

AN ELEPHANT SWINGS IN FROM THE RIGHT AS IT DISPLAYS SIGNS OF ATTACK. (Right) "LIONS HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO PASS A HUNTER ON HIS LEFT, SWING ROUND RAPIDLY, AND COME IN FROM THE REAR; THIS MOVEMENT DEVELOPS INTO A RIGHT-HAND ATTACK"

DANGER FROM THE RIGHT

By W. ROBERT FORAN

One man's experience suggests that some big game attack most often from the same direction

IT would be interesting to learn the views of experienced big game hunters on whether they consider wild animals right-handed in their attack policies. In so far as I am aware, this subject has not been discussed; but the knowledge would prove of real value when dealing with a savage onslaught whilst hunting.

Normally, a sportsman is given little enough opportunity for exact observation of the method of attack followed by various species of fauna. Their mind is too occupied in coping with a particularly grave situation and self-preservation to spare a thought for other considerations. Yet times do arise when it becomes feasible to note carefully the characteristic methods in attack adopted by different species hunted.

Perhaps wisely, writers on big game subjects rarely express opinions as to how so-called "dangerous" beasts actually carry out their attack. There are, however, certain well-defined methods employed by diverse species; and these would seem to change but little in the main principles underlying them. Even so, they are mainly dictated by the type of country where the encounter is staged.

I am open to correction, but long years of experience in hunting game over Africa, India, Malaya and elsewhere incline me to the belief that the great majority of wild animals attack in a clockwise direction. There have been noted, of course, exceptions to this. It is ever unwise to appear in any way dogmatic about the behaviour of any species of the fauna. The experience of one man is not always found to coincide with that of another, even with the same species or under identical conditions.

A purely personal impression gained is that the majority of the more dangerous beasts do appear to deliver an attack right-handed. Others may have been given cause to think otherwise. But the fact remains that nearly every time personally attacked when hunting with rifle or camera, the animal concerned in the incident did so clockwise. This, perhaps,

is in no way peculiar as the majority of humans seem to be right-handed instinctively and, quite likely, Nature decided likewise for the brute creation.

Several times when tiger-hunting in India and Malaya I was compelled to deal with a vicious attack made by tigers hunted afoot in jungle-lands, and all came in at speed from their right.

Being right-handed conferred a minor advantage in effectually halting the attack. I have also seen tiger spring upon and kill a buffalo, tethered as "live bait" under a *machan*; and the attack made right-handed. As the buffalo is also right-handed, there seemed sound method in this line of approach, but on two occasions when hunting tiger from the howdah on a *shikar* elephant, the beast came in a far more frontal line to spring upon my mount's head and trunk. There may be a reason for that happening, too, but I do not know a convincing explanation.

Many charging lions faced up to in Africa came in their final swift rush from the right, turning in suddenly to spring when almost frontal. They have also been known, however, to pass a hunter on his left, swing round rapidly, and come in from the rear; this movement develops into a right-hand attack. I have experienced this more than once; and others have confirmed that it had happened to them.

Once I watched closely, and followed up, a young lioness stalking a zebra on the Emali Plains of Kenya. She made her final spring upon the quarry at near range from the rear and right-handed. A close examination of the remains of various species—zebra, wildebeest, hartebeest, kudu, eland and impala—killed by lion clearly showed that the attack had been delivered from the right flank, the claw-marks appearing on the right.

Usually, too, the leopard follows this line of attack. They will approach at a crouching glide, body low to the ground, to make their final spring at a distance of about three times the length of body. It is directed from the right. The primary object actuating them

seems to be the use of their weight to bowl over the victim. That, of course, can only be surmise. Happily, I never suffered a mauling from a leopard so cannot speak from personal experience; but others, not so fortunate, have assured me that this was the strategy employed by a leopard. Several times I have been charged by one of these beasts and found it fairly simple to kill during the actual spring. If merely wounded, the leopard falls short and thus simplifies firing a second bullet to terminate an unpleasant episode. And it can prove most unpleasant!

A rhinoceros is too much of a blundering fool when charging or demonstrating to afford any reasonable certainty as to its attack being right-handed. I have never been able to determine which is the case, but tempted to think the charge or demonstration is frontal. On the other hand, I know of several hunters who were gored by rhinoceros and the chief damage done on their left. There are sound reasons for believing that the chief aim of a rhinoceros is to remove from the vicinity any source of danger threatening. The poor vision of this beast is a severe handicap. Having scented or heard, but not seen, a suspicious object, they charge or demonstrate, more or less blindly, in that direction and in a spirit of acute resentment. Each individual of the species, however, appears to be a law unto itself.

Every threatening situation arising is dealt with by a rhinoceros in the manner which seems to it most likely to prove effective. That this does not always work out favourably in actual practice is not germane to the subject being discussed. I have been "charged" by rhinoceros frontally, right-handed and left-handed; so have many other sportsmen on innumerable occasions from different angles. The hunter is rarely left long in doubt as to the intentions of the beast. But I much doubt if anyone could state positively which is the characteristic line of attack followed by this species. Frankly, I cannot.

When hunting elk, moose, caribou and bear in Canada or the United States, it was generally found that these species attacked right-handed. The bear, however, will often prove an exception and come straight at an enemy on its hind-legs. Its main object is to get in close enough in order to embrace and savagely claw the hunter; and once held by a bear, it is rare to come out from the encounter alive.

Most of the larger species of African antelope, after being wounded and "bayed," will use their horns with deadly effect by a right-handed movement.

THE ELDER SPORTSMAN

I EXPECT most of us in the course of our experiences have come across the "Elder Statesman" or "Grand Old Man" of sport. My elder sportsman is the man who might be termed as "not so young." It becomes ever more necessary "to see ourselves as others see us" as we grow older, and it is a good thing from time to time to take a look round and make sure that we are not holding up proceedings by being slow not only physically, but also on the "uptake."

For many years I was a keen volunteer for top butts, the thickest kale, impenetrable cover and the outside gun of any circling movements. The spirit is still equally willing and the flesh comparatively able, but I am by no means too proud to be allotted an easier task, or at any time to be relieved by a lift in the game cart or other easement, especially if available in the form of a loader.

Every keen young sportsman is buoyed up by the hope that he may develop into a first-class shot, though in these days the odds are all against him getting the quantity of shooting essential to achieve this ambition. He is therefore apt to take the ups and downs of his personal performance too much to heart, expecting every day, *à la* Coué, to better his previous standard. To have arrived at the point where one's maximum capabilities are no longer open to any doubt is a milestone on the road to full enjoyment of one's sport, provided, of course, that the standard is reasonably high.

Until after the war I had done little in the way of walking up partridge or snipe shooting, for a good many years. On coming back to these forms of shooting I was genuinely convinced that the birds were wilder than they used to be, and it was some appreciable time before the indubitable fact came home to me that I was considerably slower on the draw. I seemed to need a fraction of a second to collect my thoughts before putting up my gun, which, of course, makes all the difference and represents 5-10yds. of distance. Luckily such slightly delayed reactions need have little effect on performance at driven birds, particularly if one makes up one's mind to take them as far out in front as possible.

I seem to remember in earlier days having had long and perhaps heated arguments on the relative merits of various loads and sizes of shot. I cannot claim to have arrived at any conclusions other than that a standard load and No. 7 shot is satisfactory for all ordinary shooting, including pigeons and duck. Any conceivable loss of striking power in comparison to larger shot is amply compensated by the increased chance of a pellet in a vulnerable area. There is little difference in the striking velocity at ranges up to 40yds.

I have always suspected that the "over and under" has been produced for the problematical benefit of those who have plenty of money but not much skill, and hope that their marksmanship will be improved thereby. I have never heard of anybody starting to shoot with "over and under" unless they have had what I should consider the bad luck to inherit them. They are certainly no cure for old age. I do, however, know several men to whom a standard 12-bore has become something of a burden to carry and to handle. A change to 16- or even 20-bores may well add considerably to their enjoyment at no detriment to their performance: in fact an improvement may well result. Personally, I think I should prefer a light 12-bore and 2in. cartridges.

In my own case I am conscious of little deterioration of long sight and can still mark birds down with accuracy at a very considerable distance. My night vision is definitely not so good and I have given up duck flighting, but that is a very minor consideration. Deafness can be a considerable handicap. Instructions may be unheard or only partially understood, and only the deaf can realise what a handicap it is not to be able to hear birds approaching on the wing, or the warnings of the next guns. Good hearing enables a gun to relax very considerably and obviates the need to keep other senses keyed to a high pitch.

To plunge into what might be considered some of the more intimate and personal problems of the elderly would be impertinent. But in conclusion I would bet that among the hundred best guns in England to-day there would be far more over 60 than there would be under 30; this going to show that practice and experience are worth more than mere physical fitness.

C. O. ALEXANDER



THE EXCEPTION TO THE RULE? THE RHINOCEROS WHICH ATTACKS IN NO SET FASHION

I have never known the "horning" to be other than from right to left. The sable, oryx, gemsbok and roan antelopes can prove very dangerous if approached too close by a hunter or his dogs after being disabled by a bullet. Many a man has been given cause to know this truth or had one (or more) of his dogs killed by a "bayed" member of those four species. The sharp-pointed horns can be employed with deadly effect by a vicious sweep sideways to the left.

If their anger is aroused, wart-hogs will charge on sight but not always in a direct line. They often circle around, swing in right-handed at a fast trot, and then deliver a wicked charge home. The head is lifted high and higher, and ever more to the right, as it comes in for the final rush. The movement of the head is always outwards until close to the enemy, when swung inwards with great force to gore with the cruel tushes. When riding down wart-hogs with spear or revolver on the Athi Plains of Kenya in earlier years, this appeared to be the almost invariable strategy adopted by them when taking the initiative. Twice I had ponies so severely gored that they had to be destroyed. Again the attack was right-handed.

More or less, the buffalo's attack is on the same principle as that of the wart-hog. As in the case of the latter, the more deliberate an advance to attack, the more murderous the intentions. When at close range, the lowered head is swung viciously inwards from the right to gore or knock down the victim; and then, this achieved, the beast turns about quickly to gore or trample to death. As the massive head is almost invariably held low to cover most vital portions of the anatomy, it is never simple to halt or turn such a deliberate type of attack. Only when near the hunter is the great head raised sideways and outwards, exactly like wart-hogs, to give forceful play to an inward and vicious sweep of the horns. The first wound inflicted is nearly always on the left side of the victim.

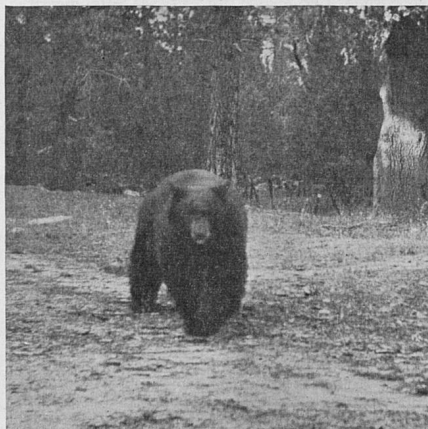
The ferocious s'ladang of the Malayan jungles normally attacks with lowered head and right-handed, like the African or Asiatic buffalo; but once, during the few hunts for this beast in the Malay Peninsula, a bull unexpectedly charged head-on at me from close quarters. I was taken completely unawares, but jumped quickly to the left and got in a shot at close range. Luckily, it brought down the bull and a second bullet ended a most unpleasant incident but the swiftly-moving seconds were not such as one desires to be repeated. The density of a jungle in Malaya furnishes a severe handicap and is all in favour of the tiger or s'ladang.

A charging elephant is never less than a tough proposition. Firing a bullet in the ground just in front of the forefeet or high up on the forehead will often turn them off their set course, thus affording a chance to get clear or kill. When a herd stampedes, usually the wisest policy is to stand immobile. That is easier said than done. Every instinct urges flight from a panic-stricken stampede of giants, but standing your ground makes all the difference between a whole

skin and fatality. The herd will pass you on either flank. As this has also been the experience of others, it appears a normal enough happening. They may regard the man in their path merely as another tree to be side-stepped, else acute terror has blunted their customary high degree of intelligence.

Several times when hunting elephants in the Belgian Congo I was called upon to face up to a stampede and by steeling my nerves to remain immobile, emerged from the terrifying ordeal quite unscathed. Once, too, even worse occurred. Having seen the herd vanish down-wind in a thick cloud of dust and when gradually recovering command of my wits, I heard them stampeding back again in my direction. That second avalanche of giants, though doing no harm, completely wrecked my nerves for that day and several more afterwards. I think that is understandable.

A few of my old hunting friends and acquaintances insisted that the great bulk and weight of an elephant precluded it from turning sharp to the right when charging an enemy. They declared that in dodging to the left flank, you could escape the line of attack and have a chance to get in a mortal shot. I am not at all convinced as to the accuracy of this viewpoint. I have faced elephants charging from a somewhat right-handed angle, but also seen them turn off sharp to the right before actually reaching my position. In the latter case, possibly the "charge" was far more in the nature of a demonstration than one with lethal intent. When hunting for ivory in the "thick stuff" there is afforded little chance of getting out of the way of a deliberate charge or demonstration; but in more open terrain the attack definitely seems to have a right-handed tendency and I have yet to hear a solution as to why it should be so.



THE BEAR OFTEN PROVES AN EXCEPTION AND COMES STRAIGHT AT AN ENEMY