

BURMA

PAST AND PRESENT

WITH

PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF THE COUNTRY

BY

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Ἦδη μὲν πολέων κεκορήμεθ' ἀέθλων.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

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which was attached to our corps. On this occasion we came upon three tigers, and bagged them all.

After four years I left my regiment, and entered the Arakan Commission, in other words, I left military duty, and began to take a part in the civil administration of the province. In 1846 I was promoted to the grade of Deputy Commissioner, and placed in charge of the Sandoway district. It was in the interior of this district that I first shot a rhinoceros. A native huntsman told me that it was the habit of the rhinoceros to deposit its dung from day to day on the same spot. He added that if I would accompany him to a certain spot which he mentioned he could show me one rhinoceros, if not several. I could scarcely believe him, but the promised sport overpowered all other considerations. I placed myself under his guidance. We started about midnight, and proceeded through the jungle by torchlight. It was still dark when we halted under a gigantic peepul tree,* put out our torches, and waited for the morning.

Dawn was just breaking when I saw two large forms approaching, looming through the twilight. The first was passing me within ten paces. I fired both barrels of my heavy rifle. The brute fell at once ; the other one escaped. The balls had struck the animal behind the left foreleg ; its death must

* *Ficus religiosa*.

have been almost instantaneous. On examining the ground round about, I found that the animals had been wallowing in a pool. A track ran from this pool, past the peepul tree, to a dense forest of trees which covered the hills beyond. No doubt the animals remained in the shades of the forest during the heat of the day. At night they descended into the low lands to feed. About thirty yards from the peepul tree, on the way to the forest, was a heap of dung. Possibly, if the two animals had not been interrupted, they would have halted at the same spot. My huntsman declared they would have done so, and I see no reason to doubt his word.

The animal shot was a fine male specimen of the *Rhinoceros Sondaicus*, the lesser one-horned rhinoceros.* It is about a third smaller than *R. Indicus*. It is readily distinguished from the *R. Indicus* by having the tubercles of the hide uniformly of the same small size, also by having a fold or plait of the skin crossing the nape, in addition to that behind the shoulder blades.

I have also shot several specimens of the two other species of Rhinoceros which exist in Burma, namely, the *Ceratorhinus Crossii*, and *Rhinoceros Sumatrensis*. Both are two-horned. In the former type the hide is comparatively thin, of a pale clay colour, covered with longish brown hairs. The skin

* Blyth's "Catalogue of Mammals and Birds," page 51.

is not tessellated nor tuberculated, nor does it form a coat of mail.* The latter type is a much smaller species. It has a rugose black skin, clad with



HEAD OF A RHINOCEROS.

bristly hairs. I have often heard natives speak of its "eating" fire. They say it has a propensity to attack the night fires of travellers. When Professor Oldham was engaged on a geological survey in the jungles of the Mergui district, his camp fires

* I shot a very fine male specimen of this species in the Tavoy district. It was described and figured by my late friend, Mr. Edward Blyth, the eminent naturalist. (See the "Bengal Asiatic Society's Journal," vol. xxi. p. 156.) Mr. Blyth was of opinion that the specimen I shot served to settle the question in his favour against Grey's assignment of this species to *Rhinoceros Sumatrensis*, which, as stated in the text, is a much smaller species.

were attacked and dispersed by an animal which is supposed to have belonged to this species.

The Rhinoceros tribe wander about much during the night in search of food, when they frequent marshy ground, and wallow in its mud. During the day time they prefer high ground, where such is to be found in the vicinity of their feeding places. When disturbed they utter a peculiar shrill cry, not unlike the scream of a steam whistle. "As is well known, the existing Asiatic rhinoceroses are sharply differentiated from those of Africa by the presence, throughout life, of well-developed and functional incisor teeth."* The one-horned† species has eight incisors, four in the upper, and four in the lower jaw; and the double-horned‡ half this number. The form of the lower incisors are peculiarly calculated for uprooting plants, and stripping off the bark of trees, which form its favourite food. The horns are not

* Professor W. H. Flower.

† "*Rhinoceros unicornis* is generally supposed to be the Hebrew 'Reem,' or Unicorn of Scripture (Numbers xxiii. 72; Deut. xxxiii. 17; Job xxxix. 9, 10; Isaiah xxxiv. 7). In the Septuagint, or Greek version of the Old Testament, the word is translated *Μονοκέρας*, or Unicorn, except in Isaiah, where it is rendered *Αδρῶν* (or the mighty or powerful ones). Some are of opinion that the word signified the Oryx, observing that 'Reem' is the Arabic name for a species of wild-goat or gazelle. The better opinion seems to be that the animal or animals intended to be designated in most of the passages quoted, if not in all, was or were the *Rhinoceros unicornis*, or great Asiatic one-horned Rhinoceros. The description in Job (chap. xxxix.) would almost forbid the conclusion that any animal was in the writer's mind except one of surpassing bulk and indomitable strength."—English Cyclopædia, p. 589.

‡ The skull of the two-horned rhinoceros figured above, is peculiar in having *two* incisors on the left of the lower jaw, altogether *five*.

attached to the skull, as generally supposed, but to the hide; are solid, and formed of congregated parallel horny fibres. They are much valued by the Chinese, and other Eastern nations, for certain alleged restorative properties, and as remedies for epilepsy, and against the effects of poison.*

I have also shot a tapir † in the same locality as the above. It is a most inoffensive animal. Its flesh is not good to eat, and it affords no trophy worth taking away. After killing one, though I often came upon their footprints, I never afterwards followed them up.

There are four species of Bovidæ in Burma: *Bos Gaurus*, *B. Frontalis*, *B. Sondaicus* and *Bubulus Arni*; a number of each of which I have shot, and kept fine specimens of their heads. The first named is the grandest species, and attains, like the elephant, a finer development in Burma than elsewhere. The horns are short and thick, and the skull large and very massive. The largest I shot stood twenty-one hands at the shoulder. The bulls are very

* In the narrative of the "Voyage of Mr. James Lancaster," who visited the Indian Seas with "three tall ships in the yeere 1591," when off a town situated between Malacca and Pegu he speaks of the horn of the Abatto or unicorn being considered as an antidote against poison. He states: "We sent commodities to their king to barter for Amber-griese, and for the hornes of Abatto, whereof the king onely hath the traffique in his hands. Now this Abatto is a beast which hath one horne onely in her forehead, and is thought to be the female Vnicorne, and is highly esteemed of all the Moores in those parts as a most soueraigne remedie against poyson!"—Hakluyt, vol. ii. p. 491.

† *Tapirus Malayanus*.