ANIMALS OF AFRICA

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"KLOOF AND KARROO," ETC.

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and can exist comfortably among mountains as high as ten or eleven thousand feet.

If you attempt to shoot a rock-rabbit you will find it not so easy a task as you might imagine. They are wary little beasts, and, as they have a good many enemies among the birds of prey, they keep an extraordinarily sharp look out when they quit their caves and holes and come forth on the sides of their beloved rocks and precipices. They are, too, wonderfully quick and active in their movements, and run up and across a big cliff-face with great speed. I have spent many a half-hour in Cape Colony watching the ways and habits of these singular little beasts. If you conceal yourself and lie still, the dassies will begin to come out. They exist in fairly large colonies, feed in the mornings and evenings, chiefly on herbage and young shoots, and seem to be at their quietest for an hour or two during the hottest period of the day. They are most playful, active little beasts, and prank about, the young especially, in the most delightful manner. In some parts of Africa certain species of these animals are to be found frequenting trees, but all the members of the group have a strong family resemblance.

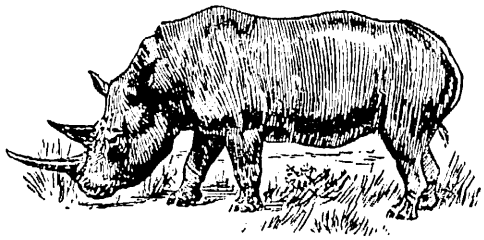
Following the diminutive rock-rabbit comes the White Rhinoceros, which, next to the elephant, is the largest of all terrestrial animals left to us since the extinction of mammoths and other strange primeval beasts. When I tell you that specimens of these immense creatures have been shot which stood six feet six inches high at the shoulder, measured sixteen feet in length, and were of proportionately huge bulk, you will understand that they were mighty beasts indeed. Some travellers have considered them quite as monstrous-looking as the elephant itself, because, although that animal is certainly

much taller, the white rhinoceros exceeded it in length and general bulkiness. No one, I think, can tell you actually why this species is called the white rhinoceros. As a matter of fact, it is no more white than the so-called black rhinoceros, and, indeed, if you go to the Natural History Museum and compare the skins of the specimens you find there, you will see that they are of much the same colour—a dark, dirty brown. The Boers, those mighty hunters, first christened this animal "wit rhenoster," or white rhinoceros, and their error has been perpetuated. Whether the first Dutch hunters came upon specimens which had been wallowing in light mud and had dried a whitish hue, and therefore called them white rhinoceroses, I cannot say; the fact remains that the white rhinoceros is no more white than his "black" cousin. There are, I should tell you, only these two species in Africa. Old Dutch hunters and natives used to say there were more, and gave them various fancy names; but it has been found that these names were bestowed from mere differences in the size and shape of the fore horn and so forth.

The white rhinoceros, which is also sometimes known as Burchell's, or the Square-mouthed rhinoceros, differs from the black in two very important points. In the first place, it has a square, blunt upper lip, and not a prehensile lip like the black species. It lives mainly upon grass, and therefore does not need the prehensile lip of its cousin, which feeds mainly upon bushes and shrubs, and so requires its finger-like upper lip for the purpose of taking hold of the leafage and wrenching it from the shrubs on which it grows. Then, again, the white rhinoceros is a much bigger animal, has a much heavier head, which it carries very low, and has, too, a much longer fore horn than the

black rhinoceros. I should properly say *had*, because, unfortunately, the white rhinoceros has been so shot out and exterminated that I doubt if there are more than half a dozen wild living examples now left in all South Africa.

If those survive, they eke out a precarious existence in one corner of North-east Mashonaland and the vast reed beds about the junction of the Black and White Umvolosi rivers, in Zululand. So has this mighty beast fallen from



THE WHITE RHINOCEROS.

its former plenty! The white rhinoceros, in the old days, when the animals were suffered to grow to maturity, carried an immensely long fore horn, far longer than any ever developed by the black species. Some of these fore horns reached the amazing length of five feet; one brought home by the celebrated hunter, Roualeyn Gordon Cumming, now in the possession of his kinsman, Colonel W. Gordon Cumming, measured five feet two and a half inches. The great native chiefs were proud to possess staffs or knobkerries fashioned from these long fore horns; I have seen some of them, and very handsome trophies they are.

This rhinoceros was a stupid, sluggish beast, having but

poor eyesight, and was easily shot. Hence its early downfall. It had, too, a comparatively restricted habitat, being only found, since it was discovered by Burchell in 1812, between the Orange and Zambesi rivers. It was a harmless, inoffensive animal, but could rouse itself upon occasion. Mr. Oswell, a great English hunter, once wounded one of these creatures. His horse took fright, and refused to budge. The white rhinoceros came on, just drove its fore horn clean through the horse, and tossed horse and rider easily over its head. A marvellous feat, truly, indicating the enormous strength of this mighty beast. Mr. Oswell escaped with his life. His horse, of course, was killed. How plentiful these animals were fifty years ago in South Africa may be realised when I tell you that two English hunters in a short season killed eighty-nine black and white rhinoceroses, while another, the late C. J. Andersson, shot sixty in a similar period. This sort of thing was carried on by scores of hunters, Dutch, English, and native, with the result of almost complete extermination south of the Zambesi. The white rhinoceros, notwithstanding its vast bulk, had a wonderfully swift trot, and could gallop at great speed. When retreating, the mother rhinoceros guided her baby, which ran just in front of her nose, by means of her long fore horn—a very curious trait.

The Black Rhinoceros, called by naturalists *Rhinoceros bicornis*, from the fact that the fore and hind horns usually assimilated somewhat more in size than did those of the white rhinoceros, has a much wider geographical range than its big relation. It is found, even at the present day, from Somaliland, in the north-east of Africa, down to Mashonaland, which, as you probably know, lies to the south of the Zambesi. Formerly, it abounded over every

portion of Cape Colony suitable to its bush-feeding habits, but was exterminated there as far back as about 1850. In the year 1851 there was just one black rhinoceros living in the Cape Colony, and this animal found shelter in some dense jungle, known as the Addo Bush, no great way from Port Elizabeth. In this same bush wild buffaloes and elephants still find sanctuary, but these are protected by Government. Although not so huge a creature as his white cousin, the black rhinoceros is a pretty formidable beast to meet, especially if he happens to be in a bad temper. A good specimen will stand as much as five feet eight inches at the shoulder, and measure twelve feet in length. As a rule, however, this animal carries nothing like so much flesh as its square-mouthed congener.

The black rhinoceros has, like all its family, but poor powers of sight, and if a man stands or lies perfectly still will pass him within forty or fifty yards, believing him to be some natural object of the landscape. Its powers of scent are, on the other hand, extraordinarily acute. Moreover, this animal is, in common with several other beasts of Africa, often attended by what are called rhinoceros-birds, which run about his huge carcase, chiefly for the sake of the ticks and insects they can pick off him. These birds, which are of the starling kind, are extremely devoted friends to the rhinoceros, as they are also to the buffalo. When they notice the approach of a hunter they manage, by excited flutterings and cries, to give warning to their big friend, who usually makes no more ado, but just bolts away out of danger. This rhinoceros is of a more irritable temperament than its white congener, and is more nervous, more inquisitive, and, apparently, more morose. He is certainly more

liable to charge, and a good many dangerous and even fatal accidents have happened with black rhinoceros in different parts of Africa. Mr. F. V. Kirby, a well-known English hunter, had only a year or two back a narrow escape from one of these animals. He fired at and wounded a cow of this species, after killing the male. She caught sight of him, and, wheeling "with marvellous celerity and snorting loudly, gave chase." Mr. Kirby, with but a short start, ran for his life. The rhinoceros was gaining fast, and, but for a very fortunate incident, would have caught and probably finished him. However, a lucky, gaping sand-crack came into view in the very nick of time. Into this the hunter threw himself, and "next moment," he says, "I was half smothered in sand and gravel as a dark form passed over; but I was safe, for on poking my head up over the edge I saw my late pursuer disappearing in the gloom among the trees."

Rhinoceroses will mostly take up wind when alarmed, and from this fact, no doubt, have arisen many of the strange old colonial tales of black rhinoceroses charging waggons, and so forth. The startled animal, in its dogged, stubborn fashion, goes madly forward, caring nothing for whatever may come in its course. It has been known, certainly, to charge right through a span of oxen, to drive its horn into and almost overturn a heavy Cape waggon, to scatter the cavalcade of an old-time Dutch governor at the Cape, and to rush clean through a caravan of natives in East Africa, killing one of the men. When wounded or pursued, however, these beasts hold down wind in the most persistent fashion. They can travel at great speed, and their gallop is as fast as the pace of a good horse. Rhinoceroses sleep much in the hot hours of midday, and in country where they have not been much disturbed

are easily shot when thus enjoying their siesta. North of the Zambesi, the black rhinoceros is still plentiful in many parts of Central and East Africa, and it will be a good many years yet before the last of them is shot there. Rhinoceroses and elephants are, as you probably know, reckoned among the Pachydermata, or thick-skinned animals. Rhinoceroses have, in truth, tremendously thick hides, from which splendid whips, walking-sticks, native shields, and other articles are manufactured. When properly dried out, cut, and polished, rhinoceros hide is beautifully transparent, resembling horn, or even amber. The fore horn of this species attains nothing like the length of that of the white rhinoceros, the finest known examples never exceeding forty-three or forty-four inches.

CHAPTER VII.

Zebras, Asses, and Horses—The "Tiger-Horse"—Four kinds of Zebra—The QUAGGA—Zebras at the Zoo—BURCHELL'S ZEBRA—Zebra Meat—Zebras in Harness—GRÈVY'S ZEBRA—Her Majesty's Zebras—Wild Asses—SOMALI WILD ASS—The Toes of Hoofed Animals—The HIPPOPOTAMUS—"Behemoth"—Measurements and Range—A Dangerous Beast—Teeth—Food—Trapping Hippopotami—The LIBERIAN HIPPOPOTAMUS—Its Habits and Appearance—African Pigs—The WART HOG—Singular Habit when Chased.

THE Zebras belong to the same family as that splendid, and to man most important and valuable, creature, the horse. To the same family belong also the various species of ass, of which that useful but much misunderstood and ill-used animal, the domestic donkey, is a humble member. Zebras, I may say at once, are more nearly allied to the asses than they are to the horse, although one of the species, the magnificent Grèvy's zebra, a denizen of East and East-Central Africa, in size and one or two other characteristics very nearly approaches the horse itself. Wild asses are found not only in Africa, but in various parts of Asia, but the zebras flourish only in Africa, and have apparently never been inhabitants of any other part of the world.

So far back as the days of Imperial Rome, when the emperors were in the habit of giving in the amphitheatre displays of all sorts of strange and savage wild beasts, the zebra was well known to the Romans, and was called by them *hippotigris*, "the tiger-horse," not by