

AN
A B R I D G M E N T
OF
DR. GOLDSMITH'S
NATURAL HISTORY
OF
BEASTS AND BIRDS.

INTERSPERSED WITH
A VARIETY OF INTERESTING ANECDOTES,
AND ILLUSTRATED BY NEARLY
TWO HUNDRED ENGRAVINGS ON WOOD,
IN THE MANNER OF BEWICK.

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CHAP. XX.

THE ELEPHANT, THE RHINOCEROS, THE HIPPOPOTAMUS,
AND THE TAPIR.

THE ELEPHANT.

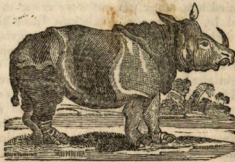


THE elephant is seen from seven to fifteen feet high, and, at first view, presents the spectator with an enormous mass of flesh, that seems scarcely animated. Its huge body, covered with a callous hide, without hair; its large misshapen legs, that seem scarcely formed for motion; its little eyes, pendulous ears, and long trunk, all concur to give it an air of extreme stupidity. But our prejudices soon subside on examining its history, and our astonishment is excited while we consider the various advantages it derives from so clumsy a conformation.

The eyes of this animal, as already observed, are very small, when compared with the enormous bulk of the body. But though their minuteness may at first appear deformed, on a more careful examination they are seen to exhibit a variety of expression, and to discover the various sensations by which they are moved.

The elephant is not less remarkable for the excellence of its hearing. Its ears are extremely large, and usually pendent; but can be raised and moved with perfect facility, and serve to wipe the animal's eyes, as well as to

THE RHINOCEROS.



THE rhinoceros is usually found about twelve feet long and from five to seven feet high, and the circumference of its body is nearly equal to its length. It is difficult to convey an accurate idea of this animal's shape, and yet there are few so remarkably formed. Its head is furnished with a hard and solid horn, projecting from the snout, sometimes above three feet in length; and were it not for this, that part would resemble the head of a hog: the upper lip, however, is much longer in proportion, and very pliable, serving to collect its food and deliver it into the mouth: the ears are large, erect, and pointed, and the eyes small and piercing. The skin is naked, rough, and so extremely thick as to turn the edge of a scimitar, or to resist a musket ball: it is of a dirty brown colour, and lies upon the body in folds, after a very peculiar manner. The belly hangs low; the legs are short, strong, and thick; and the hoofs are divided into three parts, each pointing forward.

It is worthy of remark, that the horn of this quadruped is a truly formidable weapon, growing from the solid bone, and pointed so as to inflict the most fatal wounds. The elephant, the boar, and the buffalo, are obliged to strike transversely with their weapons; but the rhinoceros employs all his force with every blow; so that the tiger will more willingly attack any other animal of the forest, than one whose strength is so justly employed. There

is no force, indeed, which this animal has to apprehend; defended on every side by a thick horny hide, which the claws of the lion are unable to pierce, and armed with a weapon that even the elephant does not choose to oppose.

The rhinoceros is a native of the deserts of Asia and Africa, and is usually found in those extensive forests that are frequented by the elephant and the lion. However, though peculiarly fitted for war, it is peaceful and harmless among its fellows of the brute creation; resting content in the consciousness of its own security. It subsists entirely upon vegetable food, is particularly fond of the prickly branches of trees, and even feeds upon such thorny shrubs, as would be dangerous to other animals either to gather or to swallow. The prickly points of these, however, may only serve to give a poignant relish to this creature's palate, and may answer the same grateful ends in seasoning its banquet, that spices do in heightening ours.

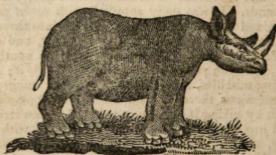
The rhinoceros, which was shewn at London in 1739, and described by Dr. Parsons, had been sent from Bengal. Though not above two years old, the expence of its carriage and food from India amounted to nearly a thousand pounds. It was daily supplied with seven pounds of rice mixed with three of sugar, divided into three portions: it also consumed much hay and grass, and drank considerable quantities of water. It was of a gentle disposition, and even permitted strangers to handle it; never attempting mischief, except when abused or hungry; on which occasions there was no method of appeasing its fury, but by giving it something to eat. When irritated, it would jump up against the walls of its room, with great violence, and make many efforts to escape; but it seldom attempted to attack its keeper, and was always submissive to his threats. It had a peculiar cry, between the grunting of a hog and the bellowing of a calf.

Another of these animals which was shewn at Exeter 'Change in the year 1791, would readily obey the orders of his keeper, in walking about to exhibit himself, and would even submit to be patted by the numerous spectators who came to visit him. His daily allowance of food consisted of twenty-eight pounds of clover, and the same weight of ship-biscuit, besides a prodigious quantity of

greens, and from ten to fifteen pails of water, which were given him at five pails a time. He was also very fond of sweet wines, of which he would often drink three or four bottles in the course of a few hours.

In the month of October 1792, this animal unfortunately slipped the joint of one of his fore-legs, and the accident brought on an inflammation, which, about nine months afterward, terminated in his death. He died in a caravan near Portsmouth, and the stench arising from his body was so intolerable, that a magistrate was under the necessity of ordering it to be immediately buried. This was accordingly done, on South Sea common; but about a fortnight afterward it was privately dug up at midnight, for the purpose of recovering its skin; which is now stuffed and deposited in one of the exhibition rooms at Exeter 'Change.

THE DOUBLE-HORNED RHINOCEROS.



This variety differs from the preceding animal in the appearance of its skin; which, instead of large and regularly marked folds, resembling armour, has merely a slight wrinkle across the shoulders and on the hinder parts, with a few fainter wrinkles on the sides; so that, when compared with the common rhinoceros, it appears almost smooth. The principal distinction, however, consists in the nos: being furnished with *two* horns, one of which is

smaller than the other, and situated above it. It is also asserted, that when the animal is in a quiet state, these horns are loose; but that on his being irritated, they become firm and immoveable.

Of the manners of this animal Mr. Bruce has given the following interesting description.—“ Besides the trees capable of most resistance,” says this traveller, “ there are in the vast forests within the rains, trees of a softer consistence, and of a very succulent quality; which seem destined for the principal food of the rhinoceros. For the purpose of gaining the highest branches of these, his upper lip is capable of being lengthened out, so as to increase his power of laying hold with it, in the same manner as the elephant does with his trunk. With this lip and the assistance of his tongue he pulls down the upper branches, which have most leaves, and these he devours first. Having stripped the tree of its branches, he does not abandon it; but, placing his snout as low in the trunk as he finds his horns will enter, he rips up the body of the tree, and reduces it to thin pieces like so many laths; and when he has thus prepared it, he embraces as much as he can in his monstrous jaws, and twists it round with as much ease as an ox would do a root of celery, or any small plant.

“ When pursued and in fear, this animal possesses an astonishing degree of swiftness, considering his size, the apparent unwieldiness of his body, his great weight before, and the shortness of his legs. He makes constantly from wood to wood, and forces himself into the thickest parts of them. The trees that are dead and dry are broken down, as with a cannon-shot, and fall behind him, and on his side, in all directions; while others, that are more pliable, or fuller of sap, are bent back by his weight and the velocity of his motions.”