

## THE NATURALIST.

## HORN OF RHINOCEROS.

SIR, I have been requested to examine a superb specimen of the horn of a Rhinoceros, the property of Mr Cadman, whipmaker, Burlington-arcade. I use the word "superb" advisedly, as this horn is, without exception, a "giant among horns," and the finest I ever saw. It was brought over from the Cape of Good Hope with other horns, and, unfortunately, nothing is known of its history. There are four varieties of rhinoceros in South Africa, viz., 1. The black rhinoceros (*Borele*); 2. The two-horned black rhinoceros (*Keitlox*); 3. The common white rhinoceros (*Mochoch*); 4. The long-horned white rhinoceros (*Kobaoba*). The horns of the two first species seldom exceed 18 inches in length. The horn of the common white rhinoceros inclines backwards, and seldom exceeds 2 feet in length, and is never found over 3 feet. It is therefore most probable that the specimen now before me was once the nose ornament of the *Kobaoba*, the long-horned species. This is much the most rare of the two species of white rhinoceros, being found far in the interior of Africa. As the horn is now placed before me on the table, its measurements are as follows: total length, 3ft. 8in.; circumference at base, 1ft. 11in.; at the tip, 2in.; its weight is 15½lb. It tapers upwards with a most graceful curve, and its proportions are exceedingly elegant. It is not altogether round, but is slightly flattened on its anterior aspect and sides, so that in section it would somewhat resemble a bayonet.

I must remind my readers that the horn of the rhinoceros is a horn in the true acceptation of the word. It may, in fact, be said to be a pyramid-like mass of skin or hair hardened into horn. If we examine the skeleton of a rhinoceros we shall find on the nose a roughened bony disc, and it is upon this disc that the horn is attached by means of a hollow at its base, reminding us much of the fleshy part of an artichoke after the leaves and crown of fibrous material have been removed. Its structure is fibrous, and towards the base the fibres becoming loose look like hair. The circumstance, moreover, of its being placed over the bones of the nose prevents any concussion of the brain, even when used with the greatest violence, it is thus one of the most powerful weapons of defence and offence in the whole animal kingdom, and we know from the well-authenticated accounts of travellers how the rhinoceros will meet the elephant in deadly combat and, waiting his opportunity, "will drive his terrible horn up to the hilt in the carcass of his huge adversary." Again, the rhinoceros will make short work of a man and horse, as was the case with Mr Oswell, who tells the story how that a wounded rhinoceros made a sudden charge at his horse, which happened to be unsteady at the moment, and thrust his horn completely through its body, so that the point of the tremendous weapon struck the rider's leg through the saddle-flap at the other side. Wishing to see how this story would agree with actual measurements, I have measured the girth of one of the troop horses in the regiment, and find it to be 77 inches; the length of the horn at present in my possession is 44 inches; dividing, therefore, the horse's girth by 3, I should be overstating the mark by saying that the horse was 26 inches through the chest, from the skin of the side, to the saddle-flap immediately opposite. If, therefore, Mr Oswell's rhinoceros had worn a horn as long as that now before me, and the horse he was riding was as big as a Life Guard trooper (which is very unlikely), the horn would not only have been quite long enough to transfix the trooper's chest, and strike the saddle-flap on the opposite side, but there would have been 18 inches to spare. I have therefore no hesitation in stating that a formidable living battering-ram, such as a long-horned white rhinoceros, is quite capable of inflicting a terrible wound as described by Mr Oswell. But, besides the horn of the beast being a weapon of defence as occasion demands, I believe that its more frequent use is to clear away a path in the dense jungle—this path being made by the beast for his own use in the first instance, and then afterwards taken advantage of by other beasts of the forest. If we were compelled to assign a positive and actual duty to each animal in the creation, I should say that the duty of the rhinoceros is to walk as Pioneer to the army of wild beasts in their march through the forest to their feeding-quarters, and their canteens—the drinking fountains. His horn, well in advance of his gigantic body, would form a capital clearing instrument to break through the masses of "wait-a-bit" jungle; nor would his body suffer from bruises or scratches, as it is defended by a ponderous coat of skin-armour, or, in the words of an ancient writer, "he is covered over with strong scales upon his body like the wings of a dragon, coming from his back down to his belly." What, therefore, could be a better machine for cutting paths in the forest than a rhinoceros?

Rhinoceros' horn was of course included in the pharmacopœia of our ancestors, who powdered up and swallowed as medicine bits of nearly all birds, beasts, fishes, and reptiles; and a pharmacopœia of 1712 tells us gravely, in all sober earnest, "That the rhinoceros' horn is used as the Unicorn, and is good against all contagious and malignant fevers, for being a high alkaly, both fixed and volatile, it encounters and destroys the malignant acids which stir up and influence the most pernicious diseases; it is reckoned a singular sudorifick." It was also believed by Eastern nations to have the power of detecting poison, for that if poison were placed in a cup made of it, effervescence would take place. There are some magnificent specimens of Rhinoceros horns, carved into vases and cups, in the Chinese part of the Exhibition. In our own country it is principally used to make walking-sticks and riding-whips, a purpose to which it is admirably suited, as it takes a most beautiful polish. I know of two driving-whips, in possession of friends of mine, which were cut out of a single horn by Mr Cadman. These whips are 33in. long, in an unbroken piece, whereas the horn above described exceeds them by many inches in length. It would be a great pity to cut up and destroy such a fine specimen of natural history as a horn 3ft. 8in. in length, and I trust it will not be done.

FRANK BUCKLAND, 2nd Life Guards.

## NOTES AND QUESTIONS ON NATURAL HISTORY.

CURIOUS COLT.—A man named Pike called on me this morning and informed me has a curious colt. One fore-leg has the perfect hoof of an ox; one of the hinder is also that of an ox, but very much mis-shapen. The colt

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