical Journal" for 1824. I shall therefore simply refer to my account of the horn given in vol. ix. of Proceedings, pp. 636 and 637.

Sir Walter C. Trevelyan, Bart. of Wallington, Northumberland, F.S.A. Scot., some time after the publication of my paper, wrote to the late David Laing, LL.D., on the subject of the Rhinoceros Horn, and subsequently to myself; and as both of these gentlemen are now dead, and Sir Walter knew more about its history than any other person, I have thought it might be worth recording what he had to say as a conclusion to the history of the horn. I delayed doing so at the time, hoping to be able to discover and to add to these notes the account of the horn believed to be given in one of Mr Don's publications, referred to by Sir Walter, but I have as yet not been able to do so.

The following letters tell their own story. The first was addressed to myself, and the second is the one referred to by Mr David Laing; the third letter was afterwards sent to me by Sir W. C. Trevelyan, Bart.

No. 1.

SIGNET LIBRARY,
EDINBURGH, *February 6th*, 1875.

“DEAR DOCTOR,—I only received yesterday the enclosed letter from Sir Walter Trevelyan. It would have been more appropriately addressed to yourself. Should you think it worth while you might either acknowledge it to Sir W. or read it at the next meeting of the Society, to come into the ‘Proceedings.’—Yours very truly,
D. LAING.”

No. 2.

WALLINGTON, NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE,
28th January 1875.

“MY DEAR SIR,—I have been much interested with the paper of Dr J. A. Smith on the ‘Ancient Cattle of Scotland,’ in the ‘Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland,’ vol. ix. p. 587. In reading it I find notice of ‘A Horn of a Rhinoceros,’ “found in one of the marl pits at the Loch of Forfar.” As I many years ago (in 1825) went to Forfar and

Dundee, especially to investigate the history of that horn, it may interest Dr Smith and some of the members of the Society to know the result of my enquiries, in the course of which I had interviews with almost all the persons through whose hands the horn had passed, after the time of David Don (the first individual who is recorded to have had it in his possession) down to Mr Stévens, who gave it to the museum of the University of Edinburgh.

“At Dundee, in my way to Forfar, I called on *Mr Douglas Gardner*, formerly keeper of the museum at Forfar, who received the horn from Don, and deposited it in the museum, where it remained until the sale of that museum in 1818 or 1819, when the horn was bought by Mr Brown of Dundee (a cousin of the celebrated botanist Robert Brown) whom I also saw. He gave it to *Mr Stephens*, of Balmadies, near Forfar (author of ‘The Book of the Farm’). When at Forfar, I called on Mr S. at Balmadies, and he informed me that he had taken the deposition of Alexander Nevay, of Forfar, one of Don’s servants, who had known the horn in his master’s possession for many years, and who gave the same account of its being commonly understood to have been found in a Loch near Forfar.

“I did not, however, succeed in meeting with any person who could say that he knew it as a fact, or otherwise than by hearsay,—and from all I could learn, I could come to no other conclusion than that there was no satisfactory evidence to establish the fact that it had been found, as stated, in a marl pit near Forfar.—I remain, My Dear Sir, Yours very truly,

“ W. C. TREVELYAN.

“P.S.—I have been told that its discovery in the Loch of Garth is mentioned in some small publication of Don’s,—which however I have never yet been able to find, perhaps you might be more fortunate in the centre of Scotch literature.

“When I was at Forfar I learnt that the Loch of Garth had been drained a few years before, and that there never had been any marle or marle pits in it.”

No. 3.

WALLINGTON, NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE,
28th March 1875.

“DEAR SIR,—I am glad you have found my notes about the Forfar *Rhinoceros* horn interesting, and shall be happy that you should make what use of them you think serviceable.

“Were I to see the two horns in the Museum (and I will, when I visit Edinburgh, endeavour to do so), I think I should be able to point out that which was said to have been found in Forfar Loch; but I may say that the impression made on my mind by the enquiries I made, were that the evidence was not sufficient to *establish* the fact; I did not meet with one of the individuals who had possessed the horn, or who knew it, who could say that he recollected more about its discovery, than that Don *said* that it had been dug up in one of the marle pits:—if it really had been so, I should have expected that other *less perishable* parts of the skeleton, or the *teeth*, would have been sooner or later discovered, but I believe such has not been the case.

“Near a seaport, such as Dundee, or Arbroath, such an object is a very likely thing to have been brought home by a sailor, and afterwards to have passed from hand to hand till it reached Forfar, where it may have easily got mixed up with bones, &c., really found in those pits,—and have been confounded with them. It would be interesting and perhaps of importance to settle the question, if you could meet with the printed *pamphlet* or *paper* of Don, in which he mentions the *horn* (as I was told) having been found in the marle. Is there anything about it in Sir J. Sinclair’s ‘Statistical Account of Scotland’?—Believe me, Dear Sir,
Yours faithfully,
W. C. TREVELYAN.”

Some time after I received these letters, I met Sir Walter C. Trevelyan in Edinburgh, and he informed me that he had now, as I had suggested to him, examined the different horns of the *Rhinoceros* in the “Museum of Science and Art,” to which the old “Natural History Museum of the University” had been transferred, and that I was quite

correct in fixing upon the "small pointed and much weathered horn in that Museum as the one presented to the University Museum by Mr Henry Stephens in 1823." "It measures about 7 inches in height along the front slope of the horn, and about $5\frac{1}{4}$ inches in the longest diameter of its oval base" (*loc. cit.* p. 638). There is no reference to the horn in the Rev. Mr Bruce's account of the Parish of Forfar in Sir J. Sinclair's Statistical Account of Scotland.

To the courtesy of the Director of the Museum, Mr Archer, F.S.A. Scot., I am indebted for being able to exhibit this now almost historical specimen.