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A BOOK OF THE WILDERNESS AND JUNGLE



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OLD BAILEY

Mr. Gladstone dancing a breakdown in the Monkey House at the Zoo.

THE RHINOCEROS

We know all manner of rhinoceroses best by the horn, or horns, on their snout. There are three different kinds of these animals in Asia and two in Africa, but as this chapter does not pretend to describe every animal, the so-called "great" rhinoceros of Assam, Kooch Behar and Nepal may do duty for the Eastern species. It is a huge, blundering creature, standing about six feet high and carrying on its nose a single pointed horn a foot or more in length. The so-called "horn" of the rhinoceros is absolutely different from those of goats or cattle, being really a growth of hardened skin. It can, in fact, be removed without leaving more than a scar, which rapidly heals, and this actually happens to these animals in captivity, for they occasionally rub off their horns against the bars. Both sexes carry this formidable weapon, but, as a matter of fact, the Indian rhinoceros fights only with its teeth, the horn being used only in tearing up roots. So long as they are not molested, these animals are usually inoffensive, and when they have been known to charge without provocation, it has been a case

of nerves. They are short-sighted and hard of hearing, and when they suddenly get wind of a man they are apt to charge blindly, for fear of being surrounded. In parts of India, the high grass is both board and lodging to the rhinoceros, which lives in it and feeds on it, and must, therefore, be shot from elephant-back, as it is not possible for anyone on foot to get a shot. The rhinoceros of Sumatra is a smaller animal, with hairy ears. It is not particularly courageous, but is very destructive in the plantations.

THE WILD BOAR

This animal is the joy of Indian sportsmen, particularly of soldiers stationed in that land, who find pigsticking one of their favourite amusements. Nowhere else do boars show such fight. I have seen them pretty nasty when maddened by spear-thrusts in the corkwoods near Tangier, but an old Indian boar, which stands some thirty inches at the shoulder, is the incarnation of pluck, tushes bristling, little red eyes flashing, charging times and again, even with spears broken in its body. Though considered a dainty by both tigers and leopards, and, doubtless aware of their fondness for his flesh, the boar thinks little of drinking at the same waterhole as

Only one kind of African elephant has hitherto been generally known, but a year or two ago the *East African Standard* published particulars of a somewhat mysterious "water-elephant," as it was called, discovered by a Frenchman in a lake in the Congo. It seems to be of smaller build than the ordinary kind, with short ears and no tusks. Further evidence, however, seems desirable before taking this creature very seriously, though, in view of the recent discovery of the okapi, it is unsafe to predict that Africa may not have other surprises in store.

RHINOCEROS

There are—perhaps it would be more accurate to say there were—two kinds of African rhinoceros. The white, or square-mouthed kind, also named after Burchell, is all but extinct, and only the black kind survives in any numbers in the wild state.

As a matter of fact, the "white" rhinoceros of Africa no more deserves its name than the "white" elephant of Burma, for it is grey, and the same may be said of the "black" kind. Each of them carries two horns on the snout. In the square-mouthed rhinoceros the fore-horn has been known to measure over 62 in., whereas the longest recorded fore-horn in the black rhinoceros was only 44 in. In-



"THE AFRICAN RHINOCEROS USES ITS HORN FOR TOSsing ITS ENEMY."

deed, it is only in South and East Africa that it has horns of even that length. The second horn in both kinds is always smaller and grows straight, whereas the other is curved, usually backward, though in some specimens it points forward. No doubt the animal knows how to turn it to account, whichever way it grows, and, as has been mentioned above, the African rhinoceros uses the horn for tossing its enemy, whereas the Indian fights chiefly with its teeth.

The rare "white" rhinoceros is the taller and heavier beast of the two, standing a little over 6 ft. at the shoulder, whereas the largest known black rhinoceros would be several inches shorter. The most conspicuous difference between the two, however, is in neither size nor colouring, but in the shape of the upper lip, a sure clue to the food preferred by the animal. In the black, the upper lip overhangs the lower like a finger. In other words, the animal is "prehensile-lipped," or able to pick leaves off bushes, browsing on acacia and other low trees within its reach. Burchell's rhinoceros, on the other hand, has a square mouth and is a grazing animal, living out on the open plains, and not in the forests which are the home of the other. Its day is done. Its old haunts know it no more, and even Selous, greatest of living hunters, would be puzzled to find one to-day in the length and

breadth of South Africa. It must be looked for in East Africa, and should be strictly preserved. Unfortunately, Mr. Roosevelt and his son shot nine between them. No one can fairly blame these American sportsmen for availing themselves of the invitation to shoot all manner of game in British territory, but let us hope that those nine may be the last to fall to the rifle for many a long year.

The black rhinoceros may still be described as fairly plentiful as far north as Abyssinia. Those who have shot and watched these animals in the two continents where they are still found (time was, before the dawn of the period we call history, when they roamed over Europe) are unanimous as to their character, describing them as stupid, short-sighted, blundering brutes, much given to attacks of nerves, easily panic-stricken, and at such moments apt to charge blindly the moment they get wind of the hunter, not so much in malice as for fear of being surrounded. There will always be differences of opinion about the character of the lion and tiger, but no such uncertainty seems to invest that of the rhinoceros. Fortunately its eyesight is so poor that its charge can easily be avoided at the last moment.

Much nonsense has been written about the thickness of the animal's hide, which has been

described as capable of turning bullets even at short range, and it may be that these fables date from the days of primitive guns and insufficient charges of powder, which may have had no more effect on these thick-skinned animals than a peashooter on a pig. Modern ammunition, however, makes short work of the rhinoceros; moreover, apart from such vulnerability, we must remember that its hide cannot even withstand the attacks of the tsetse-fly, which feeds greedily on its blood. It is, nevertheless, an immensely powerful animal, and few others are so hard to kill; for it dies so slowly that very often, when one is seemingly dead from spear or bullet wounds, it will rally and either charge the enemy or gallop away out of reach. The rhinoceros is said to be irresistibly attracted by fire. A creature of such bulk hardly seems comparable to a moth flying into the candle-flame, but it is a fact that, attracted in some unaccountable fashion, the rhinoceros sometimes charges right into a camp fire. Elephants have a similar habit of trampling on fires, with the result that they occasionally spread the embers, and have even been known in this way to set fire to native villages.