

WILD BEASTS

AND

THEIR WAYS

REMINISCENCES OF EUROPE, ASIA, AFRICA
AND AMERICA

BY

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F.R.S., F.R.G.S., ETC. ETC.



“I also am a Tiger.”—Puss.

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CHAPTER XVI

THE RHINOCEROS

THE "unicorn" of the ancients has been one of those animals that appear to defy the attacks of man. It is thus described by Cuvier:—"They are large animals, with each foot divided into three toes; and the nasal bones, very thick and united into a kind of arch, support a solid horn, which adheres to the skin, and is composed of a fibrous and horny substance, resembling agglutinated hairs. They are naturally stupid and ferocious; frequent marshy places; subsist upon herbage and the branches of trees; have a simple stomach, very long intestines, and a great cœcum.

"The Indian rhinoceros. (*Rh. Indicus*, Cuv.) In addition to its twenty grinders, this species has two stout incisive teeth in each jaw, together with two other intermediate smaller ones below, and two, still more diminutive, outside of its upper incisors. It has only one horn, and its skin is remarkable for the deep folds into which it is thrown behind, and across the shoulders, and before, and across the thighs.

"The Javanese rhinoceros (*Rh. Javanus*, Cuv.), with the great incisors and single horn of the preceding, has fewer folds in the skin, though one of them on the neck is larger; and what is remarkable, the entire skin is covered with square angular tubercles.

"The Sumatran rhinoceros (*Rh. Sumatrensis*, Cuv.), with the same four great incisors of the foregoing, has no folds to the skin, which is besides hairy, and there is a second horn behind the first.

"The African rhinoceros (*Rh. Africanus*, Cuv.), or rather rhinoceroses, three species of them being now ascertained. Two horns as in the preceding; and no folds in the skin, nor any incisor teeth, the molars occupying nearly the whole length of the jaw. This deficiency of incisors might warrant a separation from the



INDIAN RHINOCEROS.

others. The great rhinoceros (*Rh. simus*, Burchell), which considerably exceeds in size any of the others, is further distinguished by its pale colour, its very long and straight anterior horn, and remarkably short hind one, and particularly by the form of its upper lip, which is not capable of elongation, and a certain degree of prehension, as in all the others; it is the most gregarious of any, and also the most inoffensive, frequenting the open karoos. The common Cape rhinoceros (*Rh. Africanus*, Cuv.) is darker, with also unequal horns, the posterior being shorter; and the Ketloa rhinoceros (*Rh. Ketloa*), recently discovered by Dr. Smith, is an animal of solitary habits, with horns of equal length, reputed to exceed the rest in ferocity."

I have extracted the definition assumed by Cuvier to exhibit the peculiar varieties of this species. His *Rh. simus* is the white rhinoceros of Southern Africa. This does not exist north of the equator. The peculiar form of lip to which the great naturalist directs attention proves, being broad and rounded, that the animal is a grass-eater, in which it differs from those with prehensile lips, which feed upon the extreme ends of twigs and tender branches; to gather these, they require an embryo proboscis, which the prehensile lip actually represents, and the next stage of evolution may be seen in the development of the same member in the tapir. Cuvier omits to describe the peculiarity of the molars of the prehensile lip varieties; these teeth have sharp overlapping cutting edges, which, when the jaws are closed, exactly represent the action of a pair of shears. The prehensile lip catches a bunch of twigs, and forming them into a compact bundle, introduces it into the mouth; the shear-like teeth then cut it off as neatly as though pruned with a switching-hook.

There has been a great diversity of opinion concerning the varieties of rhinoceros, and I feel convinced that it cannot be solely determined by the length or shape of horns; these differ as much as the horns of stags, although the animals belong to the same species. The great white rhinoceros is a distinct species, which is marked by the blunt muzzle, the rounded and non-prehensile lip, the shape of the head, the enormous size, and the extraordinary length of the horn.

All the varieties of rhinoceros have the same peculiar formation of foot, confined to three horny toes, each of which forms nearly a half-circle. The horn of the Indian variety is so short as to be valueless as a trophy, and the length of 8 inches would be considered above the average, although the base is remarkably thick.

I do not agree with Dr. Smith that the horns of the Ketloa are

of equal length. It is quite possible that some may be equal, where the anterior horn has been ground away by long service ; but as a rule the anterior horn is considerably longer, and always different in shape, being rounded from its broad base, and continuing always round until it terminates in a sharp point.

The posterior horn is flattened at the sides, and rises with a sharp edge along the ridge, with a raised centre, which forms a point.

All rhinoceros horns are of the same texture, being simply agglutinated hairs, which, if cut in a thin transverse section and placed beneath a microscope, exhibit the capillary tubes glued together by a horny substance into a solid body. There is no material that can equal in toughness the horn of rhinoceros, and it has always been in request from time immemorial for various useful and other imaginary purposes. The belief that a cup formed of rhinoceros horn will detect poison is very common, and is thoroughly accepted by the Arabs of the Soudan. I have three in my possession, mounted in silver, which were presented to me, when leaving Africa, by the great sheik of the deserts, Hussein Khalifa Pasha.

The horns are not attached to the skull, but they are merely seated upon the hard and thick bone, which forms a foundation, slightly convex, above the nose. The skin is immensely thick at the base from which the horn springs, and it appears bristly and rough, to a degree that would suggest gradual development into horn, which is actually the case.

When a rhinoceros has been killed, and the head has been exposed in the sun to dry, the horns will fall off upon the third day if struck lightly with a stick, and they will expose the foundation upon which they rested ; this closely resembles the bottom of an artichoke when the prickly leaves have been removed.

Although the horns would appear unsuitable for rough work, being merely attachments to the skin, they are most powerful weapons of offence. It has been asserted that the rhinoceros will kill an elephant ; this is highly probable, if it had an opportunity of striking it in the belly or the flank by an unexpected attack ; but no rhinoceros would have the remotest chance in actual conflict with an ordinary bull elephant, as the weight and strength would be immeasurably superior, in addition to the length and power of the two tusks. Elephants are much afraid of rhinoceros, but they are almost equally timid with other animals, while the rhinoceros is a sullen, stupid brute that is afraid of nothing.

I have never seen more than one species of rhinoceros east of



THE BLACK RHINOCEROS (KETTLOA).

the White Nile, from Abyssinia to within $1^{\circ} 14'$ of the equator; this is the variety known as the Ketloa. It well merits the distinction of superior ferocity, as it will attack either man or beast, frequently without the slightest provocation. It is especially likely to attack should it obtain the wind (scent) of any person or strange animal before it appears in sight. This makes it extremely dangerous when riding through thick jungle or high grass, should a rhinoceros be somewhere concealed to leeward. I have myself been hunted out of the jungle by two rhinoceroses which thus gained our wind, just as we had become aware of their existence through the presence of fresh droppings. Fortunately there was no lady, and our party was confined to the Hamran Arabs and myself; but three sharp whiffs close at hand in the thick jungle, like jets of steam let off to ease the boiler, were immediately followed by the animals themselves, which came tearing down upon us at full speed, and sent us flying in all directions.

No lady upon a side saddle could possibly have ridden through that thorny jungle without being dragged from her seat. As it was, after a mad chase the animals lost sight of us, but when we collected together, everybody was more or less damaged, by either tumbling over rocks, or being torn by the hooked horns.

The sure find for rhinoceros is in the neighbourhood of a peculiar red-barked mimosa. This is the much-loved food, and the appearance of the bushes will immediately denote the presence of the animal; they are clipped, as though by pruning shears, all the shoots being cut off in a straight line where the rhinoceros has been browsing. This neat operation is effected by the prehensile lip and the shear-like teeth. Another proof of rhinoceros will be found in the vast piles of dung, nearly always against the stem of a considerable tree; it is a peculiar custom of this animal to visit the same place every night, and this regularity of functions brings it into the traps which are cunningly devised by the natives for its capture.

A round hole, the size of an ordinary hat-box, is dug near the tree. This is neatly formed, and when completed, it is covered with a wooden circle like the toy wheel of a child's waggon. The spokes are made of flat bamboo, with sharp points overlapping each other in the centre, in the place where the nave would be. This looks rather like a sieve when fitted carefully as a cover to the hole. If any person were to thrust his fist through this elastic substance, the points of the bamboo would prevent his hand from being withdrawn, as they would retain his arm. In the same manner this sieve-like cap would retain the leg of an

animal, should it tread upon the surface and pass through. Accordingly a noose is laid upon the surface. The rope is constructed specially, of great strength, and the end is fastened to a log of wood that weighs about 200 or 300 lbs. This is buried slightly in the earth, together with the cord. A quantity of dung is thrown carelessly over the freshly turned ground to conceal the fact.

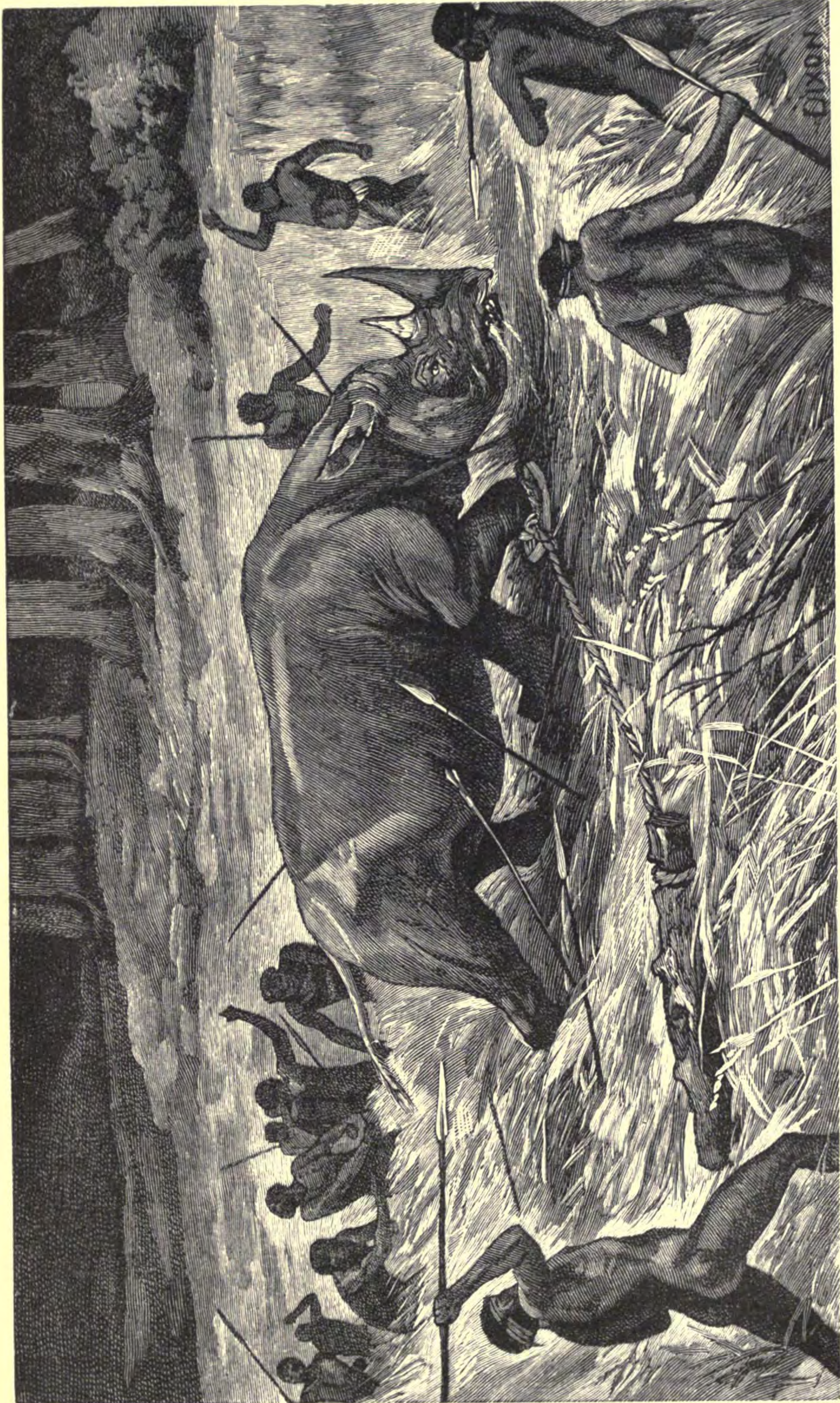
The rhinoceros, like many other animals, has a habit of scraping the ground with its fore foot when it visits the nightly rendezvous; during this action it is almost certain to step upon the concealed trap. The foot sinks through, and in the withdrawal the noose fixes itself upon the leg, prevented from slipping off by the pointed support beneath, which remains fast, adhering to the skin.

The moment that the rhinoceros discovers that its leg is noosed, it makes a sudden rush; this draws the noose tight, and, at the same time, the jerk pulls the buried log out of the trench. The animal, frightened at the mishap, gallops off, with the heavy log following behind. This arrangement is excellent, as it leaves an unmistakable trace of the retreat, which can easily be followed by the trappers on the following morning. At the same time, there is not the same risk of the rope breaking that would be occasioned by a steady pull. The log, which trails behind, catches in the innumerable bushes and thorns, causing great fatigue, until the rhinoceros, thoroughly wearied, is obliged to halt. When discovered by the hunters, it is generally entangled by some attempt to turn, which has hooked the log around a tree; the fight then commences, as the beast has to be killed with spears, which penetrate the hide with difficulty. Accidents frequently happen when the rhinoceros, thoroughly enraged, succeeds in snapping the rope.

I have seen a horn in Khartoum that was brought down the White Nile by one of the slave-hunting companies, which came from the distant west, in the latitude of Lake Chad; that must have belonged to a different species of rhinoceros, as it was quite 3 feet long, and immensely thick; no Ketloa or black rhinoceros ever possessed such a horn. The longest one I have ever shot measured 23 inches, and I have never seen a larger one in possession of the natives.

There was a ready market in Gellabat, the frontier town of Abyssinia, as in that country the horn is in great demand for the handles of swords belonging to the chiefs. In 1861 in that locality the ordinary price was a dollar per lb.

The skin of the rhinoceros is exceedingly compact and dense. When stretched over a block and dried, it is rubbed down with



FOLLOWING THE NOUSED RHINOCEROS.

sand-paper, and oiled; it then becomes semi-transparent, like clouded amber, and is much esteemed by the great personages of Abyssinia for shields; these are beautifully mounted with silver, and are highly ornamental. I have a piece of skin tanned which measures 587 square inches and weighs $13\frac{3}{4}$ lbs. In its fresh state it would weigh more than double.

Although the Soudanese Arabs eat the flesh of this animal, it is refused by the savage tribes of the White Nile regions. These people say that the Arabs are hyænas, who will eat anything, even crocodiles. The reason given by the blacks for their objection to the flesh of the rhinoceros is, that the blood is unlike that of any other animal; that should your hand be bloody, and you close your fist for a few moments, the fingers stick together, and you have a difficulty in opening them.

I have eaten young rhinoceros, and found it quite as good as a buffalo calf, but I imagine that anything young is tolerable. This was a curious incident. I was shooting, and exploring the affluents of the Nile from Abyssinia, and having examined the course of the Atbara and Settite rivers, I passed into the territory of Mek Nimmur, who was at war with the Egyptians. The first march from his camp brought us to the rivers Salaam and Angrab, at their junction; and I was following the course of the main river below this point, when we came upon the tracks of rhinoceros. Following upon these, I left the two camels behind, with the ropes, etc., which they always carried to secure any animals I might shoot.

We had not advanced far through the tolerably open jungle when we arrived at the foot of a rocky hill. There were many large boulders lying about, when suddenly one of my Arabs touched my arm and directed my attention to an object that appeared to be a rock; almost at the same moment a rhinoceros rose quickly from the ground, and had evidently obtained our wind. I made a good shot with a No. 10 rifle through the shoulder, and after turning round twice, and uttering a peculiar squeaking sound like the bellows arrangement of a crying doll, it fell to the ground and died. We now observed a fine young animal which was standing upon the opposite side of the mother, and I suggested to my famous Hamran hunters that we should call up the camels and endeavour to secure the calf with our good supply of ropes.

This was quite opposed to their ideas, as the young one was sufficiently advanced to boast of a pair of small horns, which the Arabs declared to be too formidable to warrant an attempt at capture.

I thought otherwise, therefore I arranged that we should make

a trial. The camels were brought, and the ropes arranged. Nooses were prepared, and I suggested that we should attempt to mob the young one, and then secure its legs.

My Arabs declined this plan, as they rightly declared that the ground was unfavourable, owing to the number of large rocks, which would prevent them from getting out of harm's way should the animal charge. It was ultimately arranged that Taher Noor, my head Arab, was to lend me his sword, and that I was to go first, while they would follow with the ropes and nooses, to endeavour to trip up the calf should it charge past me.

Taher Noor drew his sword. This was a beautiful blade, that had belonged to his family, and been handed from father to son for several generations; the cross hilt and fittings of the handle were solid silver, also the knob at the end, through which the tongue was riveted. He cautioned me to beware of striking a stone, and he evidently parted with regret from his familiar weapon.

The calf was about $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet high, and was standing by the body of its mother, evidently ignorant of her death. As I cautiously approached, it looked much larger than when I had seen it at a distance, and I began to think the Arabs were right in their conclusion. There was not much time for reflection, for the young tartar gave an angry shake of its ugly head, emitted the usual three sharp whiffs, and charged at me as fast as it could gallop.

I jumped quickly backwards, by a large rock, and it passed within 3 feet of me, but immediately halted, instead of continuing so far as the spot where the Arabs were in waiting with the ropes.

It now turned round, and seeing me, it repeated its charge in reverse, as hard as it could go. I again jumped back, but as I did so, I delivered a lightning-like downward cut with Taher Noor's favourite sword. The young rhinoceros fell stone-dead, all in a heap!

The Arabs ran to the spot. Taher Noor took the sword carefully from my hand, and pointing it at arm's length, he looked along the edge; he then wiped the blade upon the body of the rhinoceros, and, to prove the perfection of his weapon, he shaved a few hairs off his naked arm; then exclaimed with a deep sigh of pleasure and astonishment, "*Mashallah*," and returned it to the scabbard.

We now carefully examined the young rhinoceros. Although only a calf, it was a large animal, and the neck was about 15 inches thick. The blade had fortunately struck exactly between two vertebræ, and had slipped through the gristle as though it had been a carrot. Continuing its course, it had severed the neck

completely, leaving only the thick skin of the throat, to which the head was still attached.

This was a magnificent stroke, which delighted the sword-hunters, and I should much like to hear the story as it is now told by them, if alive, or by their descendants. They will assuredly have converted the calf into a full-grown rhinoceros, as the length of time now elapsed will have accounted for the change ; but the incident will certainly be remembered, and narrated by the owner of the sword, and will be handed down to posterity with some few exaggerations.

We opened and cleaned the calf, and the united efforts of six men secured it across a camel ; we then cut the shields off the large rhinoceros, and took the calf to camp, as Taher Noor wished particularly to exhibit the trophy of his sword to the Sit (Lady Baker).

As we arrived, we found a large body of Abyssinian hunters, who asked us for meat. "Meat?" exclaimed my men. "We've left an entire rhinoceros only just skinned, about twenty minutes' walk from this. Look, you can see the vultures gathering in the air."

"Vultures? Yes, there are plenty of them ; but if you took the skin off, there'll be no meat by the time we get there."

"Not if you stop here talking," my men replied. "Run, and you will be in time to get something."

About twenty fellows started off in the direction pointed out by the hovering birds. In less than an hour the Abyssinians returned with a report "that only the skeleton remained upon their arrival."

There is no animal which parts with its hide so easily as the rhinoceros. Directly that the fatal shot has been fired, the Arab hunters measure the body by so many spans, the thumb stretched from the little finger. The rhinoceros should yield eight large squares of hide, each of which will produce a circular shield about 2 feet in diameter, or rather larger. When the operation of skinning is commenced, it is curious to see the want of attachment between the hide and the flesh ; it detaches immediately, simply upon a few digs with the fist, and it flakes away like the bark of an oak when felled in May. Each square is worth 2 dollars, therefore a rhinoceros is a valuable prize to the Arab hunters.

It is difficult to believe the rapidity with which vultures will consume a large animal when it has been divested of the skin. Should a buffalo die, these birds are helpless, as they can only work at the eyes, and beneath the tail, the hide resisting their

attack until decomposition shall have commenced ; but, when skinned, a cloud of these repulsive birds will settle upon the carcase, and it disappears in much less than half an hour. This is the case in Abyssinia, where vultures are more numerous than in any portion of the globe which I have visited.

Many years ago there was a long and interesting discussion in the *Field* respecting the power of sight or scent in directing the vulture to its prey. Of course, views were expressed upon opposing sides ; one declared that the bird discovered its food by sight, others pronounced in favour of guidance by scent alone.

Common-sense would suggest that a bird which soars at such an enormous height that it is frequently invisible to the naked eye would not ascend without a purpose, as there can be no food attraction in the great wilderness of space. What is that purpose ? It is to obtain an extensive field of observation upon the world beneath. If a bird hunted by scent, it would assuredly remain as near as possible upon the surface to obtain that scent, instead of soaring in an opposite direction, where the strongest smell could never be detected.

I have tried the experiment practically, many times.

When an animal is killed and skinned, before the operation is completed the first bird to appear is the wily and omnipresent crow. The next is the ordinary buzzard. Both these birds are near the surface of the earth, seeking their food with untiring energy ; but although they may have keen powers of scent, even they, in my opinion, are mainly guided by their acuteness of vision, as they are always on the alert, hunting in every direction, and in fact keeping a sharp "look-out."

The third arrival is the small red-necked vulture. This bird descends from a great height.

It is now most interesting to watch the concentration from all quarters of the compass ; this is easily arranged by lying beneath a bush, and shading the eyes while you gaze into the deep-blue sky. It will appear to be alive with the smallest flies, all moving, all hurrying, and descending. These become rapidly larger, and you are aware that they are vultures, collecting from such enormous altitudes, that, were a mountain-top exposed, it would be capped with everlasting snow. While you are straining your eyes to peer into those blue vaults, you are startled by a tremendous rush like the roar of a rocket ; this is the descent with closed wings of one of the large bare-necked vultures, which has plunged like a plummet for some 1000 feet, to share in the feast below.

All those birds, flying at high altitudes, have been soaring upon

endless wings, never fatigued by motion, as they seldom flap, but only adjust themselves to the currents of air upon which they float; and having with their extraordinary powers of sight observed the hurry of smaller birds to some attractive point, they have at once directed their course, to fulfil the Biblical expression, "Where the carcase lies, there shall the eagles (vultures) be gathered together."

The audacity of the vulture is remarkable, in countries where it pursues its course undisturbed. I have known an instance where, in a serious battle, in the midst of musketry and the dense smoke and flame of a general conflagration, the vultures mutilated the bodies of the killed before they could be carried off the field.

Last, but not least, of all birds of carrion tastes is the adjutant. When the buzzard has driven away the crow, the red-necked vulture has driven off the buzzard, and the bare-necked vulture has kicked out the red-necked intruder, the long-legged and gigantic-beaked adjutant arrives upon the scene of turmoil, where feathers, dust, and blood are mingled with the shrieking and quarrelling of mixed varieties. All stand clear when the adjutant appears, as the long bill delivers its pecks to the right and left, and commands attention and respect. This bird, which carries its supply of water in a bag beneath the bill, pendant from the throat, flies at a higher altitude than any other, and arrives upon the scene the last, owing to the greater distance it has been forced to travel. All these birds have been necessarily directed by sight, and not by the sense of smell.

The sense of vision may be continually observed by any person who has experience of countries that are full of living creatures. When the grass is fired in the dry season, there may not be a bird in sight, but directly that the dense volumes of black smoke darken the air with rolling clouds upon the earth's surface, a great variety of birds are almost immediately attracted. The buzzard, the fly-catchers, and, curiously enough, the bustard (or houbara), which is generally so scarce, all appear upon the dusky scene, and challenge the smoke and flames, to pursue the locusts, which are endeavouring to escape from the advancing fire.

The so-called rhinoceros bird, which is supposed to afford the animal some notice of approaching danger, is not confined specially to that particular beast, but it is to be seen frequently picking the ticks and other vermin from the backs and sides of buffaloes, as starlings may be seen upon the cattle in England during the warm days of summer. There is also a so-called crocodile bird, which is accredited with watchful instincts in the interest of the animal

it attends upon ; this is the ordinary plover, which when alarmed cries in good English, throughout the world, "Did-he-do-it? Did-he-do-it?" These birds are not employed in protecting the animals they wait upon, but they are simply searching for insects which infest such creatures, and when disturbed themselves, their cries and movements naturally alarm the beasts upon which they fatten.

I have had no personal experience of the Indian rhinoceros, which is heavily protected by thick folds of skin, instead of the comparatively smooth exterior of the African species ; but the habits of the animal appear to be somewhat similar, with the exception of its frequenting marshy localities.

I have never found the African rhinoceros in the neighbourhood of swamps, but, on the contrary, I have generally met them in dry and elevated places, at the base of rocky hills, or in woods, at some distance from a river. Certain animals have their regular hours for drinking : the rhinoceros in Africa approaches the water an hour after dark, and during the day it may retreat several miles inland. The female Ketloa has a longer horn than the male, but more slender. The males are continually grinding their horns by sharpening them upon rocks and the trunks of trees ; this process reduces their size, from continued friction.

The female has only one offspring at a birth, and the ugly little calf is well protected by its mother. In a very few weeks after its introduction to the world it becomes exceedingly strong and active, and follows its mother over the rough ground at considerable speed. At that early age, when from two to four months old, the young ones are captured by the sword-hunters, who hunt the mother until the calf becomes thoroughly fatigued.

When the vast bulk of a rhinoceros is considered, it is astonishing to see the speed that this heavy animal can attain, and continue for a great distance. I have hunted them in company with the Arabs, and for at least 2 miles our horses have been going their best, keeping a position within 5 or 6 yards of the hind-quarters, but nevertheless unable to overtake them before they reached an impenetrable jungle. It is the peculiar formation of the hind legs which enables the rhinoceros to attain this speed ; the length from the thigh to the hock is so great that it affords immense springing capacity, and the animal bounds along the surface like a horse in full gallop, without the slightest appearance of weight or clumsiness.

Upon a level plain, free from bushes or stones, a good horse would quickly overtake the black rhinoceros, but the animal is seldom found upon such favourable ground, and its strength and three-hoofed feet give it a peculiar advantage for travelling at a

high speed over a rough surface that would test the endurance of the best horse.

There is considerable danger in shooting a rhinoceros, owing to the difficulty in stopping a charge. The position of the two horns makes it impossible to reach the brain by a forehead shot, as the bullet, should it strike a horn, would certainly deflect. If you are slightly on one side, there is a direct line to the exceedingly small brain, exactly in front of the eyes, but this is extremely difficult to hit, and must be hazardous. The bone of the skull is the hardest of any animal in existence, and upon one occasion a No. 10 bullet struck the head just in front of the ear, and failed to penetrate. The animal fell to the ground, stunned, but recovered its feet and ran half unconsciously past me, giving me the opportunity to run alongside and fire the remaining barrel behind the shoulder, which immediately finished the encounter.

I was not aware at the time that the No. 10 leaden bullet had failed to penetrate; but upon an examination of the head, I found the lead wedged into the joint of the lower jaw; the skull was slightly fractured, but not actually penetrated.

Upon another occasion I was stalking a bull rhinoceros which I had observed from a distance, and it had disappeared upon the other side of rising ground. Feeling sure that I should reach it by running quickly forward, upon my arrival at the spot where I had lost sight of my object I detected it among a few bushes not 20 yards distant. There were a number of brown-coloured rocks scattered about the surface, nearly as large as ordinary grindstones. Taking advantage of these, I knelt behind one and fired at the shoulder. Instead of falling, the rhinoceros immediately turned towards the smoke, which fortunately was drifting across to my right in a strong breeze. With stupid astonishment it regarded this unsubstantial cause of disturbance, and followed it until I again had a good chance within only a few yards. The No. 10 quicksilver and lead conical bullet shot completely through the body, entering behind the right shoulder, and making its exit upon the opposite side. The animal staggered a short distance, and then, emitting a few shrill squeaks, quite disproportioned in sound to the great size of the beast, it fell and died.

This proved the advantage of a hardened and heavy bullet for such an animal, instead of pure lead, although the latter would have been preferable for a thin-skinned beast.

Although the rhinoceros is dangerous, I have never heard of many casualties among sportsmen. This may be explained by the comparatively small number of persons who have engaged in

the sport. It is quite impossible to determine the exact amount of risk in the encounter with any animal, as they vary in character and pugnacity. The black rhinoceros is generally accepted as the most vicious, and the huge white variety the most harmless, but the uncertainty in the sport is the charm to the hunter, and I will relate an incident that befell a friend of mine, which will exhibit this uncertainty in a striking manner.

Mr. Oswell was one of the early Nimrods in South Africa, at the same time that the renowned Roualeyn Gordon Cumming was paving the way for fresh adventures. There never was a better sportsman or more active follower of the chase than Oswell; he had gone to Africa for the love of hunting and adventure, at a time when the greater portion was unbroken ground. He was the first to bring Livingstone into notice when he was an unknown missionary, and Oswell and Murray took him with them when they discovered the Lake N'gâmé. He had a favourite double-barrelled gun made by Purdey. This was a smooth-bore No. 10, specially constructed for ball. Although a smooth-bore, it was sighted like a rifle, with back-sights; the gun weighed 10 lbs. The owner most kindly lent me this useful weapon when I first went to Africa in 1861, therefore I can attest its value, and the hard work that it had accomplished. A portion of the walnut stock had been completely worn away to the depth of an inch by the tearing friction of the wait-a-bit thorns, when carrying the gun across the saddle in chase at full speed through the hooked-thorn bushes. The stock had the appearance of having been gnawed by rats.

At the time of Oswell's visit, the country was alive with wild animals, all of which have long since disappeared before the advance of colonial enterprise and the sporting energy of settlers. There was a particular locality that was so infested with rhinoceroses that Oswell had grown tired of killing them, and he passed them unnoticed unless he met some specimen with an exceptional horn. He was riding a favourite horse, which had been his constant companion in countless shooting incidents, and he happened to remark a large white rhinoceros standing in open ground alone. This animal possessed a horn of unusual length, which made the owner a worthy object of attention.

Oswell immediately rode towards it. The animal took no notice of his approach until he arrived within about 100 yards. The *Rhinoceros simus* (white species) is not considered dangerous, therefore he had approached without the slightest caution or hesitation. I forget whether he fired; but I well remember that the beast calmly confronted the horse, and slowly, but determinedly,

with measured pace, advanced directly towards the rider. Like an object in a disturbed dream, this huge creature came on, step by step, leisurely but surely, never hesitating or halting, but with eyes fixed upon the attacking party. Firing at the forehead being useless, Oswell endeavoured to move either to the left or right, to obtain a shoulder shot ; but the horse, that was accustomed to a hundred contests with wild animals, was suddenly mesmerised, and petrified with horror. The quiet and spectre-like advance of the rhinoceros had paralysed and rooted it to the ground ; trembling all over, its limbs refused to move ; the spur and whip were unavailing ; the horse felt that it was doomed.

This horrible position endured until the rhinoceros was within only a few paces distant ; it then made a dash forward.

Oswell describes his first sensations, upon returning consciousness, nearly as follows. He found himself upon a horse. The reins were not in his hands. A man was walking in front, leading the animal by the reins, which had been pulled over its head. There were natives upon either side, apparently holding him upon the saddle ; a dreamy feeling, and a misty and indistinct view of the situation, was sufficient to assure him that something must have happened. He felt certain that he must be hurt, but he had no pain. He began to feel himself with his hands, and he felt something wet and soft upon one thigh.

The fact was, that the long horn of the rhinoceros had passed *through* his thigh. It not only passed through his thigh, but through the saddle flap, then completely through the horse, and was stopped by the flap upon the other side. The horse and rider together were thrown into the air, and the inversion was so complete, that one of Oswell's wounds, a cut upon the head, was occasioned by the stirrup-iron, which proved the inverted position.

The horse was of course killed upon the spot, and the Caffres came to their master's assistance, and placed him on his spare horse, upon which they held him until they reached the camp. This wound kept the great hunter prostrate for several months. It is many years since Oswell told me this story, but I think I have narrated it exactly.

It must be remembered that this rhinoceros belonged to the so-called harmless species. This incident is sufficient to exhibit the utter fallacy of a belief "that any kind of animal is invariably harmless." We find that many beasts which are accredited with bad characters conduct themselves occasionally as though abject cowards ; in the same manner, those which are considered timid may, when least expected, exhibit great ferocity.