



A Book of Zoology for Boys.

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THE HIPPOPOTAMUS, RHINOCEROS, AND TAPIR.

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XIV.

The Hippopotamus, Rhinoceros,
and Tapir.

THOUGH these three kinds of creatures belong to different genera, there is a certain family likeness among them that entitles them to be classed together ; and since there are not many species of each, they will conveniently form a group.

Of late the hippopotamus has been the most notorious of the three ; though he is far from being as interesting an animal as the rhinoceros. Since, however, he is at present the most popular, we shall give him the foremost place in our sketch.

The Hippopotamus was known to the Greeks and Romans. His name is Greek, and, as every one knows, signifies the River-horse. Why so called ? you may ask—since between this unwieldy creature and the beautiful horse there does not appear a single point of resemblance. The answer is, that the cry of the hippopotamus was fancied to resemble the neighing of a horse ; and in some respects this is really the case. Hence the misnomer. The Dutch of the Cape Colony call the creature a Cow, or Sea-cow, which is also an ill-adapted name. The cow is well enough, for the head and mouth of the animal bear a very striking resemblance to those of a broad-muffled cow ; but what the

“sea” has to do with it is not so clearly understood : since the hippopotamus is found only in fresh water—in lakes and rivers.

Every one knows that this huge creature is of amphibious habits ; and lives equally well on land, in the water, or even under the water. It requires air, however, and at intervals rises to the surface to breathe. On such occasions it usually projects a jet of water from its nostrils—in other words, it spouts, after the manner of the whales.

It is altogether herbivorous ; and grass and the leaves of succulent plants form its subsistence. A vast quantity of these are required to sustain it ; and a single individual will consume as much as two hundred pounds' weight in a day.

The hippopotamus, notwithstanding its formidable appearance, is not a dangerous enemy if suffered to go unmolested, or rather if persons do not come in its way. When wounded, however, or even intruded upon in its solitary haunts, it will attack man himself ; and a boat or canoe passing along a river frequented by these creatures is in danger of suffering a similar fate to that resulting from an encounter with the great whale—that is, of being tossed out of the water or broken to pieces.

The River-horse, or Sea-cow (whichever you prefer to call the creature), is exclusively confined to the African continent ; and is found in all the great lakes and rivers from the Cape Colony to the southern limits of the Sahara. It is indigenous to the Upper Nile ; but does not show itself in the lower half of that river. In fact, its range appears to be exactly coterminal with that of the African elephant.

There is a question about the number of species. For long it was supposed there was only one, but now it is ascertained that two, or even more, exist. The hippo-

potami of the Nile differ considerably from each other and also from the species known as Sea-cow in South Africa; while a smaller kind than either has been observed in the rivers of Western Africa.

The *Rhinoceros* is altogether a more curious and interesting animal than the hippopotamus; but, being more common, and oftener encountered by modern travellers, it is at present less an object of curiosity.

Of rhinoceroses at least seven distinct species are known—three of them being Asiatic, and four African.

The largest of all is the Indian rhinoceros, which inhabits a part of Bengal and the countries beyond—Burmah, Siam, and Cochin China. This species is easily distinguished from the others by the thick rough skin, which is placed on the animal's body in such a fashion as to resemble a coat of ancient armour. The singular protuberances have a complete resemblance to the "bosses" which were worn on the shields and breast-plates of warriors of the olden time.

A second species, the Warak, which inhabits Java, is somewhat similarly accoutred; but the third Asiatic kind, the Sumatran rhinoceros, has a smoother skin—more resembling that of the African rhinoceros.

These last mentioned are denizens of the African continent; but especially of the regions extending northward from the Cape. They do not all four frequent the same district; but two, and sometimes three of them, are found in one locality. They are distinguished as the black and white rhinoceroses—there being two species of the black, and two of the white. The black ones are much fiercer than their white congeners; although the latter are by far the largest, and present a far more formidable appearance, from the extreme length of their horns.

The *Tapir* was for a long time supposed to be exclusively an American animal, but later research