

NATURAL HISTORY

BY THE

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"ANECDOTES OF ANIMALS," ETC.

*WITH FOUR HUNDRED AND EIGHTY ORIGINAL
DESIGNS BY WILLIAM HARVEY*

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sounds with which they are familiar, indicating their position. Incredible as this account may appear, it is actually the method in which the settlements along Caney Creek and in the Brazos Bottoms have been of late years in a great measure relieved of this dangerous annoyance."

The Peccary alone of all animals appears to have resisted the terrors of the gun, and a herd of them will attack men with fire-arms, and only seem to be more enraged by the report and flash of the guns. The Indians eat the animal, but its flesh is not considered to be particularly excellent, especially as the gland which the animal bears in its haunches has an evil effect on the meat, and causes it to become unfit for use in a very short time. Its colour is a greyish black, caused by the colour of the bristles, which are ringed at intervals with grey, straw-colour, and black.

Sub-family *d. Rhinocerina.*

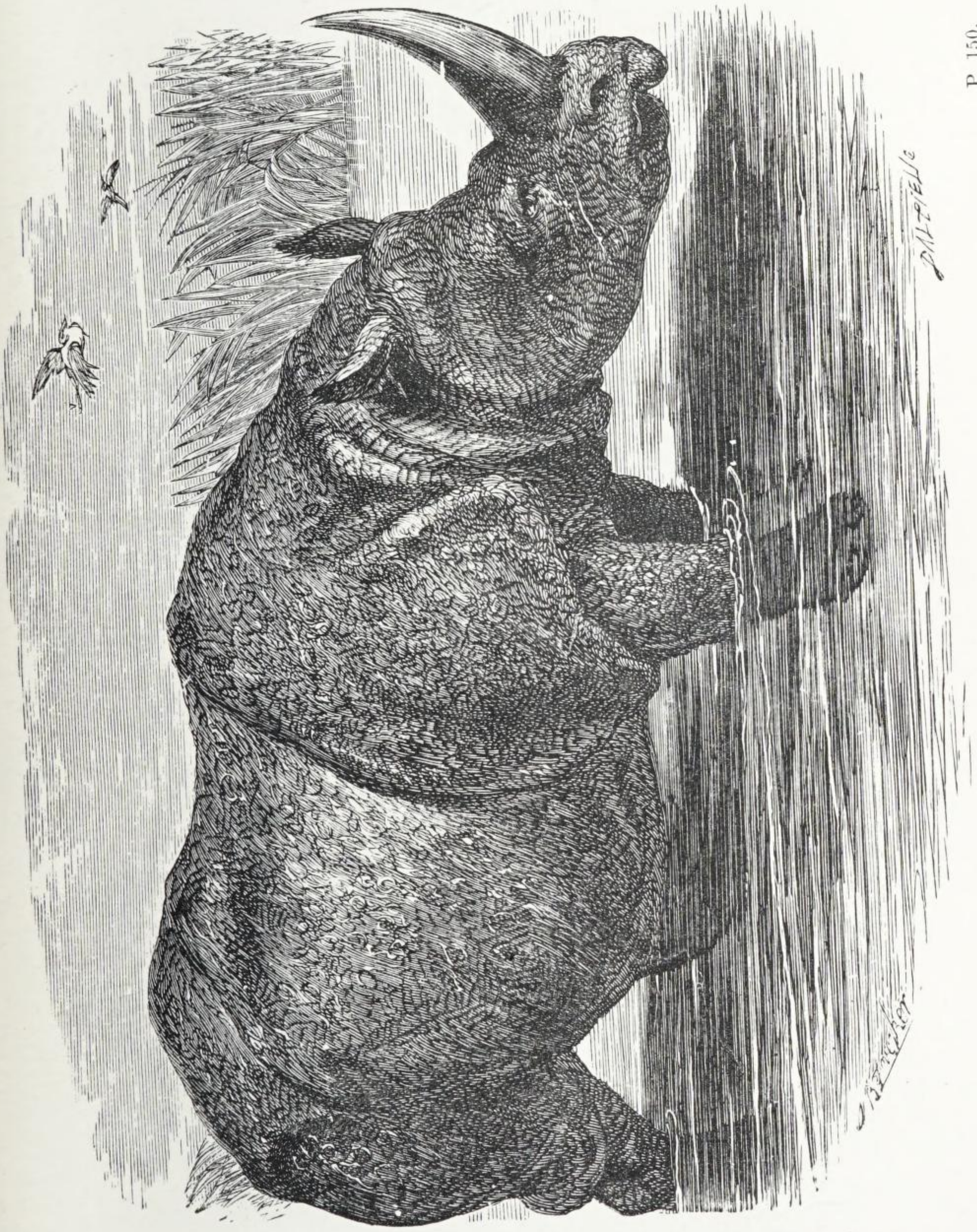
RHINOCĒROS.—(Gr. *ῥίς*, or *ῥίς*, a nose; *κέρας*, a horn.)



Unicornis (Lat. *Unus*, one; *cornu*, a horn), *the Rhinoceros.*

The RHINOCEROS.—There are, apparently, six species of this formidable animal. Their chief peculiarity, the so-called horn, is a mass of fibres matted together, and closely resembling the fibres of whalebone. Their feet are divided into three toes, incased in hoofs. The best description of the various species of the African Rhinoceros is given in Cumming.

“Of the Rhinoceros there are four varieties in South Africa, distinguished by the Bechuanas by the names of the ‘borèle,’ or black rhino-



INDIAN RHINOCEROS.

ceros, the 'keitloa,' or two-horned black rhinoceros, the 'muchocho,' or common white rhinoceros, and the 'kobaoba,' or long-horned white rhinoceros. Both varieties of the black rhinoceros are extremely fierce and dangerous, and rush headlong and unprovoked at any object which attracts their attention. They never attain much fat, and their flesh is tough, and not much esteemed even by the Bechuanas. Their food

RHINOCĒROS.



Bicornis (Lat. *bis*, twice; *cornu*, a horn), the *Two-horned Rhinoceros*, or *Rhinaster*.

consists almost entirely of the thorny branches of the wait-a-bit* thorns. Their horns are much shorter than those of the other varieties, seldom exceeding eighteen inches in length. They are finely polished with constant rubbing against the trees. The skull is remarkably formed, its most striking feature being the tremendous thick ossification in which it ends above the nostrils. It is on this mass that the horn is supported. The horns are not connected with the skull, being attached merely by the skin, and they may thus be separated from the head by means of a sharp knife. They are hard, and perfectly solid throughout, and are a fine material for various articles, such as drinking cups, mallets for rifles, handles for turners' tools, &c. &c. The horn is capable of a very high

* The reader must know that these are the thorns of a kind of acacia, which being several inches in length, very strong and very sharp, generally do cause any one who has fallen among them, to "wait a bit" until he finds himself free from them.

polish. The eyes of the rhinoceros are small and sparkling, and do not readily observe the hunter, provided he keep to leeward of them. The skin is extremely thick, and only to be penetrated by bullets hardened with solder. During the day, the rhinoceros will be found lying asleep, or standing indolently, in some retired part of the forest, or under the base of the mountains, sheltered from the power of the sun by some friendly grove of umbrella-topped mimosas. In the evening, they commence their nightly ramble, and wander over a great extent of country. They usually visit the fountains between the hours of nine and twelve o'clock at night, and it is on these occasions that they may be most successfully hunted, and with the least danger. The black rhinoceros is subject to paroxysms of unprovoked fury, often ploughing up the ground for several yards with its horn, and assaulting large bushes in the most violent manner. On these bushes they work for hours with their horns, at the same time snorting and blowing loudly; nor do they leave them in general until they have broken them into pieces. All the four varieties delight to roll and wallow in mud, with which their rugged hides are encrusted. Both varieties of the black rhinoceros are much smaller and more active than the white, and are so swift that a horse with a rider on its back can rarely overtake them. The two varieties of the white rhinoceros are so similar in habits, that the description of one will serve for both, the principal difference consisting in the length and set of the anterior horn; that of the common white rhinoceros averaging from two to three feet in length, and pointing backwards; while the horn of the long-horned white rhinoceros often exceeds four feet in length, and inclines forward from the nose.

“Both these varieties of rhinoceros attain an enormous size, being the animals next in magnitude to the elephant. They feed solely on grass, carry much fat, and their flesh is excellent, being preferable to beef. They are of a much milder and more inoffensive disposition than the black rhinoceros, rarely charging their pursuer. Their speed is very inferior to that of the other varieties, and a person well-mounted can overtake and shoot them.”

Several travellers have mentioned that there are certain birds which constantly attend the rhinoceros, and give him warning of approaching danger. Their accounts were either received with silent contempt, or treated with open ridicule, as preposterous extensions of the traveller's privilege of romancing. Here, however, we find the same author who has just been quoted, corroborating in every respect these disbelieved tales. His description of these birds is so interesting that I give it entire.

“Before I could reach the proper distance to fire, several ‘rhinoceros birds,’ by which he was attended, warned him of his impending danger, by sticking their bills into his ear, and uttering their harsh, grating cry. Thus aroused, he suddenly sprang to his feet, and crashed away through the jungle at a rapid trot, and I saw no more of him.

“ These rhinoceros birds are constant attendants upon the hippopotamus and the four varieties of rhinoceros, their object being to feed upon the ticks and other parasitic insects that swarm upon these animals. They are of a greyish colour, and are nearly as large as a common thrush: their voice is very similar to that of the misseltoe thrush. Many a time have these ever-watchful birds disappointed me in my stalk, and tempted me to invoke an anathema upon their devoted heads. They are the best friends the rhinoceros has, and rarely fail to awaken him, even in his soundest nap. ‘Chukuroo’ perfectly understands their warning, and, springing to his feet, he generally first looks about him in every direction, after which he invariably makes off.”

The organs of scent of the rhinoceros are very acute, and as the creature seems to have a peculiar faculty for detecting the presence of human beings, it is necessary for the hunters to use the greatest circumspection when they approach it, whether to avoid or to kill, as in the one case it may probably be taken with a sudden fit of fury, and charge at them, or in the other case, it may take the alarm and escape.

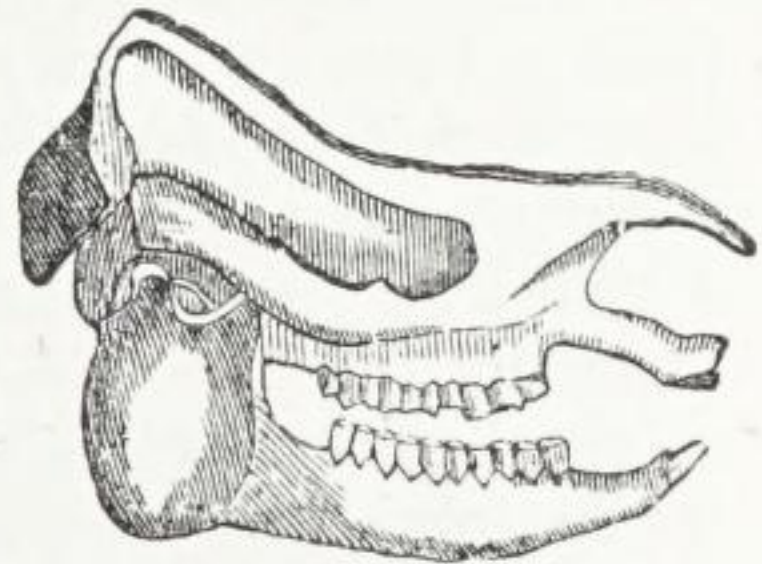
The Indian Rhinoceros is chiefly remarkable for the very deep foldings of the skin, which is so hard at the folds, that an ordinary leaden ball will often fail to penetrate sufficiently to cause a deep wound, and the hunters are consequently forced to harden their bullets with tin or solder.

It may be here remarked, that the so-called “horn” is not a true horn, being nothing but a process from the skin, and composed of a vast assemblage of hairs. If a thin transverse section of the horn of a rhinoceros is placed under a microscope, it will be seen that it is composed of a series of minute tubes, exactly like those of hair. Indeed it is possible to make an artificial rhinoceros horn, by gluing together a bundle of hairs, and if a transverse section of this composition is placed under the microscope, it almost exactly resembles the section of the rhinoceros horn. Round the base of the horn, and wherever it has been injured, the broken ends of the hairs stand out separately, and can be cut off.

The contempt with which the hunters, at all events the British hunters, appear to treat the rhinoceros is very amusing. If they want the skin or the horn, why, then they shoot it; but if they do not stand in need of such articles, and a rhinoceros comes in their way, they are obliged to pelt it away or drive it off as they would a cow.

Goblets, made of the horn, were formerly in high estimation as preservatives against poison. The Indian kings were accustomed to have their wine served up in these goblets, as they imagined that if any poison were introduced into the cup, the liquid would boil over, and betray its presence.

The upper lip is used by the rhinoceros as an instrument of prehension, with which it can grasp the herbage on which it feeds, or pick up small



SKULL OF THE RHINOCEROS.

fruit from the ground. The very tame rhinoceros in the Zoological Gardens will take a piece of bun or biscuit from a visitor's hand by means of its flexible upper lip.

The HIPPOPOTAMUS.—There is, in all probability, but one species of the Hippopotamus. It inhabits Africa exclusively, and is found in plenty

Sub-family *e. Hippopotamīna.*

HIPPOPOTĀMUS.—(Gr. ἵππος, a Horse; ποταμός, a River.)



Amphibūs (Gr. ἄμφι, on both sides; βίωω, I live), the *Hippopotamus*.

on the banks of many rivers in that country, where it may be seen gambolling and snorting at all times of the day.

These animals are quiet and inoffensive while undisturbed, but if attacked, they unite to repel the invader, and have been known to tear several planks from the side of a boat, and sink it. They can remain about five or six minutes under water, and when they emerge they make a loud and very peculiar snorting noise, which can be heard at a great distance.

The hide is very thick and strong, and is chiefly used for whips. The well-known "Cow-hides" are made of this material. Between the skin and flesh is a layer of fat, which is salted and eaten by the Dutch colonists of Southern Africa. When salted it is called Zee-koe speck, or Sea-cow's bacon. The flesh is also in some request.

The Hippopotamus feeds entirely on vegetable substances, such as