

THE
SPORTS OF THE WORLD

WITH

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DRAWINGS AND PHOTOGRAPHS.

EDITED BY

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THE GREAT INDIAN RHINOCEROS.

By MAJOR-GENERAL A. A. A. KINLOCH, C.B.



RHINOCEROS SHOT BY MAJOR-GENERAL KINLOCH IN BHÚTÁN DŪARS, 1886.
(Photo: Major, Fortar.)

PERHAPS fewer sportsmen have had the chance of shooting this huge animal than of killing any of the other numerous species of "Large Game" that are to be found in India or along its frontiers.

Not only is its present *habitat* restric-

ted, but without special facilities its pursuit would generally be useless.

In former days this rhinoceros probably inhabited the whole of the "Terai" or damp forest at the foot of the Himalayas; and there are legends that it, or a closely allied species (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*), was hunted by the Emperor Baber in the valley of the Indus. Now its western limit is the Nepal Terai, and a considerable blank space occurs before it is again to be met with in the Bhútán Dúars; and again, still farther east, in Assam. About forty years ago large numbers were to be found in the immediate neighbourhood of Jalpaigori, at the foot of the Sikkim hills; and several sportsmen made considerable sums by the sale of their horns, which are in much request among certain castes of Hindoos. Native *shikaris* also were keen in their pursuit, and the consequence is that their numbers are sadly diminished.

It is a pity that the Indian Government does not take steps to prevent the extermination of this and other interesting fauna, as is done in Africa and America. No animal is more harmless. Inhabiting, as it does, the densest thickets of high grass and reeds in sparsely

inhabited districts, it rarely, if ever, does any harm to cultivation, and I have never personally known a single instance of its damaging any crops.

Although comparatively few people have seen it in its native haunts, all visitors to the "Zoo" must be familiar with the ungainly beast, which comes up to the barrier of its enclosure and opens its vast mouth for buns and other trifles. Although generally so tame, the keeper has informed me that it is subject to paroxysms of rage, when it dashes against the walls and bars of its house, and sometimes injures itself badly.

Many fables have been told and written about the rhinoceros. It was supposed to be almost invulnerable—a belief that was to some extent supported by the armour-like appearance of its hide, which was doubtless not easily penetrated by the feeble weapons and light projectiles of former days.

With modern rifles no animal is more easily killed if bullets are at all well directed. The lungs are very large, and a shot through them, if not immediately fatal, soon causes death by suffocation. I have more than once killed a rhinoceros with a single bullet.



MAKING OFF.

It has also been supposed that the horn on the snout is used as a weapon of offence. This, so far as I have been able to ascertain, is an entirely erroneous idea, and the horn, like many other things in nature, appears to serve no special purpose. It is possible, however, that, as has been suggested, it may be employed for the purpose of rooting up weeds in swamps; at any rate, horns are frequently found to be much worn, and, in fact, very long and sharp horns are comparatively seldom met with.*

Though generally of a peaceable disposition, the rhinoceros, like nearly all animals, may be roused to fury, and it will then inflict severe wounds with its formidable teeth. I have heard of elephants being badly injured in this way, but I have never seen a rhinoceros charge home, though I have known more than one make angry demonstrations. The animal's vast size and noisy expressions of fear or resentment have a great effect on the nerves of both elephants and mahouts, and many of both, who would go unflinchingly up to a wounded tiger, show signs of great trepidation when confronted with the larger (but really less formidable) game. Exact measurements and anatomical details would be out of place in the present article, but it may perhaps be mentioned that the average height of a full-grown rhinoceros is about seventeen hands. He is extremely bulky in proportion to his height and very short on the leg.

One has no facilities for weighing heavy animals in camp, but I would conjecture that an old bull would weigh at least two tons.

This amount of meat need not be wasted. It is of excellent quality, closely resembling beef. The natives of the districts where rhinoceros are found are always eager to carry away the flesh, and quickly assemble when they hear of "a kill."

The hide, when dried and properly cured, takes a high polish, and may be utilised for several ornamental purposes. I would suggest to any sportsman who has the good fortune to shoot a rhinoceros that he should preserve the whole skin and legs and have them made into a sideboard or drawing-room table.

The best horns that I have seen have been about 12 inches in length. I cannot supply a photograph of such a good specimen, as one or two to which I was entitled by the etiquette of sport, were surrendered to friends who had a share in shooting the animals that bore them, and had fewer opportunities than myself of acquiring such trophies. The print of the dead rhinoceros (on p. 164), with natives clustered upon and around it, is a reproduction of a photograph taken by an old friend of mine in Assam in the year 1862, and gives a good idea of

* I have always been given to understand that the employment of the horn as an offensive weapon is confined to the African rhinoceros, which is not provided with the formidable biting teeth of the Indian beast.—THE EDITOR.

the bulk of the animal; the head represented is that of one shot by me in the Bhütán Dúars, at a much more recent date. It was the only one that I have had an opportunity of shooting on foot. As I have already mentioned, this rhinoceros inhabits the densest thickets of reeds and grasses, which grow to a height of twenty or thirty feet, and afford nearly impenetrable cover.

Tortuous tunnels are formed by the larger denizens of these jungles, and it is only along these that any man could proceed at the rate of more than two or three hundred yards an hour.

I have been informed that there is little risk in following rhinoceros along these galleries, as even if one of them does make a rush, it is only necessary to throw oneself to one side, when the short-sighted beast passes harmlessly on. There is always, however, a chance of meeting a buffalo in such places, and it is a much more dangerous antagonist. Rhinoceros have the habit of dropping their dung in certain places, which are often watched by native *shikaris*, with a view to obtaining a close and easy shot. Such a procedure will not commend itself to most British sportsmen.

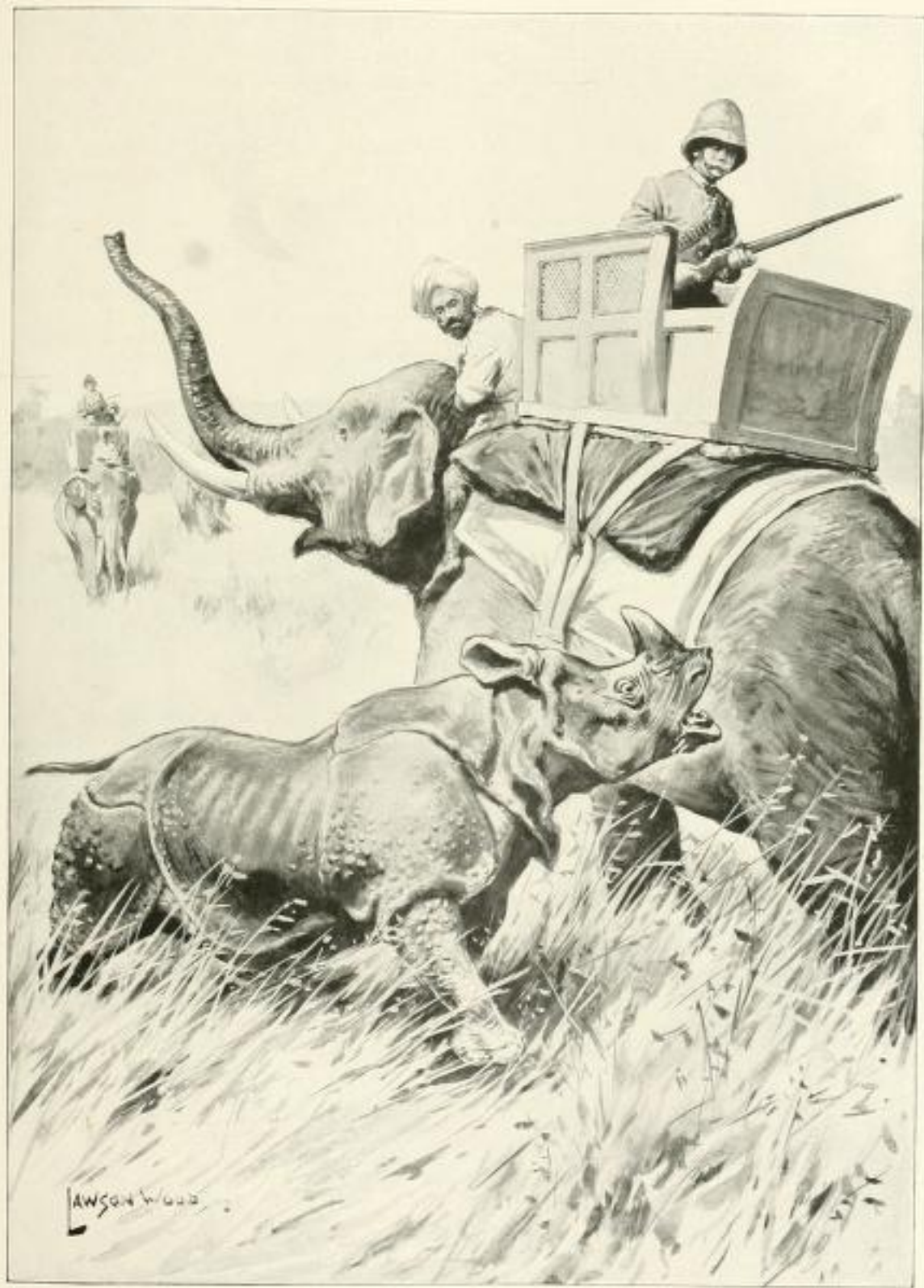
The track cannot be mistaken for that of any other animal, the impression of the three toenails being quite unlike the "spoor" of elephants or any of the wild oxen, which alone could compare with it in depth and size.

The massive tuberculated hide, which hangs, or may rather be said to be arranged, in heavy folds, with conspicuous shields on the shoulders and hind quarters, differs in many respects from that of the other rhinoceros (*R. sondaicus*) already alluded to. The latter is comparatively little known, and was supposed to be confined to the "Sunderbunds," or Delta of the Ganges, to the south-east of Calcutta. It is, however, to be found in Bhütán Dúars, where I saw one that had been shot by a friend of mine.

I do not think that there is much difference in size between the two species; but the females of *sondaicus* have no vestige of a horn, and the skin appears to be formed of "mosaic," instead of being studded with protuberant knobs. The arrangement of the folds of the skin is, moreover, quite different.

While *R. unicornis* delights in thickets of grass and reeds, with the luxury of frequent wallows in muddy pools, *R. sondaicus* is more of a forest-loving animal, and I have found its tracks among low hills, where entanglements of the thorny cane render its pursuit on elephants almost impossible, and on foot nearly equally difficult.

Although I have several times attempted to track one, I have never been successful. In the "Sunderbunds" (a corruption of the names "Súndri Ban"—meaning the forest of Súndri trees), I have no doubt that anyone with leisure might be pretty sure of obtaining a shot at this



CLOSE QUARTERS.

little known animal; but special arrangements would have to be made for boats from Calcutta, and also for commissariat, as the resources of the "Sunderbunds" are decidedly limited. I believe, however, that the unhealthiness of this district has been greatly exaggerated, and that the man-

I fired at his forehead, but either I or my elephant must have been unsteady, for my bullet, as I afterwards found, merely grazed his snout. With an angry grunt he turned round and rushed back into the reeds, receiving as he did so the bullet from my left barrel in the ribs. The beaters were now close up, and in a very few minutes I had the satisfaction of hearing that they had found him lying dead, having been shot through the lungs.

When thus shot, the rhinoceros generally pro-



RHINOCEROS SHOT BY THE LATE CAPTAIN SPEER IN ASSAM, 1862.

eating mosquito is more to be feared than the tiger.

Curtains, if properly arranged, will keep out the former at night, and the latter usually confines his attentions to unarmed woodcutters.

Personal reminiscences have, as a rule, little to interest general readers; and I have no desire to parade my own; but, as I have been asked to give a few, I may mention some experiences in the pursuit of the animal to which this article refers.

The first rhinoceros that I ever saw in a wild state was roused just in front of me as we were beating with a long line of elephants. Although within easy range, he went straight away, and, although I could hardly have missed him, I failed to stop him.

My next shot was more successful. I was posted at the end of a dense thicket of reeds, through which the pad elephants could only make slow progress, and as they drew near I could hear some large animal moving in front of them. It was impossible to know whether it was a rhinoceros, a buffalo, or possibly a gaur; but at length my doubts were solved by the appearance of the huge head of the first-named animal, which halted at the edge of the jungle, doubtless with a view to ascertaining whether any danger lay ahead.

claims its approaching dissolution by loud grunts and squeals. Before being wounded they are often noisy, puffing and blowing and causing much consternation among the beaters. I remember that on one occasion five or six were found in one small jungle, and the scare they created was ludicrous.

To be on a runaway, or rather *walkaway*, elephant is, however, no laughing matter. Even in open country the sensation is disagreeable, while in forest the danger is great.

It is not generally known that an elephant has no pace beyond a fast walk or shamle, which probably never exceeds six miles an hour for a short distance, and is usually much slower. Many years ago a well-known illustrated paper was hoaxed into giving a representation of an elephant hurdle race, in which the huge beasts were depicted as flying the hurdles like racehorses!

An elephant is quite incapable of crossing any fence that it cannot step over or break down, or any deep ditch with steep solid sides more than seven feet wide.

Trying to stop an elephant that has got out of hand by means of the "hankas," or driving hook, has been compared to endeavouring to arrest the speed of a locomotive by hooking a walking-stick round the funnel! I think it was Albert Smith

who said that riding a camel was like "sitting on a three-legged stool, with only one leg, on the top of a hansom cab, going down St. James's Street!" He must, however, have been unfortunate in his mounts, as a good "*Somiri*" camel's action is remarkably smooth and easy. I have, I find, rather digressed from my subject, and must now give one or two more of my not very exciting experiences with the rhinoceros.

There must always be a certain amount of monotony in such descriptions, which are necessarily far less interesting to the reader than to the writer, who recalls memories of events in which he took a leading part. It is also not very easy to avoid repetition, nor to be perfectly sure of accuracy, however careful one may try to be.

It is a remarkable fact that great authors and painters have made mistakes which they might have avoided by closer observation. Charles Kingsley, a great lover of nature and generally to be depended upon, makes some curious blunders in "*Hypatia*," where, if I recollect right, he describes how the elephant which carried the heroine lifted her from its back with its trunk, and how its heavy tread resounded through the amphitheatre. The former feat is a physical impossibility, and the footfall of an elephant is as noiseless as that of a tiger. Landseer, admirable as he was in most of his paintings of animals, made strange mistakes. There are obvious errors in two of his most beautiful and best known pictures—"The Sanctuary" and "The Challenge," which I will

leave the critical reader to find out for himself. The errors exist.

One day I went out with a friend in search of such game as we could find, expecting to have a chance at buffaloes and deer. It so happened that we found a rhinoceros in a long but narrow strip of reeds, which it was difficult or impossible for him to leave without being exposed to our fire. After being driven backwards and forwards for some time he at last emerged from the jungle and afforded me a good chance. I made a bad shot, but as he turned away I gave him what would have been a fatal wound; as he went in the direction of my friend, however, the latter dropped him with a well-directed bullet. This rhinoceros had the longest and most perfect horn that I have seen.

On another occasion a nearly equally large bull which had been hit, but not mortally, by another friend, passed me at a swinging trot, and I had the satisfaction of dropping him stone dead with a bullet through the centre of his shoulder. It is seldom that one has an opportunity of shooting an Indian rhinoceros on foot, but the last that I killed was in such a situation that I was able to dismount from my elephant and regularly stalk him. I was using a very heavy rifle, and although he did not at once succumb, I had only to follow his tracks for a few hundred yards before I found him lying dead.

The head figured on p. 161 is his. As will be observed, the horn is considerably worn away.



RHINOCEROS SHOT IN KUCH BEHAR.

(Photo: P. B. Forrester.)