

HUNTING IN THE JUNGLE

WITH GUN AND GUIDE

AFTER LARGE GAME

ADAPTED FROM "LES ANIMAUX SAUVAGES" BY

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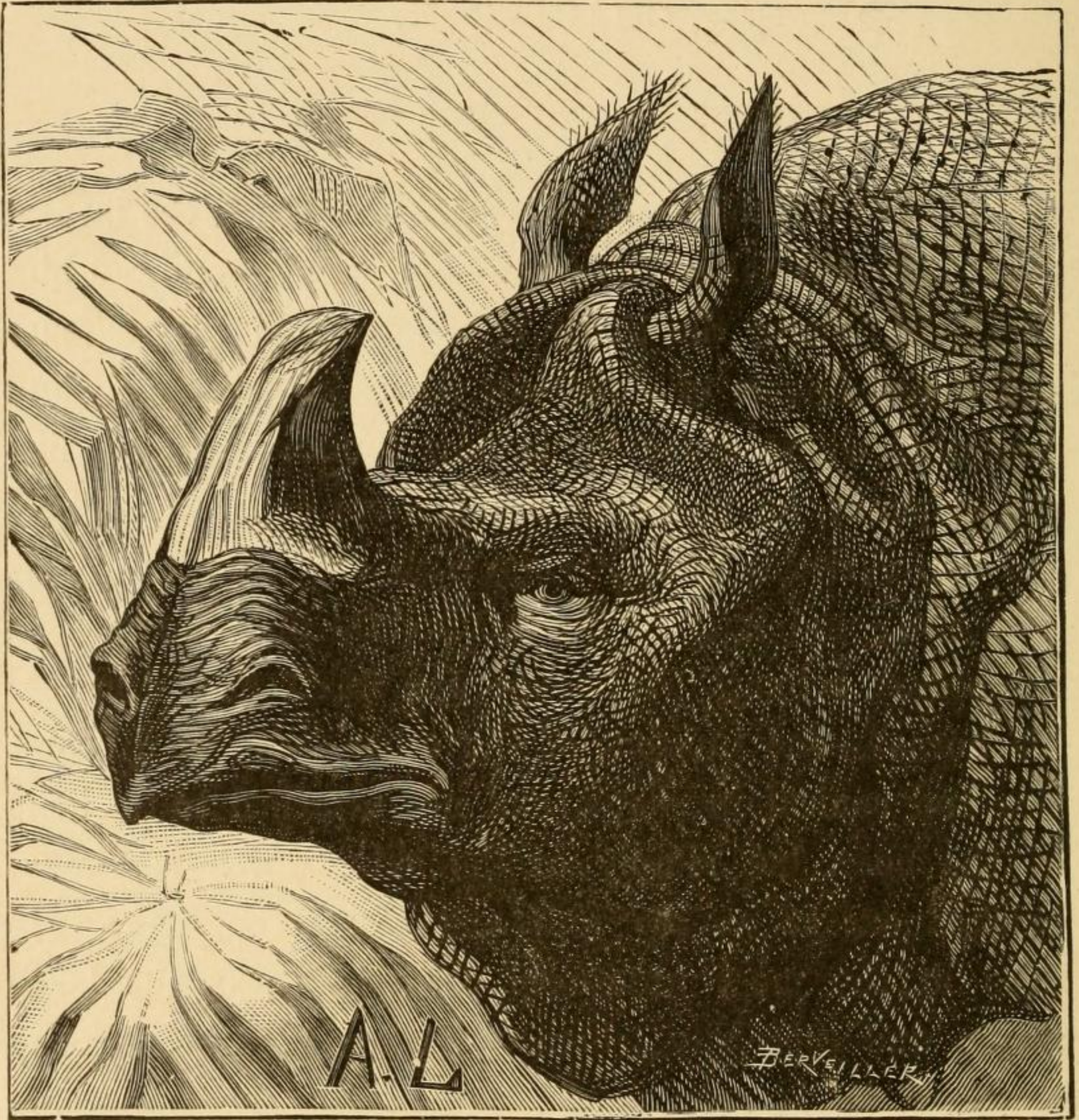
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CHAPTER X.

HUNTING THE RHINOCEROS.

FTER the elephant, the rhinoceros is the largest animal on the globe; and I have followed him along the great rivers, through the marshes and dense forests of Southern Africa, India, Java, and Sumatra, where alone he is now found, although, like the elephant, he was once much more common. There are two varieties living, — one with one horn, the other with two; and it is to the latter class that the African rhinoceros belongs. His eyes are small and deep-set; his horns — one in front of the other — are of different size and conical in shape, and not attached to the bone of the nose, but simply to the skin, which is almost hairless except at the tail, and along the ears. He lives in the most untracked solitudes, near the large rivers, and especially where a variety of acacia grows of which he is very fond. Both classes of rhinoceros are, like all vegetable-eating animals, fairly peaceable, and he never attacks without provocation; but when his blood is up he becomes blindly furious, and his strength and ferocity are without bounds. The deep grunting noise which he makes ordinarily then becomes

a shrill, piercing note, and he rushes rapidly straight ahead, overturning every obstacle, uprooting trees, ploughing the ground with his terrible tusks, and vent-



THE ONE-HORNED RHINOCEROS.

ing his rage on whatever he meets. Covered as he is with a tough and little sensitive hide, he fears neither the rifle-ball nor the claws of the tiger and lion, and even has been said to attack the mighty elephant,

disembowelling him with his tusk at a single blow. If, however, his first attack is unsuccessful, the elephant immediately crushes him with his greater strength and weight, and kills him before he can make a second lunge.

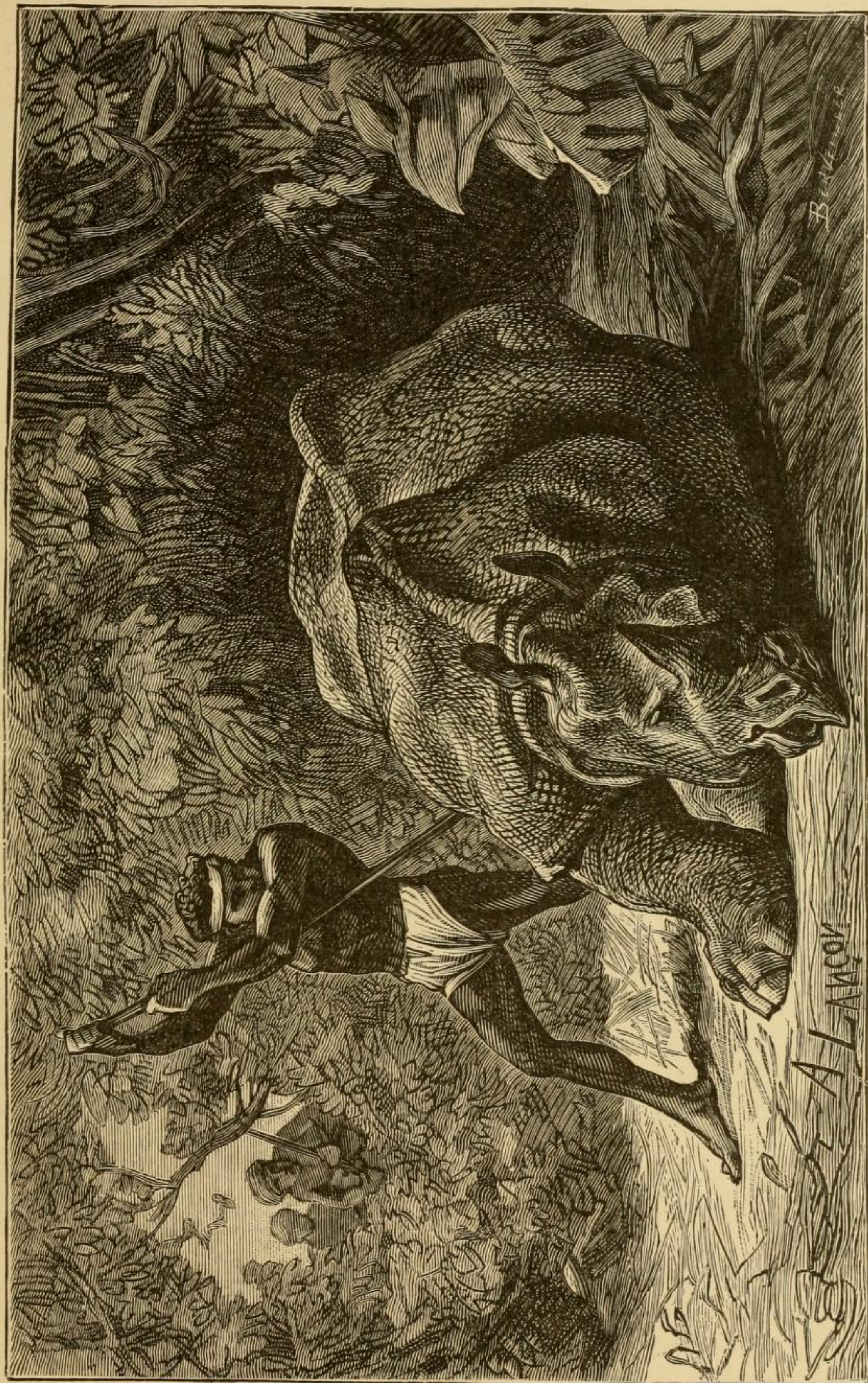
Although of little intelligence, he is sometimes domesticated and his unreasoning strength turned to use about the farm.

The natives are very fond of rhinoceros flesh, and to obtain it, take advantage of the animal's slowness in turning, creeping silently into his lair, approaching him from behind, and, before he can turn to gore them, burying a spear in his heart. Should the blow miss its aim, the hunters, who practise this dangerous sport in couples, spring upon trained horses that they have in readiness, and are off like the wind.

The animal's enormous appetite and thirst prevents his staying long in any one spot, and only then, where the food is very abundant, as he consumes two hundred pounds a day. Besides the flesh, the horns are greatly valued by the superstitious natives, and cups made from them are supposed to render harmless any liquor they may contain, and knives and swords with horn handles are believed never to miss their man. From the heart's blood is prepared a sacred philter curing fevers, serpent bites, and wounds received in battle; while from the teeth and nails are made rosaries which protect from spirits, wizards, and even death itself. In

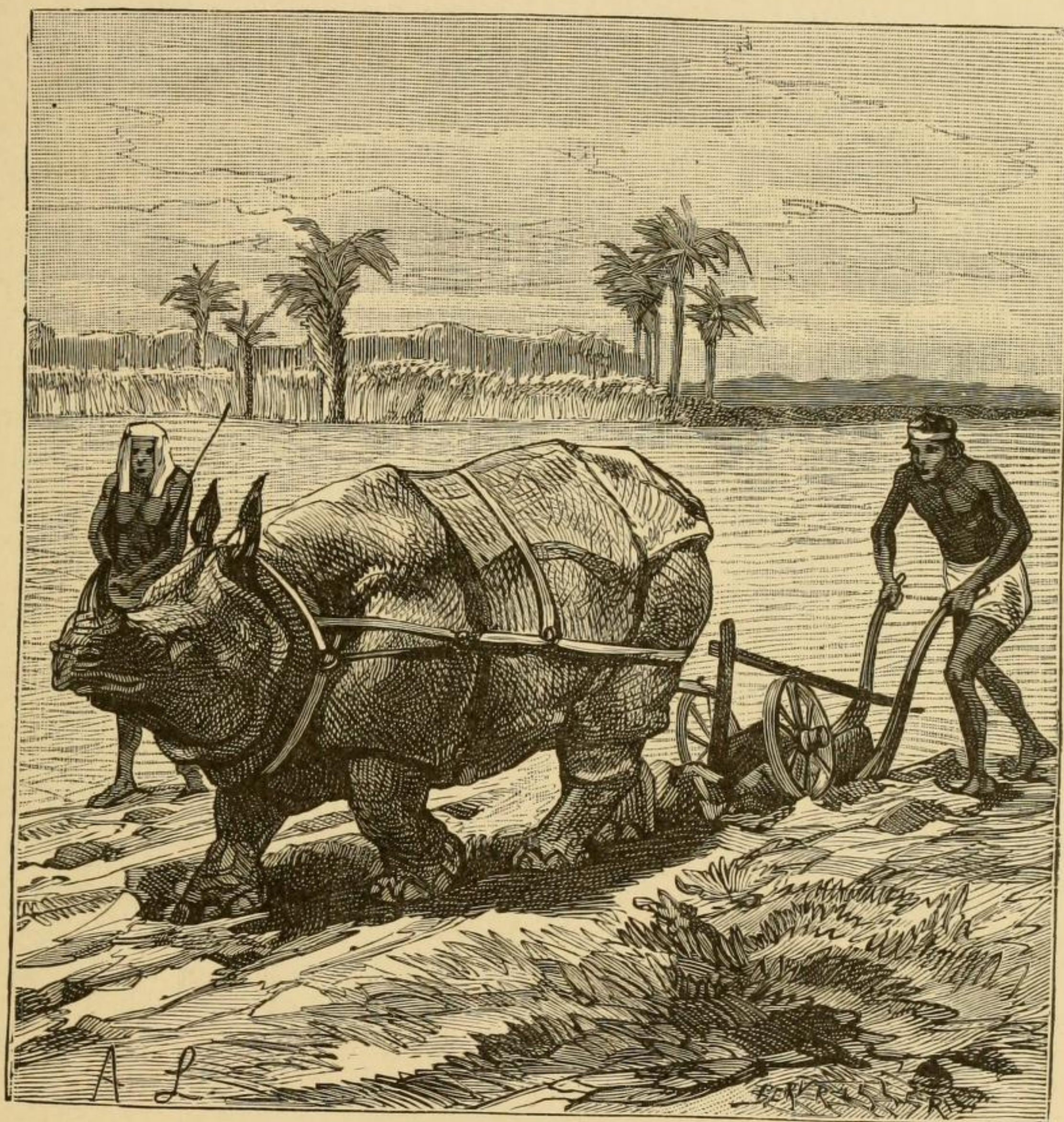
Siam the horns are so highly prized that the king, wishing to especially honor Louis XIV., sent him six, as the rarest treasures he possessed.

There is one point on which naturalists cannot agree in regard to him, and that is whether in Abyssinia he is really used to replace the ox in field labor. However, this much I know, that there is a vast country south of Egypt and bordering on the Nile, inhabited by an ancient race which has clung to life through all the vicissitudes that have visited this continent. Driven back, first by the invaders from the South, and then by the conquerors of Egypt, they owe their preservation to the rocky deserts among which they retired, and over the possession of which no one cared to dispute. They live between the first and second cataracts of the Nile, and have preserved many of the characteristics of the old Egyptian type. Their figures are tall and elegant, their limbs well formed, but generally slender, their coloring delicate, and the slight amount of hair upon their faces is more than compensated for by the bushy growth upon the top of their heads. This silky covering is made an even greater protection against the hot sun of their country by their habit of dressing it heavily with a pomade in the shape with which the old Egyptian monuments have made us familiar. Here the rhinoceros certainly fulfils the mission of the ox, as I can testify from actual observation in this home of the lion, the panther, the giraffe, the bear, and the



BEFORE HE CAN TURN, THE HUNTER BURIES A SPEAR IN HIS HEART.

zebra, and so many other animals, besides reptiles and birds, interesting to a naturalist. I had hired a dahabieh at Cairo, and, with my faithful Thursday as



THE RHINOCEROS FULFILS THE MISSION OF THE OX.

servant, joined another boat bound up the Nile. I planned to go at once as far as Assouan, where the first cataract of the Nile is, and where the country

of the Barabras begins; and that from that point I would be governed by circumstances. It is seventy-five leagues or so from Cairo to Assouan, and travelling as we did, only by day, it took us a month, — one of the pleasantest of my life. The shores are lined with ruins, broken monuments, temples, and palaces of the Pharaohs, that fill the most unimaginative with delightful dreams of the past.

One day I was taking a nap in the comfortable cabin of my craft, when I heard loud cries of native children on the bank, and at the same moment Thursday came running in to call me on deck.

“What’s all this row about?” grumbled I.

“Come and see the wicked beast with a tusk on the end of his nose!”

I left the boat by the plank that connected us with shore, to find a rhinoceros led by a party of Abyssinians, who made him perform antics like a trained dog. He would stand on his hind legs, lie down, get up, and dance at command, grunting with apparent admiration of his own accomplishments. His keepers assured me, through an interpreter, that it was not an uncommon sight in their own country, and that they had put the rhinoceros to all sorts of more useful employments.

It was on this trip that I had a narrow escape from falling into the jaws of “the river horse,” — hippopotamus, one of the largest of mammals. This animal can never have been very common on the lower part of the



A bison

ON THE BACK OF THE FEMALE RESTED A YOUNG ONE, UGLIER, IF POSSIBLE, THAN ITS FOND PARENTS.

F. R. V. 1860

river, for you do not see his easily recognized figure among the hieroglyphics with which the temples are filled, between the Delta and the first cataract. Nor does Roman history often mention them in the games or triumphs of the emperors, which is singular, when tigers, lions, and elephants figure so often. But farther up the river you meet him still, usually swimming very low in the water, with simply his nose, eyes, and ears above its surface, and followed by his mate, — for they travel usually in couples. But on the day to which I refer, this number was increased to three, — and huge specimens they were, — sunning themselves on the left bank of the river, and on the back of the female rested a young one, uglier, if possible, than its fond parents. We were six of us, only one a native, rowing along the shore in a skiff; and one of my companions, a Frenchman, with the careless thoughtlessness of his race, raised his rifle and let drive at the youngster. There was a tremendous splashing and racket, and the water for yards was stirred up by the four mighty bodies diving into it simultaneously. A cry of warning came from our guide, who began jabbering away in his own lingo at a great rate.

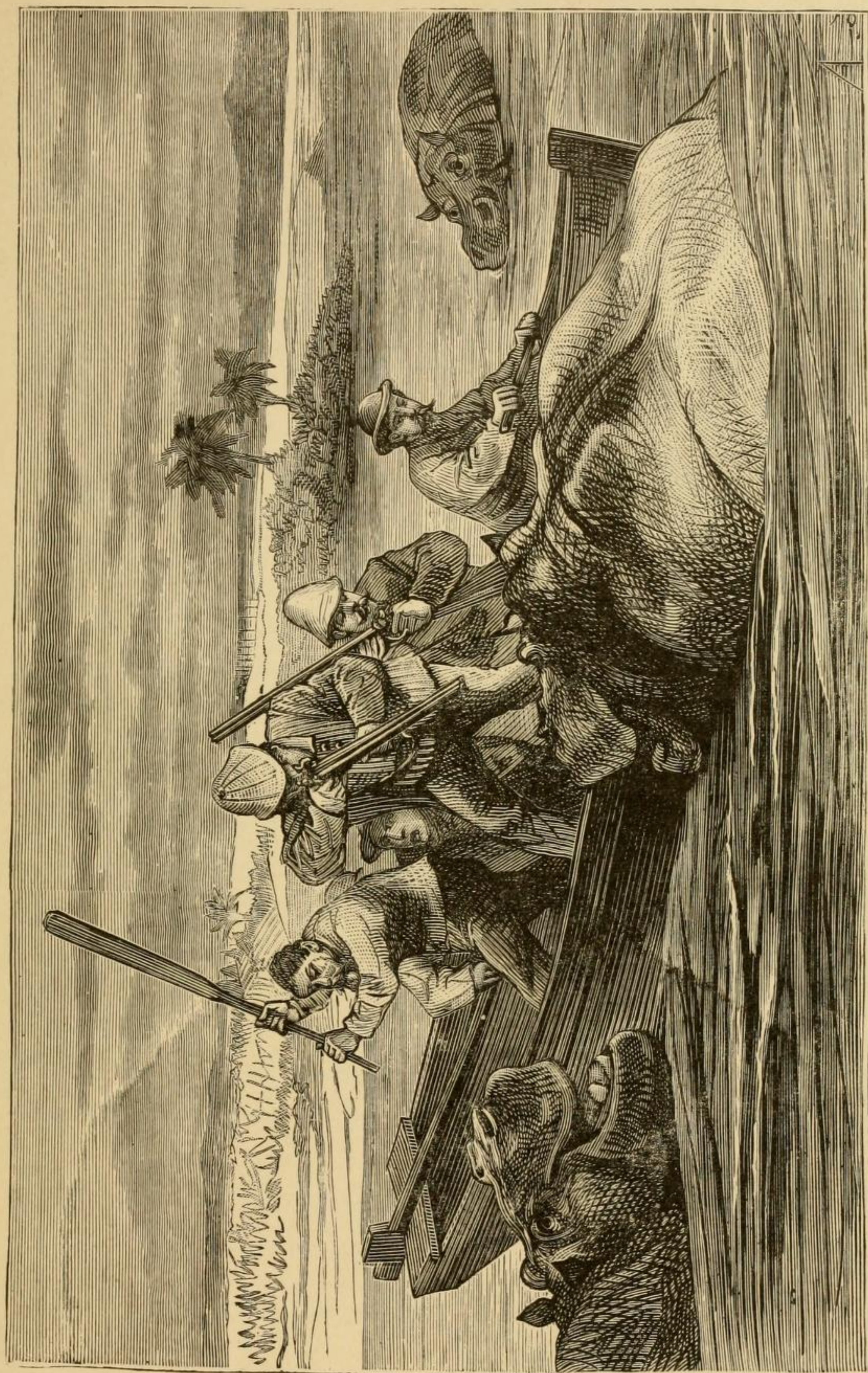
“What’s the beggar raising all this row about?” asked the Frenchman.

“Pull for your life!” shouted I. “You’ll have the whole party round us in a minute.”

The boat was a poor one for speed, and we were still a long way from the nearest point of land when the

snouts of the hippopotami came to the surface within pistol-shot of the stern. In a moment they were around us, threatening to crush the thwarts of our craft and make two mouthfuls of the whole party. We dropped our oars — for flight was out of the question — and seized our guns. Placing my barrel almost against the eye of the largest, I emptied both barrels into his head, and he sank without a gurgle into the muddy water. Meanwhile the other end of the boat had been less fortunate. The remaining male had fastened his massive jaws in the gunwale and was crunching it like paper, while the Frenchman, the cause of all the danger, was ineffectually belaboring his head with an oar, his empty gun being, of course, useless.

Luckily for us, one of the party had a loaded rifle and some presence of mind left, and to these hippopotamus number two reluctantly yielded, and went to join his friend at the bottom of the muddy river. It is really curious how easily and quickly so huge an animal will die under modern weapons, when you remember what difficulty the ancients experienced in killing large game, and how an entire army was needed to cope with an elephant or hippopotamus. But to return to our still rather unpleasant predicament: before the female could reach us, we were all reloaded and ready for her. She seemed to realize this, for, without waiting for our cordial reception, she turned tail and made for the other shore, leaving a wake behind her like a harbor steamboat. Reaching



THE FRENCHMAN WAS BELABORING HIS HEAD WITH AN OAR.

a long tongue of land near the farther bank, she waded through the shallows and across it, disturbing the croco-



DRIVING THE CROCODILES INTO THE WATER.

diles sunning thereon, and driving them into the water beyond, into which she followed them and was lost to our sight. And not one of the party seemed to care!