

ADVENTURES

ON THE

GREAT HUNTING GROUNDS
OF THE WORLD.

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CHAPTER X.

The Rhinoceros.

ONE traveller says that the sight of a rhinoceros is sufficient to put a lion to flight. Another, without contradicting the first, says that the rhinoceros makes the lion fly like a cat; and a third writes,—“He kills even the elephant, by tearing open his belly with his tusk.” A fourth says,—“Men are the only enemies whom he fears, and this fear ceases when he is wounded or pursued.”

Listen again to another one:—“He is at once a traitor and an aggressor whom nothing frightens, and a furious brute whom all resistance only renders the more implacable.” This animal inhabits both Asia and Africa.

There are always degrees of character, and thus it appears that the white rhinoceros is relatively gentle and confiding. This mildness, however, must not be exaggerated. A white rhinoceros, having been wounded by Mr. Oswell, threw both horse and rider into the air with one blow of its tusk.

What might one expect after that from the politeness of the black rhinoceros ?

Dr. Livingstone writes :—“ Mr. Oswell was once stalking two of these animals, and as they came slowly to him, he, knowing that there is but little chance of hitting the small brain of this animal by a shot in the head, lay, expecting one of them to give his shoulder, till he was within a few yards.

“ The hunter then thought that by making a rush to his side he might succeed in escaping ; but the rhinoceros, too quick for that, turned upon him, and, though he discharged his gun close to the animal's head, he was tossed in the air. My friend was insensible for some time, and on recovering found large wounds on the thigh and body. I saw that on the former part still open, and five inches long.”

Mr. Moffat having brought down a black rhinoceros, the natives threw themselves on the beast, shouting with joy ; twelve lances at once penetrated the sides of the victim. The punctures reanimated him ; he sprang up in an instant, and, tearing up the earth with his horn after his fashion, rushed upon his conquerors, who promptly showed him their heels.

The rhinoceros is, after the elephant, the largest mammiferous animal known on the earth. The name is derived from two Greek words, which might be translated *horn on the nose*. It is well known, in fact, that



"THE HUNTER WAS TOSSED IN THE AIR."

the frontal nasal region is surmounted, in adults, with one or two horns, according to the species.

They live on vegetables, and their dental system is perfectly suited to this kind of food. Their neck is so short, and so little flexible, that they are much less fond of grass than of browsing the leaves of branches within their reach, which their very mobile and triangular pointed upper lip easily seizes. According to Chardin, the Abyssinians tame the rhinoceros, and make him work like an ox.

It rarely happens that more than four or five are met with at once, and it is pretty well to encounter one. They are hunted on account of their flesh, which is considered a great treat by the savages.

In Nubia they hunt him on horseback, the men being entirely naked.

They throw themselves on him, and irritate without being able to wound him.

In spite of their dexterity and the agility of their horses they do not always escape the blows of their formidable enemy. The infuriated animal pursues his assailants. Then one of them detaches himself from his companions, and pretends to wait for him. The rhinoceros turns his rage on this one, and abandons the other hunters, who, moving off rapidly, seek a favourable place near some large tree, chosen beforehand.

When the horseman who had remained behind, engaged with the animal, supposes that his comrades have attained their retreat, he starts off like a dart, reaches the foot of the tree indicated, leaps from his horse, which gallops off, and climbs swiftly up the branches.

The rhinoceros, which has followed him, dashes furiously against the tree, as if he meant to upset it, and strikes his horn deeply into it. But whilst he is making unheard of efforts to disengage himself, the hunters in ambush fall on him and kill him with their lances. As to the horse, he stands still when he finds that he is no longer pursued, and, attracted by the neighing of his companions, he is not slow in rejoining them.

The rhinoceros, when attacked, takes voluntarily, as we have seen, a tree for a hunter, and discharges his rage on the former. Livingstone attributes this blundering to the fact of the horn being so placed as to obstruct the line of vision; and he gives as a proof that the variety named *Kua-baōbo*, having the horn projecting downwards, and therefore not interfering with the sight, was able to be much more wary than its neighbours. Be this as it may, the eye at all events is very small, and sunk in the head. On the other hand, the senses of hearing and smell are very subtle; at the least noise the

animal takes alarm, pricks its ears, rises up, and listens, that is, if he is not asleep, for his sleep is very heavy.

This has been contradicted, but Sparrman relates as follows:—"Two of our Hottentot marksmen perceived through the bushes, at a distance of three or four yards, a rhinoceros, lying on his right side, and sleeping so profoundly, that he did not wake up even at the loud noise which they made by chance in striking the guns one against the other. Their first movement was to take aim at him; but as he did not awake, and as they could only see the back part of his body, after a short consultation they made a circuit, and placing themselves in a position to point their guns towards the animal's head, they discharged their two barrels at once into his brisket.

"As the animal struggled somewhat feebly, they had little fear that he would as yet wake up and pursue them; then, as much for their amusement as precaution, they recharged their guns and fired several balls into him."

Le Vaillant says that two rhinoceroses had stopped side by side in a plain at a little distance from his camp; he started at once, accompanied by his men.

"One of the two being much larger than the other, I took them to be male and female.

“They were holding their noses to the wind, and consequently presented their croups to us.

“It is a habit of these quadrupeds, when thus stopping, to place themselves to windward, in order to be warned by scent of any enemies they have to fear. Occasionally, they turn the head to cast a glance behind, to watch for their safety, but it is simply a glance, and the affair of an instant.

“We were discussing the disposition to be made for the attack, when Jonker, one of my Hottentots, begged me to allow him to attack the beasts alone. I permitted him to do so. He stripped naked and departed, carrying his gun with him, and crawling on his belly like a serpent.

“During this time I placed my hunters in the posts they were to occupy, whilst I remained where I was with two Hottentots—the one held my horse and the other the dogs. We were all three concealed behind a bush. I had in my hand an opera-glass, with which I had often watched the *jeu des machines*, and the effect of theatrical decorations: but the objects were changed now! At this moment it exhibited to me two frightful monsters, turning their hideous heads now on this side, now on that. Soon their movements of observation and of fear became more frequent, and I feared lest they might have heard the motions of my dogs, which, having

perceived them, were struggling to escape from their keeper, and to rush towards them.

“Jonker, on his part, continued to advance, though slowly, keeping his eyes fixed on the two animals, and becoming suddenly motionless the instant they turned their heads in his direction. His crawling, with all its interruptions, lasted for an hour. At length I saw him direct his movements towards a great tuft of milk-wort, which was within about 200 yards of the rhinoceroses.

“Arrived there, and sure of being well concealed, he arose, and after turning his eyes on all sides, to see that his comrades were at their posts, he prepared to fire.

“During the whole time of his crawling I had followed him with my eyes, and in proportion as he advanced, I felt my heart palpitate involuntarily. But the palpitation redoubled when I saw him so close to the animals, and on the point of firing at one of them. What would I not have given at that moment to have been in Jonker's place, or at least beside him! I waited with the most vivid impatience for the shot to be fired, and I could not conceive what prevented his firing; but the Hottentot who was by my side, and who with his naked eye could distinguish him as perfectly as I with my *lorgnette*, said that if Jonker did not fire, it was because he was

waiting for one of the rhinoceroses to turn, that he might aim at his head.

“At last, the largest of the two having turned his head in our direction, he fired.

“Wounded with the shot, he uttered a frightful cry, and, followed by the female, ran with fury towards the place whence the noise had come. A cold perspiration came over me, for I expected to see the two monsters break through the bush, crush under their feet the unhappy Jonker, and tear him in pieces; but he had thrown himself flat on the ground, and the *ruse* succeeded perfectly. They passed near him without seeing him, and came straight towards me.

“Then my agony was turned into joy, and I prepared to receive them. But the dogs, already excited by the gun-shot which they had heard, became so maddened at their approach, that being unable to hold them, I unloosed them and let them on them.

“At this sight they took a turn, and made off in the direction of one of the ambuscades, where they underwent another firing; then in a third direction, where again they were met with another shot. My dogs harassed them beyond measure, which still increased their rage. They kicked at them furiously,—they tore up the plain with their horns, and ploughed

up furrows seven or eight inches deep, throwing around them a shower of stones and pebbles.

“During this time we were all approaching, in order to make as close a circle round them as possible, and to bring all our forces against them. This multitude of enemies with which they saw themselves surrounded, threw them into inexpressible fury. Suddenly the male stopped, and ceasing to fly before the dogs, turned upon them to attack and rip them up. But whilst he was pursuing them the female got away.

“I was not sorry for this flight, which was indeed much in our favour, for it is certain, that in spite of our number and our arms, two such formidable enemies would have very much embarrassed us. I must even acknowledge that without my dogs we should not have been able to encounter the risks and perils of the one remaining. The traces of blood which he left on his path told us that he had received more than one wound, which only served to increase his rage.

“Nevertheless, after some time occupied in making his furious attack, he beat retreat, and seemed to wish to gain some bushes, apparently to support himself, and that he might be harassed in front only. I divined his *ruse*, and with the design of preventing it, I ran towards the bushes, making signs to the

two hunters nearest to me to go there also. He was not more than thirty yards from us when we gained the post, then all three facing him at the same time, we fired, and he fell, without being able to rise again."
