

ANIMAL LIFE

THROUGHOUT

THE GLOBE.

William Henry Davenport Adams

An Illustrated Book of Natural History.



HUNTING THE OSTRICH.

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on the short grassy growth that lines the river-banks and the shores of the lakes, the sweet sugar-cane, rice, and millet. It is said that he occasionally regales himself with a little fish. However this may be, he is, in the main, an herbivorous animal.

In all Eastern and Southern Africa, from the Cape to the Senegal, and from the Congo to the Nile, the hippopotamus is found. The hunters pursue him for the ivory yielded by his tusks; nor do they despise his flesh, though it is somewhat coarse. Sometimes they seek out the animal's usual path, and dig in it a pit of considerable depth, planted with sharp-pointed poles, and concealed by a thatching of leafy branches. Treading upon these, he is precipitated into the pit, where he falls on the *chevaux de frise* prepared for his reception. Sometimes, in the dusk of evening, they lie in ambuscade among the bushes, and aim at his enormous body the deadly bullet, as he comes up from the water, labouring and bellowing. We say "his body;" but, more correctly speaking, it is at his head they aim, the rest of his carcass being almost as invulnerable as Achilles.

But a more stirring mode of pursuing the chase is with the harpoon,—an instrument consisting of two portions: a shaft ten or twelve feet long, and three or four inches thick; and a barbed iron point, fitting loosely into a socket in the head of the shaft, and connected with it by a stout rope.

The position of the hippopotamus having been ascertained, one or more of the boldest and most skilful of the hunters stand prepared with the harpoon; while the others make ready to launch the raft and canoes, if the attack be crowned with success. Gradually the din of preparation subsides, and every one is silent and on the alert. The snorting and plunging of the "river-horses" become more and more distinct, though they themselves are still hidden from view by a bend of the stream. When this is passed, several dark objects are seen floating idly on the waters, looking, as Charles Anderson remarks, more like the crests of sunken rocks than living creatures. Ever and anon, one or other of the shapeless masses disappears, but soon rises again to the surface. On glides the boat with its dark-skinned crew, who are now wrought up to the highest pitch of excitement. At last it drifts

into the midst of the herd, who are apparently unconscious of danger. One of the animals comes in contact with it. Now is the critical moment! The foremost harpooneer raises himself to his full height, and, with all the force of his brawny arms, plunges the deadly iron into the body of the hippopotamus.

Down to the bottom dives the wounded animal; but all his efforts to escape prove fruitless. Though the line or the shaft of the harpoon should break, the fatal barb cannot be withdrawn, but remains embedded in the flesh.

Some of the men now launch a canoe from off the raft, and hasten to the shore with the harpoon-line, fastening it about a tree or a bunch of reeds, so that the animal may either be "brought up" at once, or should the pressure on the line prove too great, be "played with," like a salmon by the fisherman.

Then the other canoes are launched, and chase is given to the wounded brute, which at length falls beneath a constant storm of javelins, and is dragged ashore in triumph.

The hippopotamus is a gregarious animal, collecting generally in herds of twenty or thirty. He is very inoffensive; but at times, when alarmed or irritated, will turn upon his assailant, —and in such a case he is apt to prove a very formidable opponent.

THE RHINOCEROS.

In the wooded and well-watered plains of Africa, from Abyssinia to Kaffraria, as well as in Tropical Asia, is found the Rhinoceros—easily distinguished by the one or two solid, curved, and sharp-tipped horns developed from the nasal bones. He is one of the most ungainly and repulsive of animals! His eyes are small and half-closed; his ears upright, pointed, and moderately large. The coarse, thick, knotty hide is so tough and impenetrable about the short thick legs and awkward body, that neither the claws of the tiger nor the steel or shot of the hunter can make any impression upon it. About the neck it hangs in several thick plaits or folds, another fold extends from the shoulders to the fore leg, and another from the hind-quarters to the thigh. The head is moderately large and long, with a flattened skull, and a protruding upper lip. In disposition he is fierce when roused, but not prompt to

attack; he leads an apparently lethargic life, wallowing on the marshy banks of lakes and rivers, where grows the vegetable food on which he exclusively feeds. From the tip of his nose to the root of the tail, he measures eleven to twelve or even thirteen feet; in girth, the corpulent unshapely body is nearly equal to its length; and he stands about seven feet high,—altogether as far opposed to our conception of the graceful and becoming as any animal can well be.

There are several varieties: the one-horned rhinoceros of Java, the one-horned rhinoceros of India, the two-horned rhinoceros of Sumatra, the unarmed rhinoceros, the two-horned rhinoceros of Africa, and the Abyssinian rhinoceros. All agree in their habits, so that what is said of the African is said also of the Asiatic species.

It might be thought that an animal so ungainly and so bulky would be slow of movement; but the contrary is the fact. When pursued, he dashes through the forest with tremendous speed, and marks his path by the dead trees which he brings to the ground, and the broken boughs which lie scattered in every direction. The havoc made by a cannon-shot in passing through the timbers of a line-of-battle ship may give some idea of the *kind* of destruction accomplished by the rhinoceros in his headlong course. He is not easily overtaken; nor is he easily surprised, for he is protected by his keenness of scent and of hearing. He can discern the approach of an enemy from a considerable distance: and it is well for him that these senses are so powerful, inasmuch as, owing to the smallness and deep-set position of his eyes, his range of vision is exceedingly limited. It is said that he is also assisted by the warnings of a bird, the *Buphaga Africana*, which frequently accompanies him, seems to be animated by a strong feeling of attachment for his unwieldy friend, and indicates the approach of danger by a signal-cry.

Like most of the Tropical animals, the rhinoceros rests or slumbers during the day. At nightfall, he proceeds to the nearest lake or river to quench his thirst, and, by wallowing in the mud, to cover himself with a coat of clay as a protection against insects. Then he sallies forth on a foraging expedition,

and in the course of the night covers a considerable extent of ground. At sunrise he retires again to rest, and under the shade of rock or tree sleeps through the hot hours of the Tropical day, either standing erect, or stretched out at full length.

Africa possesses a white rhinoceros, of which there are two varieties,—the monoho and the koboaba; and a black rhinoceros, of which there are two species also,—the borela and the keitloa. The white rhinoceros is of a comparatively inoffensive nature, timid, gentle, harmless; he lives wholly on the grasses. The black is revengeful, gloomy, and ferocious, and in his paroxysms of passion is more formidable than any other African quadruped. He feeds upon the thorny sprays and branches of the acacia, and on the roots which he digs up with his large horn.

The hunter pursues the rhinoceros after various fashions. He entraps him into a pitfall; or he hides behind a screen near his usual drinking-place, and shoots him when he comes down to quench his thirst; or he "stalks" him as our British sportsmen "stalk" the deer—taking care to keep to the windward of him, and availing himself of every opportunity of cover. A bullet is always effectual if lodged in the head, or just behind the shoulder; or, at thirty paces, if sent right through the centre of the lungs. The chase of the rhinoceros, however, is always attended with more or less danger; for in his fury nothing can withstand his assault.

The following experience is recorded by Mr. Anderson, the celebrated hunter and traveller, to whom we owe much of our knowledge of the habits of the African animals.

One day he had wounded a black rhinoceros, but was not in a favourable position to repeat the shot. The monster, with a terrible snort, and with his head close to the ground, like a bull, immediately rushed at him. The hunter had only just time to level his rifle and fire hastily, before the enemy was upon him, carrying him to the ground. So violent was the shock that rifle, powder-flask, and ball-pouch were sent spinning ten feet high in the air. On the beast charging me, says Mr. Anderson, it crossed my mind that, unless gored at once by his horn, his impetus would be so great as to carry him beyond me, and I might

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thus be afforded a chance of escape ; and so indeed it happened, for having been tumbled over and trampled on with great violence, the fore-quarters of the enraged brute passed over my body. Struggling for life, I seized my opportunity, and as the animal was recovering himself for a renewal of the charge I scrambled out from between his hind legs. But the infuriated rhinoceros had not yet done with me ; scarcely had I regained my feet before he struck me down a second time, and with his horn ripped up my right thigh (though not very deeply), from near the knee to the hip. With his fore feet, moreover, he hit me a terrific blow on the left shoulder, near the back of the neck. My ribs bent under the enormous weight and pressure, and for a moment I must, as I believe, have lost consciousness ; I have, at least, very indistinct notions of what afterwards took place. All I remember is, that when I raised my head I heard a furious snorting and plunging amongst the neighbouring bushes. I now arose, though with great difficulty, and made my way, in the best manner I was able, towards a large tree near at hand for shelter ; but this precaution was needless ; the beast, for the time at least, showed no inclination further to molest me. Either in the *mêlée*, or owing to the confusion caused by his wounds, he had lost sight of me, or felt satisfied with the revenge he had taken. Be that as it may, I escaped with life, though sadly wounded and sorely bruised, and with some difficulty got back to my screen.

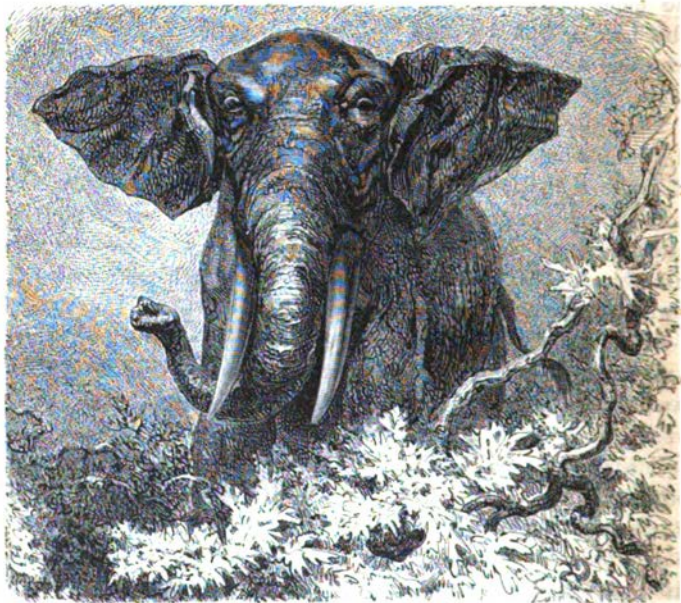
Mr. Anderson tells us that for some time afterwards he suffered from a nervous affection, and that it was long before he could again attack a rhinoceros with any coolness. This we can well believe ; but possibly the reader will be inclined to ask, with ourselves, whether a man is justified in thus exposing his life for the sake of "sport" ? Whether he could not make a better and wiser use of his energies and daring than in hunting rhinoceroses in the wilds of Africa ?

THE ELEPHANT.

Let us enter the Tropical forest. It is in these verdurous shades the most sagacious of animals loves to roam. The Elephant, however, is by no means partial to solitude, and always

joins a herd of from thirty to a hundred individuals, acknowledging the rule of a chosen chief or leader. Necessarily, they require a very extensive area of pasturage; and it is affirmed that they unceremoniously expel from their domain all other animals which would fain share in its product.

There are two species of elephant—the African and the Asiatic. Both are natives of the Tropical World, and inhabit the forest-depths, which they quit only at nightfall, and in order to repair to



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the nearest stream. There are no important points of difference in their organization or habits.

The form of the elephant suggests at once the idea of unwieldy strength. His head is large, with extremely small eyes, and broad drooping ears; he has an arched back, and a thick heavy body, which seems a "world too big" for his shapeless and stunted limbs; his huge feet are divided into five shapeless hoofs; the

upper jaw is armed with two enormous projecting tusks, which frequently measure as much as six or seven feet in length; and he is endowed with a wonderful organ in the shape of a proboscis or trunk, of such strength that it can uproot trees, and yet of such delicacy of touch that it can pick up a pin. This organ is about eight feet long; it conveys food to the animal's mouth, and pumps up the enormous draughts of water which, by means of its recurvature, are poured down the capacious throat or over the huge body. Its length supplies the place of a long neck, which would have been unable to sustain the weight of the large head and solid tusks.

The African elephant is distinguished by the enormous length of these tusks, and the extraordinary size of the internal organs of hearing. He was formerly distributed all over the African continent, and was much employed in war by the Carthaginians and Egyptians. He is no longer found in the northern parts of Africa, but large herds still haunt the central and southern regions, from the Senegal to the Cape.

When we speak of the lion, his physical characteristic which immediately strikes us is his mane; of the tiger, his superb striped hide; of the rhinoceros, his horn; and of the elephant, in like manner, his trunk. This, indeed, is necessary to his life and liberty; if seriously injured, he cannot feed himself. It is powerful alike for attack and defence; like the genius of steam, it can tear down a tree or pick up a straw: its delicacy is as wonderful as its strength. Its exquisite sensibility of touch is due to a curious appendage at the extremity, which has been likened to a finger and thumb. On the upper side is an elongated process, soft and flexible, but strong; and on the under, a kind of tubercle against which the former may be pressed. If the articles the elephant collects are not worth the trouble of separate conveyance to his mouth, he retains them in his thumb until the finger has gathered an additional quantity.

It is astonishing in how many ways the trunk contributes to its owner's comfort and enjoyment. He picks a leafy branch, and fans himself with it, or drives away the plague of insects.

He uses it to fling dust over his back—a practice in which he seems to find a special pleasure. It expresses his rage or affection; in the former case giving utterance to a loud hoarse sound, which has been compared to that of a trumpet. Hence the French name *trompe*, which we English have corrupted into "trunk." With this organ he beats the ground when he is in pain or in a paroxysm of rage. An elephant was once burned to death in a Dublin menagerie. On examining the carcass, no trunk could be found, and it was supposed to have perished in the fire; but a closer investigation revealed the fact that the poor creature, in his agony, had driven it two feet deep into the hard ground that made the floor of his den.

The elephant, colossal as are his proportions, lives wholly upon vegetable food. Had it been otherwise, how much animal life must have perished to satisfy his wants! He finds an ample supply of provender in the luxuriant woods which he always frequents. He seems to suffer from extreme heat, and therefore it may be concluded that the dense, warm, almost stifling forests of Tropical America would be unsuitable to him. But the forests of Africa are comparatively cool; their glades lie open to the free passage of invigorating breezes; and in these he finds the running streams in which he loves to bathe and swim. When he approaches, we may add, the lesser animals retire, as if out of deference. An African traveller, who was resting, on one occasion, by the reedy margin of a small pool, was warned of the coming of the giants of the Animal World by the uneasiness of the animals that happened to be drinking at the time. The giraffe, he says, began to sway his long neck to and fro; the zebra uttered subdued and plaintive cries; the gnu glided away with noiseless step; even the ponderous and contentious rhinoceros paused in his heavy walk to listen; then, turning round, listened again; and when satisfied that his suspicions were correct, cautiously withdrew, venting his terror or his rage by one of his vicious and peculiar snorts.

In moving from place to place, the elephant-herd adopt a kind of military array. The males with the largest tusks take up their position in the van, press forward with slow and steady

NIGHT SCENE BY AN AFRICAN LAKE

