

THE CHASE IN AFRICA.

FROM an interesting book, entitled "The Large Game and Natural History of South and South-East Africa; from the Journals of the Hon. W. H. Drummond" (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas), we will take, for the amusement of our readers, one or two spirited passages about hunting wild beasts, and such matters. The first shall be an account of a fight between buffaloes:—

"On looking through the edge of the last thicket which concealed them, I saw two buffalo bulls standing facing each other with lowered heads, and, as I sat down to watch, they rushed together with all their force, producing the loud crash I had before heard. Once the horns were interlocked, they kept them so, their straining quarters telling that each was doing his best to force the other backwards. Several long white marks on their necks showed where they had received scratches, and blood dripping down the withers of the one next me proved that he had received a more severe wound. It was a magnificent sight to see the enormous animals, every muscle at its fullest tension, striving for the mastery. Soon one, a very large and old bull, began to yield a little, going backwards step by step; but at last, as if determined to conquer or die, it dropped on to its knees. The other, disengaging his horns for a second, so as to gain an impetus, again rushed at him, but, whether purposely or not I could not tell, it did not strike him on the forehead, but on the neck, under the hump, and I could see that, with a twist of his horns, he inflicted a severe wound. However, instead of following up his seeming advantage, he at once recoiled, and stood half facing his antagonist, who, getting on his legs again, remained in the same position for several minutes, and then, with a low grunt of rage, rushed at him. This time he was not met, and his broad forehead struck full on his rival's shoulder, almost knocking it over. The old bull then went a few yards off, and stood watching the other for fully a quarter of an hour, when he walked slowly away in the opposite direction. Unfortunately, as it turned out, I did not fire at him, thinking one would be enough for me to manage; but the moment it disappeared, the other lay down on the spot where it had been standing; and, stealing up behind the shelter of a neighbouring thorn, I fired at its shoulder: it only made an ineffectual struggle to rise; and then I went up closer and closer, until I could see the back of its head, and shot it through that part into the brain. On examining it, I found a deep hole in the upper part of its chest; and on the ground there was such a pool of blood as showed that one of the great arteries had been severed. It was otherwise slightly scarred on the neck, but there was no other wound of importance, though I believe that this one was sufficient in itself to have caused death. When it was afterwards cut up, I noticed a slight discoloration of the brain; but my last shot was sufficient to account for that.

"Fights of this description, though probably not unusual, are rarely witnessed; and I should judge that any fatal results from them were most uncommon. The horn of the buffalo is not suited, from its curve, for stabbing, and, unless their skull gets injured in their furious onsets—as I have heard of its doing—no very severe wounds are likely to be effected."

The other passage which we take the liberty of extracting relates to the rhinoceros:—

"Sufficient anecdotes of the ferocity, chronic bad temper, and cunning of the rhinoceros, might be related of themselves to fill a volume. Their cunning is only equalled by their viciousness. In most, if not in all cases, they will at once charge on getting the wind of a human being, and if they cross his track, they will often follow it up like a dog, making none of the puffing sound natural to them when angry, till they absolutely see him. When wounded, and occasionally when much disturbed, their spoor consists of parallel straight lines, so that it is next to impossible to overtake them without being discovered, and giving them an opportunity of charging you from one side. They will wait with the utmost patience, concealed in thick jungle, until you almost touch them, and then rush out at you. When they do catch an unfortunate being, they knock him down and knead him with their feet, returning again and again until nothing but a shapeless

mass remains, uttering all the day their shrill squeal of rage. This I once saw myself.

"Four of us, consisting of myself, three native hunters, and my gun-bearer, were on our way to join a native hunting party some twelve miles off, and just after crossing a small stream about half way we saw a flock of rhinoceros-birds hovering over an ukaku thicket, and evidently accompanying some game passing through it. The place was of no great size, so two of the hunters ran round to the further sides, while I and the remaining one went into it, and, in a few seconds, struck the spoor of an upetyane. I am thankful now to recollect that I at once suggested leaving the vicious brute alone, partly because it was such dangerous work, and its death would do us no good, partly on account of the time it would waste, and the distance we had yet to go. However, the hunter wanted to go after it, and to have said more would have implied fear on my part—a thing one has to guard against when, being the only white man amongst natives far in the interior, one's comfort, and not impossibly one's life, depends upon one's prestige; and so we went on, and in scarcely five minutes I saw it, having already heard it snorting like a steam-engine, trotting along, tossing its head, and looking like mischief personified, having evidently got the wind of some of us, and being quite as anxious to find us as we it. It was about fifteen yards off, and I instantly let drive with both barrels into its shoulder, springing as I did so into the tree under which I was.

"My unlucky companion, who was a little distance on one side, and had hitherto only heard it, came running towards the shots, and absolutely met it face to face; he at once fired and turned to run, but it was too late, and he was caught on the spot, thrown up at a single toss, which must probably have stunned him, and was then trampled out of all semblance to humanity by the blood-thirsty brute. Any description would be sickening; I could do nothing, for my gun-bearer had disappeared, seeking safety in some other spot, and I found that I had not a single cartridge left in the little pouch I carried; but after a minute I could stand the inaction no longer, and, getting down from the tree unperceived, I stole away, and, as soon as I was out of reach, began to shout to the others. Two of them soon came up, my gun-bearer and a hunter, one of them having hidden himself on finding the sort of animal we had to deal with; and I having got a supply of cartridges, we went back to the spot until we got sight of the brute, still trampling and squealing, when, kneeling down, we fired at it together.

"My nerves had been so much shaken, that I was unsteady and missed clean, not twenty yards off, but the ball from my companion's great elephant gun sped more truly, and the brute fell on its knees, where, by dint of repeated, if not well-aimed shots, I succeeded in keeping it until he had reloaded, when we finished it off together.

"Other instances of the same sort are not wanting, but that was the only one that ever occurred within my personal knowledge, though, during the time I was hunting, two of my men were killed by rhinoceroses—one by an upetyane, the other by a kulumane—and from what I heard of the details, they must have been very similar. I only know of a single instance of a person escaping with life. A lot of Kaffirs were crossing the Bombo flats, and a woman, carrying her baby on her back in the native fashion, joined the party for protection. During the journey they were charged by an upetyane. Everybody threw down their bundles, regardless of breaking calabashes and pots of fat, and climbed up trees, all except this woman, who, impeded by her burden and terrified out of her wits, was overtaken and tossed. When she fell again, the rhinoceros came up, sniffed at her and the baby, and walked away, not attempting to do any further harm, and luckily she was only bruised. What had caused it to do this no one knew, and therefore some of the people ascribed it to witchcraft. Perhaps the resemblance of the baby's squalling to its own made it so unusually merciful. One killed in Zululand, in 1871, destroyed no less than seven people before its death."

We are afraid the guess at the beast's reasons for leaving the baby alone is rather wide of the mark. We cannot get inside the head of a rhinoceros, and must leave this mystery unsolved, with scores of similar mysteries, in the ways and doings of animals.

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