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Anne Ashburner
from her sister Jane
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SCENES AND CHARACTERISTICS

OF

HINDOSTAN,

WITH

SKETCHES

OF

ANGLO-INDIAN SOCIETY.

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nor is the native attachment to flowers, though extending to every part of Hindostan, so strongly displayed in any other province.

In addition to the gaieties and festivities which take place at the palace of the nawáb, the residents of Berhampore avail themselves of the opportunities of enjoying field sports, afforded by the adjacent country. The Rajmhal hills arise on the opposite bank of the river, and thither parties of gentlemen are continually attracted by the exciting warfare which Anglo-Indians delight to carry on against the beasts of prey infesting the jungles of India. Numerous wild animals, of the most savage description, abound in the sunny dells and shady thickets of the extensive mountain ranges, which divide Bengal from the neighbouring province Behar.

The Rhinoceros is an inhabitant of the woods of Rajmhal, and though of too sullen and cruel a character to become domesticated or useful to man, when taken young may be permitted nearly the same liberty of action as that with which the elephant in the Zoological Gardens is indulged. An enclosure of not very large dimensions, but in which there is a spreading umbrageous tree, and a small muddy pond, in Barrackpore Park, contains one of these huge unwieldy animals. The creature is apparently well-satisfied with its condition, wallowing for half the day in the mire, and spending the remainder under the sheltering boughs of its leafy canopy. It does not display any anger or impatience at the approach of visitors, and gazes unconcernedly at the carriages which are continually passing and re-passing the place

of its confinement, which, for the convenience of those who may wish to see it without much trouble, is close to the public road. This extraordinary animal is rarely seen in Europe ; a young one, captured a few years ago, which was intended for an English menagerie, unfortunately perished in consequence of the miscalculations of the natives to whom it was entrusted. As they learned that there would be some difficulty in procuring proper food for their four-footed companion, in one stage of their journey to Calcutta, they crammed it with three days' provision at once, and it died of repletion, a contingency which never occurred to men who can endure the extremes of abstinence or of excess without sustaining much personal inconvenience.

Those huge ferocious bears, which form such conspicuous inhabitants of European menageries, and which in their native haunts are not less formidable than the tiger, stalk in horrid majesty through the woods of Rajmhal : one of the tribe was formerly to be found in the collection at Barrackpore Park, which contained specimens of the most interesting animals in India : but the present Government, too economical in its arrangements to sanction an expense of five hundred rupees per month, the cost of the establishment, gave away birds and beasts without remorse, and though not at the trouble of taking down the buildings, which are tasteful and well-constructed, has permitted them to fall into decay. The niggard parsimony pursued in this instance must always be a subject of regret to those who are interested in the study of natural history. Had the menagerie been

kept up a few years longer, there can be little doubt that, besides the gratification which it afforded to visitants from the presidency and the neighbouring cantonments, it would have become an emporium for the supply of England, since it would have been always easy to fill up the places of those animals which should be sent to zoological societies at home. There would have been no kind of difficulty in procuring the most rare inhabitants of the peninsula of India, since, had any desire been manifested on the part of the government to render the menagerie complete in all its departments, every civilian in the service would have been happy to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by his situation, and the ready aid given by the natives to any thing which the judge or collector may choose to undertake, to furnish the collection with such wild animals as were known to exist within the limits of his jurisdiction.

Very rare and beautiful animals may frequently be purchased in India at reasonable prices. A pair of the small Nipal cattle, the Yak, which furnish those long silky tails, so distinguished an ornament of every native court, and which when converted into *chowries* are always thought worthy of being affixed to handles of solid silver, were offered for sale by the proprietor for three hundred rupees. The tails form an article of commerce in great demand, but the animals which supply them are seldom seen upon the plains of India, as they will not live through the heats of the sultry months. The introduction of the breed in England, therefore, would not be difficult, and as an ornamental appendage to a nobleman's park, they would be in-