

BIG GAME SHOOTING

EDITED BY

HORACE G. HUTCHINSON



SECOND VOLUME

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THE KING OF BEASTS

GRIVEY
LONDON
W.C.

When quite young they are warm grey in colour, the fur thick and woolly, and the spots very faintly defined.

Other carnivora are to be found in Africa, such as the caracal or African lynx (*Rooi-kat* of the Boers), the serval and other small cats, as well as the Cape hunting dog (*Lycan pictus*), the various jackals, the hyænas, the Aardwolf, a hyæna-like animal, the Abyssinian wolf, a beast almost as closely approaching the foxes as the wolves, and other creatures. These, however, can scarcely be classed as big game, in the sportsman's acceptance of the phrase; and, the writer's space being limited, they are accordingly passed by in favour of worthier objects of the hunter's rifle.



CHAPTER III

THE PACHYDERMS

By H. A. BRYDEN

THE ELEPHANT

ELEPHANTS have been pursued for their ivory with such determination, ever since fire-arms were introduced into Africa, that they have now become much restricted in their habitats, and have to be sought in the farthest and most remote portions of Central and East and West Africa. South Africa, where fifty years ago these huge mammals abounded, from middle Bechuanaland northward, is now practically shot out south of the Zambesi and Cunene rivers. Only a few troops are to be found here and there in Rhodesia, Gazaland, Zululand, and the Beira country. In Cape

at the passing elephant. Even thirty years ago, in the northern part of Matabeleland, natives still attacked the elephant with their axes, aiming their strokes at the heel; and the Achilles tendon once severed, the mighty game was rendered perfectly helpless. The finest and most daring hunters, whether white or black, in all Africa, were undoubtedly the Hamran Arabs, with whom Sir Samuel Baker hunted about the Nile tributaries of Abyssinia in the early 'sixties. These wonderful Nimrods possessed horses and rode recklessly. One of them would take his horse close up to an elephant, which would then give chase. As the monster pressed after the flying horseman, out would dash two other mounted hunters, armed with sharp swords. Riding right up to the heels of the elephant, one of these Arabs would suddenly leap from his saddle, and with one mighty two-handed stroke sever the tendon of the monster's hind leg. The elephant at once dislocated the foot in another stride or two, and was practically *hors de combat*. The other tendon was then similarly treated. The elephant bled to death; and thus, with two strokes of a sharp sword, the huge pachyderm was conquered. The Arabs were, as may be supposed, not always the victors in these heroic encounters, and fatal accidents occasionally happened among them. Sir Samuel Baker had much experience of the methods of these wonderful hunters, and always spoke and wrote of their magnificent courage in terms of the highest praise. One wonders, now that the Soudan has once more been opened up to Europeans, whether any

of the Hamran Arabs still survive. Their country lay beyond the western frontier of Abyssinia, where, even at the present day, a good deal of game is still to be found.

The flesh of the elephant is coarse and not very palatable to European sportsmen. It was once the fashion to speak of the foot, baked for many hours, as a particular delicacy. This mass of glutinous matter does not, however, at the present time, appear to recommend itself to the palate or the stomachs of English hunters. The heart is undoubtedly the best part of the elephant's anatomy for eating purposes. Roasted over the embers of the camp fire, this part of the animal will be found excellent eating, tender and well-tasted.

THE RHINOCEROS

Two kinds of rhinoceros have up to the present time been identified in Africa. These are the so-called white rhinoceros, with which I will deal first, and the common or black rhinoceros, the latter of which is still fairly common in many parts of the eastern and central regions of the continent. The white rhinoceros, which had always, apparently, a much more restricted habitat, is now, on the contrary, close upon the verge of extinction.

THE WHITE RHINOCEROS (*Rhinoceros simus*), *Chukuru* of the Bechuanas, *Umhoho* of the Matabele, sometimes called Burchell's, or the square-mouthed rhinoceros, is,—one may almost say was,—next to the

elephant, the largest of all the land mammals of Africa. Standing as much as 6 feet 6 inches in height at the withers, it measured in extreme length fully 16 or 17 feet. It was almost purely a grass feeder, and instead of having the prehensile upper lip, so characteristic of the bush-feeding black rhinoceros, the white rhinoceros was distinguished by a square blunt-lipped muzzle. The head was enormously large and unwieldy-looking, with the small eye set very far down towards the nostrils. The fore-horn was always much longer, and therefore much more prized by natives, than that of the common rhinoceros. In the good days, sixty years ago, when these beasts were common everywhere between the Molopo river and the Zambesi, some enormously long fore-horns were to be obtained as trophies. Native chiefs had them pared down and shaped into staffs and knobkerries, the finest of which were highly treasured. The longest recorded measurement of a white rhinoceros horn is 5 feet $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches. This magnificent specimen was brought to England by the renowned hunter Roualeyn Gordon-Cumming, and is now in the possession of Colonel W. Gordon-Cumming. In colour the white rhinoceros varied very little from the hue of the so-called black rhinoceros—a kind of dirty, brownish drab. How the animal came to get its name is difficult to understand. Possibly some early Boer hunter may have come across and slain one of these animals after it had been rolling in light-coloured mud, and so christened it forthwith *Wit Rhinoster*. Anyhow, the name was

undoubtedly given to it by some Dutch colonist, and the beast will continue to be called the white rhinoceros long after it has been exterminated from the face of Africa.

The habitat of these animals was, as I have said, a restricted one. Within the last 150 years, at all events, they were, until quite recently, found only in the wide countries between the Orange and a line formed by the Cunene and Zambesi rivers. A few years since it was rumoured that some animal bearing a strong resemblance to this rhinoceros had been met with in Central Africa. This suspicion has been verified; Africa is always full of surprises; and a fresh find of the white rhinoceros has come to light in the regions about Lado, on the White Nile.

The white rhinoceros was sluggish in disposition, sleeping much by day, drinking towards dusk or the early part of the night, beginning to feed towards afternoon, grazing its way towards water, and continuing to eat during the night and early morning. Many a rhinoceros has been shot while recumbent and fast asleep in some shady part of the veldt during the heat of the day. These animals (of either species) are, however, nearly always attended by the well-known rhinoceros birds,—usually the *Buphaga erythorhynca*, a species of starling,—and, thanks to the vigilance of these friends, the approach of the hunter is often detected, and the great beast moves off and escapes. Possessing excellent powers of scent, the white rhinoceros had peculiarly poor sight, so much

so that the sportsman might, and often did, completely escape its observation, while standing or lying motionless, even although the great creature passed within a dozen yards. These animals were extremely shy and inoffensive, and unless absolutely attacked would nearly always run the instant they got wind of a human being. A shot well planted through heart or both lungs would usually account for a white rhinoceros pretty quickly, but if not well hit they would run for miles and probably escape. From its enormous bulk and weight, a heavy bullet, from a .4- to .8-bore, was usually deemed necessary in attacking this game; but the powerful modern weapons now in use, a .400 or .450, using smokeless powder, and a solid bullet of not less than 480 grains, would be quite sufficient to achieve the downfall even of so mighty a quadruped.

Occasionally the white rhinoceros, inoffensive and retiring though it was upon most occasions, would, when wounded or worried by hunters, turn upon them. Oswald was once hunting one of these animals in Bechuanaland, and had severely wounded it. His horse took fright and refused to stir, and the huge beast, walking quietly up, thrust its long fore-horn clean through it, and tossed both horse and rider into the air, killing the one and severely hurting the other. Mr. W. Finaughty, a great Matabeleland hunter in the old days, was also badly injured by one of these rhinoceroses in the Mashona country, about a generation since, and other serious and even fatal accidents have occurred with these animals.

The white rhinoceros, although normally a sluggish and unwieldy beast, could, when alarmed or excited, run with extraordinary speed. Its trot was a fast one, but when it broke into a gallop it required a good horse to run up to it. The female of this species had a curious trick of keeping her calf running, when danger threatened, just in front of her huge snout, guiding it at the same time with wonderful dexterity by means of her fore-horn.

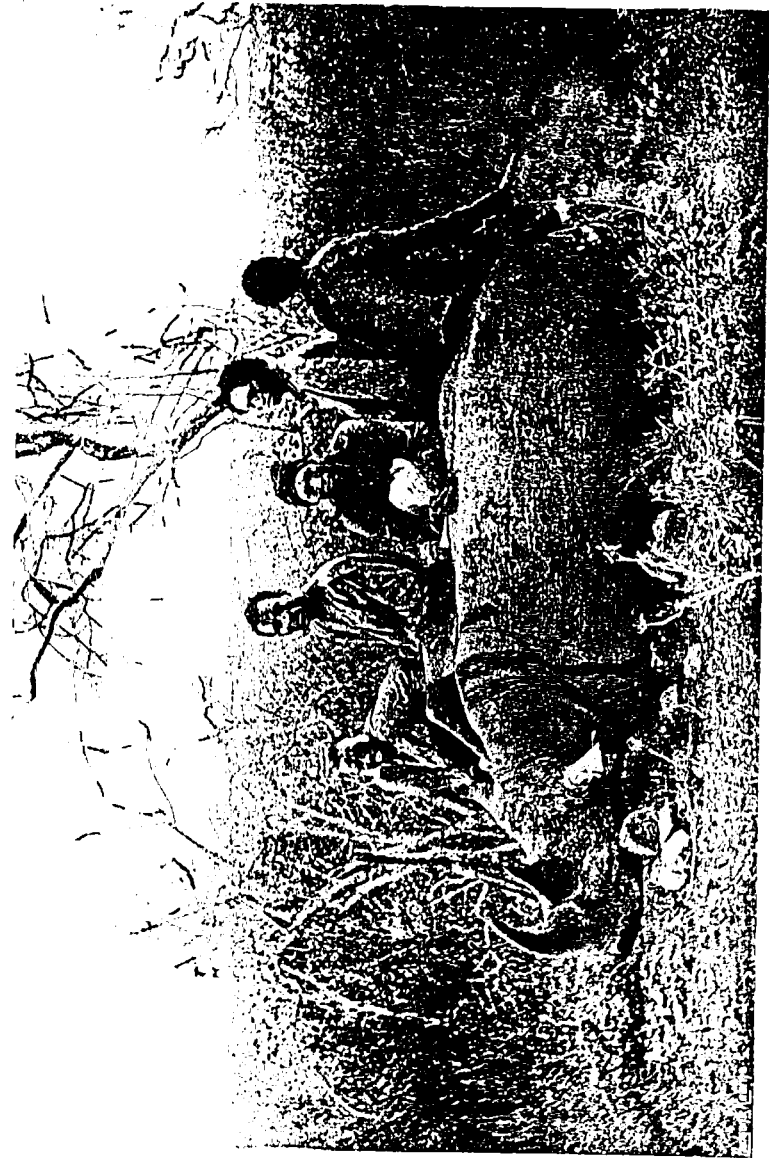
The numbers of these great creatures slain by the hunters of from thirty to sixty years ago is almost incredible. Oswald and Vardon shot eighty-nine rhinoceroses, many of them the white species, in one season. C. J. Andersson killed to his own rifle some sixty of them during a season in South-West Africa. They were shot in those days in large numbers by hunters lying out at night watching the desert watering-places. As many as eight of these huge creatures would be butchered by a single gunner during a night's shooting. It was a shocking waste of life, and by the year 1885 the slaughter had begun to have its inevitable effect, for rhinoceroses seem always to have been slow-breeding creatures.

The flesh of this rhinoceros was looked upon by all South African hunters as extremely good. Selous, a discriminating critic, speaks of it in terms of high approval. The hump, cut off and roasted in the skin in an ant-hill oven or a hole in the ground, was the prime portion of the beast. At the end of the rainy season, about March, the great creatures were at their best and fattest; but the white rhinoceros always

carried much more flesh and fat than its ill-conditioned congener.

Until within the last ten years very few specimens of this almost extinct creature were to be found in European collections. Happily some fine examples have been secured by Mr. Coryndon and Mr. Varndell, and are to be seen at the Natural History Museum, Mr. Walter Rothschild's Museum at Tring, in Hertfordshire, and at the Cape Town Museum. At the present time a few of these gigantic mammals still linger in North-East Mashonaland. In Zululand, about the dense reed-beds and coverts at the junction of the Black and White Umvolosi rivers, and probably in one or two parts of South-East Africa they are still to be found.

THE BLACK RHINOCEROS (*Rhinoceros bicornis*) is, as I have said, the common rhinoceros of Africa, and has a very wide distribution. Its most northerly limit is now probably in the region south-east of Kassala, where I believe these animals are still found. From there southward it ranges as far as North Mashonaland and Matabeleland, along the Zambesi valley, and in Portuguese South-East Africa, where it is, however, from much persecution, becoming scarce. It is probably most abundant at the present day in the little-known regions between Gallalaland and the Nile, and in the less explored parts of Uganda and British East Africa. It occurs sparingly in the Portuguese province of Angola, but in West Africa, north of the Equator, it seems to be entirely lacking.



BLACK RHINOCEROS.



ON SENTRY OVER THE DEAD.

Known to the Boers as *Zwart rhinoster*, it is called by the Abyssinians *Orarisse*, by the Swahilis of East Africa *Faru*, by the Somalis *Weel*, by the Zulus and Matabele *Upejana* and *Umpeygan*, and by the Bechuanas *Borele* and *Keitloa*.

It used to be supposed that different species or sub-species of the black rhinoceros existed. This idea has long since been exploded, and it is now well ascertained that, although slight variation in the shape and length of the horns may occur, only one species of the common rhinoceros is found throughout the length and breadth of Africa.

The black rhinoceros stands, in occasional specimens, as much as 5 feet 8 inches at the shoulder,—taken in a straight line,—but average examples reach little more than 5 feet 2 inches. In East Africa the species seems to be somewhat less in stature than in those found farther south. The fore-horn is usually, as in the case of the white rhinoceros, much longer than the posterior horn; but even in the days when these animals were as plentiful as pigs—as they actually were in places—the fore-horns never attained the magnificent proportions of those of the white rhinoceros. The finest horn recorded from South Africa¹ measures 3 feet 5 inches in length; another horn from East Africa reaches 3 feet 8 inches. To outsiders it seems difficult to account for the great demand that existed and still exists for rhinoceros horns—a demand far exceeding the requirements of the ordinary trophy hunter or collector.

¹ *Records of Big Game*, Rowland Ward and Co.

It is probable that a very large proportion of African rhinoceros horns are exported to China, where, ground up into powder, they are eagerly purchased as medicine for various ailments.

The black rhinoceros spends its day very much as did its white congener, and has much the same characteristics. It sleeps during the hot hours, usually in thick bush or beneath a spreading tree, but occasionally in the full blaze of the sun, upon an open plain, with its head pointing down-wind. Waking towards afternoon, it feeds to its watering-place; after drinking, between 6 and 10 p.m., it browses away again to its feeding-grounds till about 9 o'clock a.m., when it seeks repose. Its hearing and smell are acute, but its sight is extremely poor, so poor that it will pass a man within a score of yards without apparently making him out at all. As its prehensile upper lip indicates, it browses chiefly among bush, plucking its sustenance from various astringent shrubs and the foliage of the various bush acacias. It devours, too, certain plants that grow upon the great grass plains. It has a most singular habit of depositing its dung in a hollow which it scoops out for the purpose, but scatters it about thereafter with its horn and nose, ploughing up deep furrows as it does so. The white rhinoceros never seems to have indulged in this practice. The black rhinoceros lies with its back to the wind and, so soon as it gets a whiff of anything that it deems suspicious, sets off at a sharp trot. When charging, or making off at its best pace, it runs at a clumsy, bounding

canter, which is sufficiently fast to make a good horse gallop its hardest.

This rhinoceros is not a difficult beast to kill, and, if approached up-wind during the daytime, may often be despatched with a single bullet. Unless hit, however, through the heart, vertebra (the neck shot is a very good one), brain, or both lungs, the beast will go on everlastingly and make good its escape. If the brain is aimed for, the bullet should be planted between the ear and the eye, a few inches behind the eye. Even when severely wounded the black rhinoceros will, if the hunter stands perfectly still, unless it gets his wind, pass him within less than twenty yards. There is, I think, little doubt that this rhinoceros is, on the whole, a more irritable and savage beast than its white congener. Many accidents, some fatal, have happened with it. Some of these accidents may have been the result of pure mischance. As, for example, when a black rhinoceros in East Africa, getting the wind of a passing caravan, may in its headlong course, without meaning a direct charge, blunder right through the line of men, upsetting and even injuring some. There is a ludicrous account of such a charge in one of the quaint chronicles of the old Cape commanders, which relates how Governor Simon Van der Stell, on an expedition up country in 1685, was, with his waggons and retinue, charged furiously by one of these animals and much damage inflicted.

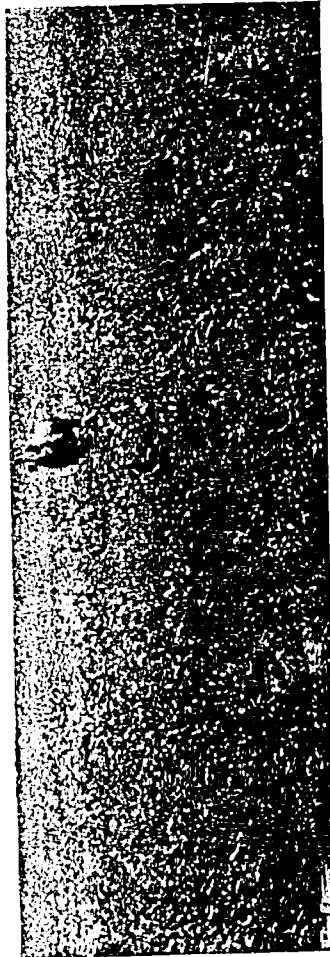
Some writers and hunters speak of this rhinoceros as if it were a comparatively harmless beast;

but the sportsman, unused to the habits of this kind of game, would do well not to attempt to take any liberties with it. There have been many accidents from the charge of the black rhinoceros. Oswell, for example, who had a serious mishap with a white rhinoceros, was nearly finished off altogether by one of the black species. The great beast came close upon him, as he lay in the grass, and he had to run. He was chased, tossed high into the air, and so severely wounded in the thigh as to be crippled for some time. One of Mr. C. V. A. Peel's Somali hunters was tossed in Somaliland, a few years since, but escaped with his life. A native, hunting with C. J. Andersson towards the Okavango, was, as he lay concealed by a tuft of bush, slain with a single lightning-like stroke of a black rhinoceros's horn, his skull being cleft, and his brains scattered on the soil. And many other serious and even fatal mishaps have taken place in Africa from the charge or attack of this rhinoceros. It is, however, consoling to remember that if the first charge of the beast can be dodged or avoided, he commonly blunders straight on and returns no more. In nineteen cases out of twenty it may be said that the sportsman will safely bag his rhino without much trouble or difficulty. But in the twentieth he may meet with an irascible, troublesome beast which may give him some very uncomfortable moments.

If it were not for the rhinoceros birds which are so frequently found in attendance on this animal, the rhinoceros would be much more often surprised at



A RHINO WITH A 57-INCH HORN.



CHARGING

its siesta than it is. These birds are, as I have said, members of the great starling family—a family famous for its attendance upon animals. Greyish brown in colour, with ferruginous tail feathers and pale fulvous breast, rump, and under-parts, they have orange-coloured bills with red tips. Their claws are extraordinarily developed, manifestly for the purpose of hanging on to the skin of an animal in any position and at almost any angle. They have an extraordinary liking for various kinds of animals, notably domestic cattle, wild buffalo, and rhinoceros. They are most frequent attendants upon rhinos in all parts of Africa, freeing their big friends of ticks and other insects, and are invariably sure of a welcome. In return for the friendship extended to them, they warn the rhinoceros of the approach of danger, flying into the air restlessly above the animal's head, and uttering shrill cries. The rhinoceros knows at once what these warnings portend, and usually makes off at a good pace. It is not, however, invariably attended by these birds, and the gunner, especially on a hot day, may be able to approach, even upon a wide, open grass plain, without the least difficulty, and get his shot within twenty yards. A man must, of course, be sure of himself and his shooting in such a situation.

The amount of black rhinoceroses slain during the last fifty years in Africa must have been enormous. In South Africa, between 1840 and 1880, they were shot by thousands. In East Africa, where they are still abundant, the earlier hunters of the middle

'eighties shot very large numbers of them. Sir John Willoughby, Sir Robert Harvey, and two friends, bagged in their expedition, made in the year 1886, as many as fifty of these animals. All this seems rather senseless slaughter; there were no fine trophies to be acquired; and the sportsman seems usually to have shot for the mere purpose of killing. It was, until quite recently, supposed that none but weapons of heavy calibre were fitted for attacking this huge mammal. Mr. Selous and others have exploded that theory, and still more lately Mr. Neumann has proved that even so slender a missile as the .303 bullet (the solid military pattern) is quite sufficient to account for these animals. Many sportsmen of great experience still hold, however, with the larger bores and a heavy bullet of great smashing power. A double 8-bore of the Paradox type is a first-rate weapon for this kind of game. A still more preferable arm, in the writer's opinion, would be one of the latest .450 rifles, burning cordite powder and delivering with the solid bullet a blow of enormous striking force. A double barrel of this kind is, in my opinion, an ideal weapon for all kinds of heavy game. For rhinoceros, which are extremely thick-skinned beasts, the bullets should be slightly hardened.

In Somaliland and Abyssinia, and among Soudan Arabs, the hide is in much request for the purpose of making shields. As many as fifteen to thirty fighting shields can be cut from a single rhino skin. In Abyssinia, only the men of higher importance are

allowed to be in possession of rhinoceros horns. From these sword handles and drinking cups are manufactured. The cups thus made are popularly supposed to detect the presence, or neutralise the effect of poison poured into them. This is a very ancient, but, of course, utterly baseless superstition, which obtains still in India, and was not unknown in Italy and other countries of Europe during the Middle Ages.

THE HIPPOPOTAMUS

Hippopotami are still found in most rivers of the African interior. A few schools still linger in the Orange River, in that wild and almost unknown western region, never yet explored by the white man, where for more than three hundred miles the great river, running seawards, below the Augrabies Falls, is shut in by vast mountain cliffs, which render it almost completely inaccessible to the human eye. A few yet remain in the eastern reaches of the Limpopo river. Beyond the Limpopo they are found in some few rivers of South-Eastern Africa, including the Busi, Pungwe, and others. From the Shiré and Zambesi, northwards to the Upper Nile waters and the rivers and lakes of Abyssinia, these unwieldy monsters are to be met with in most parts of Africa in more or less abundance. I found them on the Botletli river, Ngamiland, in 1890, and they are still to be met with in that river, in the Chobi, the Okavango, the Cunene, and other systems of South, Central, and

or to cross from one piece of country to another. The tender shoots of bushes and shrubs, grass, and fruit seem to form its main dietary. Hidden up during the day in some sheltered and secluded spot, it sleeps heavily, and is then to be easily approached. At all other times it is a most shy and wary beast. These animals are apparently not very numerous. Few, if any, Englishmen appear to have shot them, and they can scarcely be classed among the game animals likely to form interesting objects of sport. From their very rarity and singularity it is, however, possible that some enterprising Briton, finding himself in West Africa, may think it worth while to devote a few days or even a week or two to their pursuit. The flesh of these beasts is fairly good eating, that of the young ones being tender, well tasted, and in flavour somewhat like wild pig. The habitat of this pigmy hippo is Liberia and the adjacent regions of the West Coast; but the interior of this country is so little known that the exact range of the animal is by no means clearly ascertained. The Liberian natives know it as the sea-cow or water-cow; in their tongue *mali* or *vey*.

[The pachydermatous animals have been considered, for the purposes of these volumes, as if they were confined to Africa, though both elephants, of which Mr. Cumming takes some passing notice, and rhinoceros are found in various parts of Asia. The shooting of them, however, in Asia is not of any great importance, nor does it differ in any very interesting particular from their shooting in Africa,

where they are so much more generally recognised as objects of the sportsman's pursuit. Similarly, although the lion is represented in Asia also, as by the so-called black-maned lion of Guzerat, no particular account of his shooting in Asia has been given, as his numbers are so few and the sport claims so few followers. The same remark applies to one or two other species which are represented in more than one of the great continents. The wild boar, for instance, is an inhabitant both of Asia and of Europe, but its shooting has no particular points of interest in either continent, although pig-sticking is so fine and popular a sport.—ED.]

