

# THE SPORTSMAN IN SOUTH AFRICA.

THE HAUNTS, HABITS, DESCRIPTION,  
AND THE PURSUIT OF ALL GAME, BOTH FUR AND FEATHER,  
FOUND SOUTH OF THE ZAMBESI (INCLUDING THE  
CAPE COLONY, TRANSVAAL, BECHUANALAND, NATAL, AND  
DAMARALAND), AT THE PRESENT DAY, WITH BRIEF  
NOTICES OF THE BEST KNOWN FRESH AND  
SALT-WATER FISH.

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LONDON:  
THE BRITISH AND COLONIAL PUBLICATIONS CO.,  
53 CARTER LANE, DOCTORS' COMMONS, E.C.,  
AND  
SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, HAMILTON, KENT, & CO., LTD.  
PATERNOSTER ROW.

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1892.

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still, even out in the open, a whole troop might possibly pass at close quarters without showing the slightest signs of detection; but this, of course, could not possibly happen unless the wind were favourable. The exact direction of the latter can readily be ascertained by simply throwing a handful of sand into the air. Anyone under the impression that the huge spoor of an Elephant can at all times be traced with the greatest facility will, in actual experience, be grievously disappointed. Broken down bushes and grass is evidence easily recognisable of the passing of one, but when these are absent and the spoor leads into hard bare ground, it requires the practised acuteness of the Kafirs to follow it with any reasonable speed. When hunted hard in the great heat of the sun, they can be come up to much quicker than at other times, and one of the surest signs of an Elephant being "dead beat" is when it inserts the trunk into the stomach and, withdrawing it, ejects water all over its back.

An almost nightly supply of water is necessary for the existence of these pachyderms, but it is unusual to find them drinking in the day time; and when the sun is hot they retire into the recesses of the thickest jungle, where they pass the hours standing in sleep. If disturbed at such a moment they are inclined to be far more aggressive than at others. When persecuted for any lengthened period in a particular district, they entirely forsake it, nor do they return to it for perhaps a long time. The flesh is excessively coarse and rank, although all natives hold a contrary opinion. Some portions of the trunk are eatable, while the heart is very acceptable to a hungry hunter. A baked foot was in days gone by considered quite a delicacy, but modern appetites are unable to agree with the tradition.

**The Black Rhinoceros** (*Rhinoceros bicornis*). Fig. 35, Plate X.—(*Zwaart Rhinaster* of the Dutch; *Borele* or *Keitloa* of the Bechuanas; *Upeygan* of the Matabele.)

[*The black prehensile-lipped Rhinoceros is distinguished from the R. simus by its inferior size and strongly projecting pointed upper lip, which enables it the more readily to browse on twigs, leaves, and roots, on which food it entirely subsists; ears short and rounded, tipped with coarse hair; posterior horn much varies in size in different animals, being in some a mere excrescence, and in others developed to*

*a length exceeding the anterior, both being round; nostrils round; eyes situated low down and forwards. Snout exhibits the impression of the three toes pointing almost directly forwards.]*

THE general understanding that there were four distinct varieties of Rhinoceros inhabiting South Africa, viz., the *R. simus*, *R. oswelli*, *R. keitloa*, and *R. bicornis*, seems to have been first disputed by Mr. F. C. Selous in a very interesting paper read by him before the Zoological Society in June, 1881, and no matter how opinions may differ, it is now commonly accepted that there are but the two, the Black Rhinoceros (*R. bicornis*) and the White Rhinoceros (*R. simus*), although, most unfortunately, it is believed that the latter has become extinct within the last five or six years. The presumption that there were four varieties was erroneously based on the development and different shape of the horns in individual animals. The range of the Black Rhinoceros South of the Zambesi is limited to the hilly and broken country along that river East of the Victoria Falls, where it is still found rather plentifully. Two years ago it was very common throughout Mashonaland, but is now almost driven out, only being met with in far-away places remote from the prospectors. A fair number still remain in the unfrequented parts of Matabeleland, particularly in the portion which Lobengula calls his preserve; and in the low-lying country on the East Coast about Sofala Bay it is said to be continually come across, a few, perhaps, being still left North of the Chobe.

Blood-curdling stories have been repeated, *ad nauseam*, as to the morose, revengeful, and indescribable ferocity of this Rhinoceros; sufficient, indeed, to deter the most courageous and enterprising spirits from even partaking of a distant view of a country inhabited by such monsters. When truth is separated from fiction, it will be found that these narratives are merely the result of very strong imagination on the part of those who recount them. This animal is possessed of a very limited power of vision but very perfect organs of smell; and the so-called headlong charges attributed to it may generally be presumed to be occasioned more by a confused idea of some danger being at hand, without exactly knowing its direction, and a desire at all hazards to escape from it, than to the actual disposition for devastation and annihilation for which it gets credit. Of course, accidents do and will occasionally occur in encounters with them, but the dangers attending their chase is

comparatively little when compared to that of the Elephant, Lion, or Buffalo; and if one be found charging under severe provocation, it will seldom make a second onslaught should the first fail. By these remarks it is not intended to convey any impression that this Rhinoceros may be attacked with impunity, but it is attempted to show that it is not the ferocious and bloodthirsty animal most travellers and nearly all natives represent it to be. However heavy and ungainly it looks, it can run with most unexpected rapidity, its trot almost equalling in speed that of the Eland, although a fairly good horse can come up to it easily; and when stalking on foot, if the wind be favourable, it can, owing to its deficiency of vision, be walked right up to without difficulty, and a side shot in the region of the heart or through both lungs will quickly prove fatal. If only wounded in one lung, however, the blood spoor may be followed up perhaps for hours without ultimate success. Owing to the difficulty of getting at the brain, a head shot is rarely effective. A solid bullet should invariably be employed.

The Black Rhinoceros is nocturnal in its habits, drinking early in the evening if not disturbed, wandering over large tracks of country during the remainder of the night in search of food, and spending the heat of the day sleeping in the shade of some thick bush, being more partial, however, to a very rugged and broken country. Although not, strictly speaking, gregarious, it is rather of a social disposition, it not being unusual to meet with several in company. It has a peculiar habit of scattering its warm dung in every direction.

The Rhinoceros bird (*Buphaga africana*) is a very constant companion of that quadruped, which, besides preying on the numerous parasitic insects infesting its hide, also acts as a sentinel, on the approach of danger flying into the air and uttering piercing cries. This, together with the rapid flapping of its wings, attracts the attention of the Rhinoceros, which at once precipitately retreats without waiting to ascertain from whence comes the danger.

**The White Rhinoceros** (*Rhinoceros simus*). Fig. 33, Plate IX.—(*Vit Rhinaster* of the Dutch; *Chukuru* of the Bechuanas; *Umhofo* of the Matabele.)

ALTHOUGH there is every reason to suppose that the White or square-mouthed Rhinoceros is now extinct, it is thought advisable

for completeness to mention the characteristic points that distinguish it from the *R. bicornis*. Why it was ever called "white" it is difficult to imagine, as it was almost similar in colour to the previous variety. It occasionally attained a height of 6½ feet, the head being enormously large in proportion; the ear conch long, the ear itself very much pointed and almost devoid of any appearance of hair on the tips; the nostrils elongated and not round, while the eyes were situated high and far back. From its habits of proceeding with the nose low down, the anterior horn always presented a partially flattened front, caused by continual scraping on the surface of the ground; and specimens have been obtained in which this horn has attained a length considerably exceeding 4 feet. The posterior horn was rarely so much developed as in the case of the *R. bicornis*, and seldom exceeded 3 or 4 inches in length. The mouth was square, betraying no appearance of a projection of the upper lip. The food consisted solely of grasses, and on this account it preferred to frequent a flat rather than a hilly country. The young calves of the *R. bicornis* invariably run behind their mothers when pursued, whereas those of the *R. sinus* proceeded in front, the course of the little ones being directed and guided by the point of their parent's horn. The White Rhinoceros was last observed frequenting a small district in North-east Mashonaland, and also in the neighbourhood of the Sabi River. Although the Zoological Society have made every effort to procure a living specimen, they have up to the present been wholly unsuccessful.

**The Hippopotamus** (*Hippopotamus amphibius*).—(*Zee-kue* of the Dutch; *Cubu* of the Bechuanas; *Imfubu* of the Matabele.)

[*The appearance and characteristics of the Hippopotamus are so well known that it will be sufficient to say the spoor can be easily distinguished from that of the Rhinoceros by its superior size and impress of four in the place of the three toes.*]

It is many years since the last Hippopotamus was killed in the rivers of the Cape Colony, and although some herds are said to exist at the mouth of the Tugela on the East Coast, they are otherwise extinct South of the Crocodile. Eastward of the junction of