



W. C. Harris del.

XII. HIPPOPOTAMUS AMPHIBIUS. - THE HIPPOPOTAMUS.

PLATE XII.

HIPPOPOTAMUS AMPHIBIUS.—THE HIPPOPOTAMUS, OR SEA-COW.

Zeekoe of the Cape Colonists.—*Imfoobo* of the Kafirs and Bechuana.

GENERIC CHARACTER.—Between four and five feet high at the shoulder, and from eleven to twelve in extreme length. Figure particularly massive and heavy. Body ponderous, and shapeless with fat. Neck brawny as in a stall fed bull; short, voluminous, and rounded, with a coloped crest formed by a continuation of the arch of the back. Head thick and square. Muzzle broad, truncated, and furnished with a few detached pencils of split bristly hair. Gape wide. Lips full and bulging, so turned up towards the angles of the mouth as to impart to the face a quaint and waggish expression, enhanced both by the very elevated position of the diminutive eyes, which are seated in a pulpy prominence, and by the singular appearance of the rounded ears, which are approximated, and would seem to have been unsparingly cropped. Lower incisors long, and placed horizontally. Canine teeth greatly developed; those in the lower jaw forming tusks, which, when the mouth is closed, are nevertheless completely concealed by the overhanging lips. Legs so extremely short that the belly almost touches the ground. Feet disproportionably small, and terminating in four detached anterior toes, armed with hoofs. Tail twelve inches, flabby like that of a tortoise, and beset with bristles towards the extremity. Skin rough, hard, and remarkably thick; entirely destitute of hair. General colour dirty pinkish brown, waxing lighter on the belly and flanks, where the skin is clouded and freckled with a darker tint upon a blush or flesh coloured ground.

Female differing little in point of appearance, but smaller than the male. Has an udder with two teats. Amphibious. Inhabits the rivers and lakes of the interior, and was once common within the Colony.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HIPPOPOTAMUS.

Behold now Behemoth, which I made with thee; he eateth grass as an ox.
Lo now, his strength is in his loins, and his force is in the navel of his belly.
His bones are as strong pieces of brass, his ribs are like bars of iron.
Surely the mountains bring him forth food, where all the beasts of the field play.
He lieth under the shady trees, in the covert of the reed and fens.
The shady trees cover him with their shadow, the willows of the brook compass him about.

MODERN commentators are nearly all agreed in identifying *Behemoth* of the Sacred writings with the Hippopotamus—as well as in pronouncing the scaly Crocodile, to be *Leviathan*, created “hugest of beasts that swim the ocean stream.” Alike amphibious, and inhabiting the same waters, these aquatic monsters were uniformly associated together by the ancients, who were wont to describe them both as being possessed of the most marvellous powers: and when the changes are considered which time and civilization have wrought in the relative position of man and the wild beasts, the poetical descriptions given in the Book of Job will be found throughout so characteristic of the habits of each, as to leave little doubt upon the mind that these must have been the animals implied; for in arriving at our conclusions upon a subject so remote, it should be borne in mind that creatures which in the earlier history of our own species, were “words of fear,” have gradually been rendered more timid, and less formidable, in the ratio of the encroachments of man upon their wild haunts, armed with more efficient weapons for their destruction. But of all the mammalia, whose portraits, drawn from exaggerated descriptions or mutilated specimens, have been foisted upon the world, poor Behemoth has doubtless been the most shamefully traduced, and the most ludicrously misrepresented. Although celebrated from the most remote antiquity, engraven both on Egyptian obelisks and on Roman medals, sacrificed in combats of the Arena, and exhibited with other rare and singular animals in triumphal processions, his history was nevertheless so imperfectly understood by the ancients, that both Aristotle and Herodotus awarded him the voice and mane of a horse, the hoofs of an ox, and the tail and tusks of a wild boar,—the whole tastefully combined with the fair proportions of *an ass!* Pliny did not fail to add handsomely to this catalogue of blunders; and yet, according to his own account, the citizens of Rome were treated by Scaurus during his edileship, to the sight of a live Hippopotamus, which, together with four Crocodiles, was exhibited in a temporary lake prepared for the occasion—

And a deformed sort of monsters came
Which by their shape we might *Sea-horses* name:

Augustus next producing one of the prodigies as an appropriate emblem of conquered Egypt, on his triumph over Cleopatra. The paintings at Herculaneum, which are delineative of Egyptian scenery, represent the mighty River-horse browsing upon the herbage of an island while the Crocodile is basking amid flags and bulrushes. In the famous Mosaic pavement at Præneste, also, which exhibits the plants and animals of Egypt, the two figures are given in the same group upon the Nile. But although, after that date, the figure of the Hippopotamus appeared on various medals of the Roman Emperors, it was not until many ages afterwards that any authentic history of the animal could be obtained.

About the middle of the sixteenth century, Belon saw at Constantinople a living Hippopotamus, of which nevertheless he gives but an imperfect representation,—the two figures with which he has illustrated his description not having been drawn from the animal he saw, but copied from the reverse of Adrian's medal, and from the Egyptian Colossus at Rome. Hence the era of any exact knowledge of this animal must be brought down to the beginning of the seventeenth century, when Frederico Zerenghi, a surgeon of Narni, in Italy, published at Naples the history of two Hippopotami which he had taken alive near Damietta, in a great ditch dug for the purpose in the neighbourhood of the Nile. “With a view,” says the Doctor, “of obtaining an Hippopotamus, I stationed men upon the Nile, who, having seen two of these animals go out of the river, made a large ditch in the way through which they passed, and covered it over with thin planks, earth, and herbage. In the evening, when returning to the river, they both fell into the ditch. I was immediately informed of the event, and having hastened to the place with my Janizary, we killed both the animals by pouring three shots into each of their heads from a large arquebuse. They almost instantly expired, after uttering a cry which bore greater resemblance to the bellowing of a buffalo than to the neighing of a horse. This exploit was performed on the 20th day of July, 1600. The following day they were drawn out of the ditch, and carefully flayed. They proved male and female, and I caused their skins to be salted, and stuffed with the leaves of the sugar cane, in order to transport them to Cairo, where they were salted a second time with greater attention and convenience, each skin requiring four hundred pounds weight of salt. On my return from Egypt in 1601, I brought them to Venice, and

from thence to Rome, and showed them to several intelligent physicians. Doctor Jerome Aquapendente, and the celebrated Aldrovandus, were the only persons who recognized them to be the spoils of the Hippopotamus; and as the latter's work was then printing, I allowed him to draw a figure from the skin of the female, which he inserted in his book."

The aquatic habits of the species, no less than the secluded nature of its haunts, are of course greatly opposed to an intimate acquaintance with its manner of living; but one thing is certain, that modern Hippopotami have retained little of the dexterity or the cunning of their ancestors, whom Pliny represents to have been in the constant habit of walking backwards in order to deceive their pursuers—the more simple plan of getting their *shoes reversed*, as King Robert Bruce did those of his horse, having not perhaps occurred to them. The mode in which the animal, when wounded, contrived to moor himself by the teeth to the roots of water-trees; and his method of performing venesection, when he found himself so shamefully *embonpoint*, as to be in danger of apoplexy, were even more ingenious. "The Hippopotamus," says Père Labat, "being of a very sanguiferous temperament, knows well how to let blood of himself. For this purpose, he searches for a sharp pointed rock, and rubs himself against it, till he makes a sufficient aperture for the blood to flow. To promote the flux, he then agitates his body, and when he thinks he has lost a sufficient quantity, he rolls in the mud in order to shut up the wound." "I have known," says Capt. Covent, in a letter to Dampier, "the Hippopotamus to open his mouth, and set one tooth on the gunnel of a boat, and another on the second stroke from the keel (which was more than four feet distant), and there bit a hole through the plank, and sink the boat; and after he had done, he went away shaking his ears. His strength is incredibly great, for I have seen him, in the wash of the shore, when the sea has tossed in a Dutchman's boat with fourteen hogs-heads of water in her, upon the said beast, and left it high and dry on its back, and another sea came, and fetched the boat off, and the beast was not hurt, in as far as I could perceive. We made several shots at him, but to no purpose, for they would glance off him as from a wall. It is the custom of the natives, when he comes near their canoes, to throw him fish,* and then he passeth away, and will not meddle with their fishing craft. They call him *Kittimpungo*. He doth most mischief when he can stand on the ground; but when afloat, hath only power to bite. As our boat once lay near the shore, I saw him go under her, and with his back lift her out of the water, and upset her with six men aboard, but as it happened did them no harm. Whilst we lay in the road, we had three of them which did trouble the bay every full and change, and two or three days after. The natives say they go together, two males and one female, and their noise is much like the bellowing of a large calf." The males are said to contest each other's right to the females, and the attack of two such powerful animals, as may naturally be imagined, is terrible. The earth shakes beneath them—the water trembles—their blood flows in torrents, and the masses of flesh torn out by their mighty grasp of teeth, lie scattered upon the blood-stained scene of conflict. Sometimes, the weaker, perceiving his efforts ineffectual, leaves his antagonist master of the field, but this does not often happen, for it is seldom that one or both of them does not perish on the spot.†

Onesicritus, and other old authors, assert that the Hippopotamus inhabited Asia, and abounded in the river Indus, but Alexander's letter to Aristotle, which forms the only foundation for such an opinion, is so far from being conclusive, that it seems probable the range of its *habitat* has always been limited to the lakes and rivers of Africa, more especially to those of her Southern and Eastern regions. Common in Egypt in days of yore, ere modern weapons had taught it to fear man as an enemy before whom it must retire, it divided with the mail-clad Crocodile the empire of the Nile and its Delta—that noble stream, over whose source mystery had cast a veil, and whose waters whilst spreading the blessings of seed time and harvest throughout a country where millions greeted their overflow, teemed at the same time with productions monstrous and terrific, against which neither the spear nor the arrow availed but little. The Hippopotamus was consequently well known to the Israelites of old, and with the Egyptians the chase of him formed a favourite amusement. Although not so hostile to man as the voracious Crocodile, he was yet looked upon as an enemy, on account of his extensive nocturnal depredations; and the value attached to his spoils, of which were manufactured whips, shields, javelins, and helmets, created an additional incitement to his destruction. Their mode of attack would appear, from the sculptures of Thebes, to have been very similar to that practised at the present day about Sennaar, where the hunters prefer badgering the animal in the river, to an open combat on shore, and employ the harpoon as in whaling. "It is chased," says Diodorus Siculus, who describes the Hippopotamus more correctly than any other ancient author, "by many persons, armed with iron javelins. No sooner does it make its appearance at the surface of the water, than they surround it with boats, and closing in on all sides, strike it with blades furnished with iron barbs, and having hempen ropes fastened to them, in order that when wounded, they may be let out until its strength fails from struggling and loss of blood." Authors inform us, that after the species had become nearly extinct in Nubia, the accidental descent of a luckless straggler along the river, occasioned scarcely less astonishment to the people who witnessed the intrusion, than to the bewildered animal itself. As usual on such occasions, the unintentional trespasser upon ground where it had ceased to be an object of terror, was punished with a promptitude which would hardly have been displayed in places where it was really obnoxious—every Turk or peasant who could muster a weapon, being fired with the same proud desire of destroying the intruder, and evincing the same *chivalrous* feeling which is usually called forth against an imprudent porpoise that may have ventured to pass the bridges of the English metropolis.

* The ancients believed that the Hippopotamus subsisted entirely upon fish, crocodiles, and cadaverous flesh.

† Encycloedia Brit.

Dr. Edward Rüppell, who partook of the sport of harpooning the Hippopotamus in Dongola, gives the most appalling description of the death of the largest he met with.* "One of those which we killed," he writes, "was a very old fellow, and of an enormous size, measuring thirteen and a half French feet, from the nose to the extremity of the tail. His incisor teeth were twenty-six French inches long, measured from the root to the point, along the outer bending. We fought him for good four hours at night, and were very near losing our large boat, and probably our lives too, owing to the fury of the animal. As soon as he spied the hunters in the large canoe, whose business it was to fasten the long rope to the float, he dashed at them with all his might, dragged the canoe with him under the water, and smashed it to pieces. The two hunters with difficulty escaped. Of twenty-five musket-balls aimed at the head from a distance of about five feet, only one pierced the skin and the bones of the nose. At each snorting the animal spouted out large streams of blood on the boat. The rest of the balls stuck in the thick hide. At last we availed ourselves of a swivel, but it was not until we had discharged five balls from it at the distance of a few feet, and had done most terrible damage to the head and body, that the colossus yielded up the ghost. The darkness of the night increased the danger of the contest, for this gigantic animal tossed our boat about in the stream at his pleasure; and it was at a fortunate moment indeed for us that he gave up the struggle, as he had carried us into a complete labyrinth of rocks, which, in the midst of the confusion, none of our crew had observed."

But the most usual, as well as the most effectual method of disposing of the Hippopotamus, is by the aid of pitfalls, which, when cunningly excavated on the river bank, and daily covered with fresh grass, so that no withered appearance may excite the animal's suspicion, not only prove fatal to the river-horse, during his excursions on shore, but frequently also to the rambling cattle of the traveller. In the paths trodden by Hippopotami, boards armed with sharp teeth like a harrow, are also sometimes concealed, and the heavy beasts striking the spikes into their feet, are rendered so incapable of exertion, as to become in the morning the victims of a horde of assailants. Hasselquist has, however, recorded a still more ingenious plan by which the Egyptians were wont to relieve themselves in some degree from this destructive animal. "They remark the places," he says, "which they frequent most, and there lay a large quantity of peas. When the beast comes ashore, hungry and voracious, he falls to eating what is nearest him, and filling his belly with the peas, they occasion an insupportable thirst. He then returns immediately into the river, and drinks upon these dry peas large draughts of water, which suddenly cause his death; for the peas soon begin to swell with the water, and bursting his belly, the Egyptians not long after find him dead on the shore, blown up as killed by the strongest poison."

Shortly after the establishment of the Dutch Colony at the Cape, Governor Plettenberg transmitted to His Highness the Prince of Orange, the spoils of a Hippopotamus, which had been shot near the *Mountains of Snow*, by a peasant of French extraction, named Charles Marais. This man stated, that in consequence of the great speed of the animal on land, the hunters durst fire at him nowhere but in the water; for which reason it is usual to lie in wait for him about sunset, when the animal being in the habit of raising his head above the water, his small ears are kept in perpetual agitation in order to hear if any danger is near. While he is listening in this manner, and floating on the surface of the water, they shoot him in the head; and when he feels that he is wounded, he plunges below the water, and walks or swims about till he loses both motion and life. Then, by means of about twenty oxen, he is dragged on shore, and dissected. "An adult Hippopotamus," adds Dr. Klockner of Amsterdam, "usually yields about two thousand pounds of fat or lard, which when salted and sent to the Cape, sells very dear, as in relish it excels all others. Besides his usual cry, the animal, when asleep, makes a kind of snoring noise which betrays him at a distance. To counteract the danger arising from this peculiarity, he generally lies among the reeds that grow upon marshy ground, which it is difficult to approach. He is extremely tenacious of life, and the hunters therefore endeavour to break his legs by large blunderbusses charged with iron wedges; and whenever they succeed in this, they are fully masters of his person."

All the larger rivers of the Cape were once teeming with Hippopotami; but the terror inspired by the Dutch invasion of their hereditary domains, and by the introduction of gunpowder, soon operated to clear the streams of the small remnant that escaped the bullets of the Colonists. The great value attached to the fat as a dainty relish—to the thick hide for the manufacture of whips, and to the teeth as an article of trade,—have combined to render the brawny animal an object so coveted by the hunter, that at the present day scarcely a single individual exists in any of the Colonial rivers, or even in those lying within a moderate distance of the border. The only surviving specimens, two in number, are females, and reside in the Berg river, under the special protection of Government. One remaining male was shot by some evil disposed poacher, a few years ago, in spite of the edict prohibiting their destruction. In regions more exempted from the white man's intrusions, however, they occur in the greatest abundance; and there, living in a state of comparative security, they are still generally prepared to welcome with curiosity the trespasser upon their wild haunts—exhibiting themselves with the same familiarity that they probably did some two centuries ago, towards the Southern extremity of the continent. Swarming in all the rivers in our route, from the Likwa to the Tropic of Capricorn, the unwieldy monsters divided the aquatic sovereignty with their amphibious and scaly neighbours, and might often be heard snorting and blowing during their uncouth gambols, within pistol shot of our encampment—the banks of every stream being deeply stamped with their singular footprints, and strewed with huge cylindrical

* Travels in Nubia, 1824-25, &c. Frankfort on the Maine, 1829. German.

masses of comminuted grass which they had voided. Occasionally, a shapeless fellow might be seen basking in the sun, or wallowing near the shore amid ooze and mud—not less to elude the teasing attentions of the hunting population common to warm humid regions, than to free himself from the ticks and other parasitic vermin infesting the cavities of his ears, as well as the softer parts of his rank hide. But within inhabited districts especially, the ungainly beasts pass the greater portion of the day in the water, rising frequently to the surface—protruding the whole of their broad heads, blowing and bellowing so lustily, that they may be heard at a great distance. Their diet is entirely confined to coarse vegetable matter—the roots and bark of water trees, together with the succulent stems of aquatic plants, furnishing them with employment during the day. Grass, however, constitutes their chief food—and night the season of their activity. As evening draws on, quitting their watery retreats and reed-grown coverts, they sally forth to graze—retiring with the approach of dawn, and never wandering to any great distance from the river, their place of refuge, and the stronghold to which they betake themselves on the smallest alarm, where plunging to the bottom, they remain perfectly secure from the assaults of their foes. During the bright moon-light nights, we not unfrequently detected the ugly monsters in the very act of making a *sortie*, their sleek slimy hides glistening like the back of a fish, as they emerged, dripping, under pale Cynthia's beams, and waddled clumsily up the river bank. Devouring at a single meal as much or more than a team of oxen, several bushels of chewed vegetable matter were usually found, on a *post mortem* examination, in the cavity of the stomach; whence it may reasonably be inferred, that the whole night is barely sufficient to admit of their laying in the supply requisite to keep up their ungainly obesity.

The Hippopotamus not unfrequently resorts to the ocean, and to the mouths of those of her tributaries which are influenced by the tides; but he is more usually an inhabitant of muddy inland lakes, of reedy marshes, and of fresh-water rivers, whose

Cavern'd banks, by the tenacious roots
Of hoary willows arched—

are overshadowed by impenetrable forests. Few of the rivers that we visited, possessed sufficient depth of water in all parts of the channel, to conceal so voluminous a beast. They more usually consisted of a chain of deep pools, termed by the Hottentots *Zeekoe gatten*, or Sea-cow's holes, from their having been gradually hollowed out by the trampling of the bulky tenants that they harbour; and whilst travelling from one to another of these, a huge back was often quite exposed, or so slightly covered by the water, that the eye could follow the progress of the corpulent owner, as he shuffled along the bottom. Notwithstanding this ability to walk with ease along the bed of the deepest river, or even in the sea, the animal cannot long remain without rising to the surface—squirting, grampus-like, a stream of water out of the truncated nose, whenever it is protruded; but the eyes, ears, and nostrils, being placed nearly on the same plane, it is necessary to expose a very small portion only of the face, in order to accomplish respiration. The great size of the coloped belly renders the specific gravity of the carcase nearly equal to that of water; and being built without any angles, it slips glibly through the stream, and floats as cleverly as an old tub, or as a life buoy, which latter in general *contour* it closely resembles.

The Hippopotamus, amid the flood
Flexile and active as the smallest swimmer
Though on the bank ill balanced and infirm,

is vulnerable only behind the ear, or in the eye, which latter organ is placed in a pulpy prominence, so as to resemble the garret window of a Dutch house. He therefore requires the perfection of rifle practice, and after a few shots, performs the movements necessary for respiration, with extreme caution and sagacity—exhibiting his square muzzle only, and as instantly withdrawing it. If slain, the ponderous body rises incontinently to the surface; but it often happened after a severe day's ball practice, that the noisome and unseemly corse of some hapless fellow, that, despite of his skill in surgery, had contrived to die of his wounds, was seen drifting down with the current—the blue swollen carcase, and disgustingly freckled belly, inflated almost to bursting, serving as a raft to voracious alligators, as they luxuriated on the dainty blubber among buzzing myriads of blue-bottle flies.

Yielding the firmest and hardest of ivory, which never changes colour from exposure, the teeth of the Hippopotamus are extremely valuable. The dental formation is very singular, being equally adapted for uprooting, cutting, and bruising; the tusks, which are three-sided, and usually weigh from three to four pounds, crossing each other like a pair of shears. They are said to strike fire with steel—a circumstance which may possibly have given rise to the assertion of writers of antiquity, that the animal vomited forth flames! In the hide, however, is found the principal source of profit; since it furnishes some five hundred strips, three feet in length, each of which, when rounded to the size of a man's finger, and tapered towards the point, forms a *sjambok** a most indispensable piece of furniture to every boor proceeding either through his grounds, or on a journey. But setting aside the value of all these *spolia*, no occupation could be devised more perfectly in unison with the indolent habits of the sporting Hottentot, than the lying in wait for the Hippopotamus. Whilst blockading a pit which the beasts are known to infest, the pleasures of the pipe are interrupted only to fire an occasional shot from an over-loaded musket, when, as our friend Andries had it, "*de Zeekoes stick up dere snouts to blow demselves.*" Nevertheless, our people

* Under the denomination of *corbaj*, these implements are also in general use throughout Egypt and Ethiopia, as well for urging on the dromedary, as for chastising the delinquent peasantry. By the taskmasters of old, the *corbaj* was doubtless freely applied—among the sculptures of Thebes, an attendant is invariably represented carrying one behind the steward of an estate.

generally managed to expend their ammunition in vain. Their balls whizzed about at random—cutting ducks and drakes as they ricocheted along the glassy surface of the stream; and if, accidentally, they *did strike* the object at which they had been projected, the huge animal, more frightened than hurt, simply dived its ugly head, resolved to afford the ambushed marksman no opportunity of repeating the salute. In short, the performances of these very ordinary marksmen, always reminded me of Sparrmann's graphic account, which had previously afforded me many a hearty laugh. "On my journey homewards," he writes, "many of these animals, thrusting their queer heads up above the water, blew themselves in broad daylight; and one of them in particular, which had been wounded by an ill-directed shot on the nose, neighed from anger and resentment!"

No scenery could surpass in beauty that of the wood-clothed borders of the larger rivers, that form, towards the Tropic, the chief haunts of the Hippopotami. An unbroken tier of weeping willows, clad in a soothing robe of vernal freshness, lean their fragile and trembling forms over the placid stream, as it rolls majestically along, and dipping their slender pendant branches into the water, are reflected back from the limpid mirror. Here the wreck of some stately tree rears its dilapidated head—a mouldering monument to the resistless violence of the flood, by which, during some vast inundation, it has been up-torn from its rock of ages—

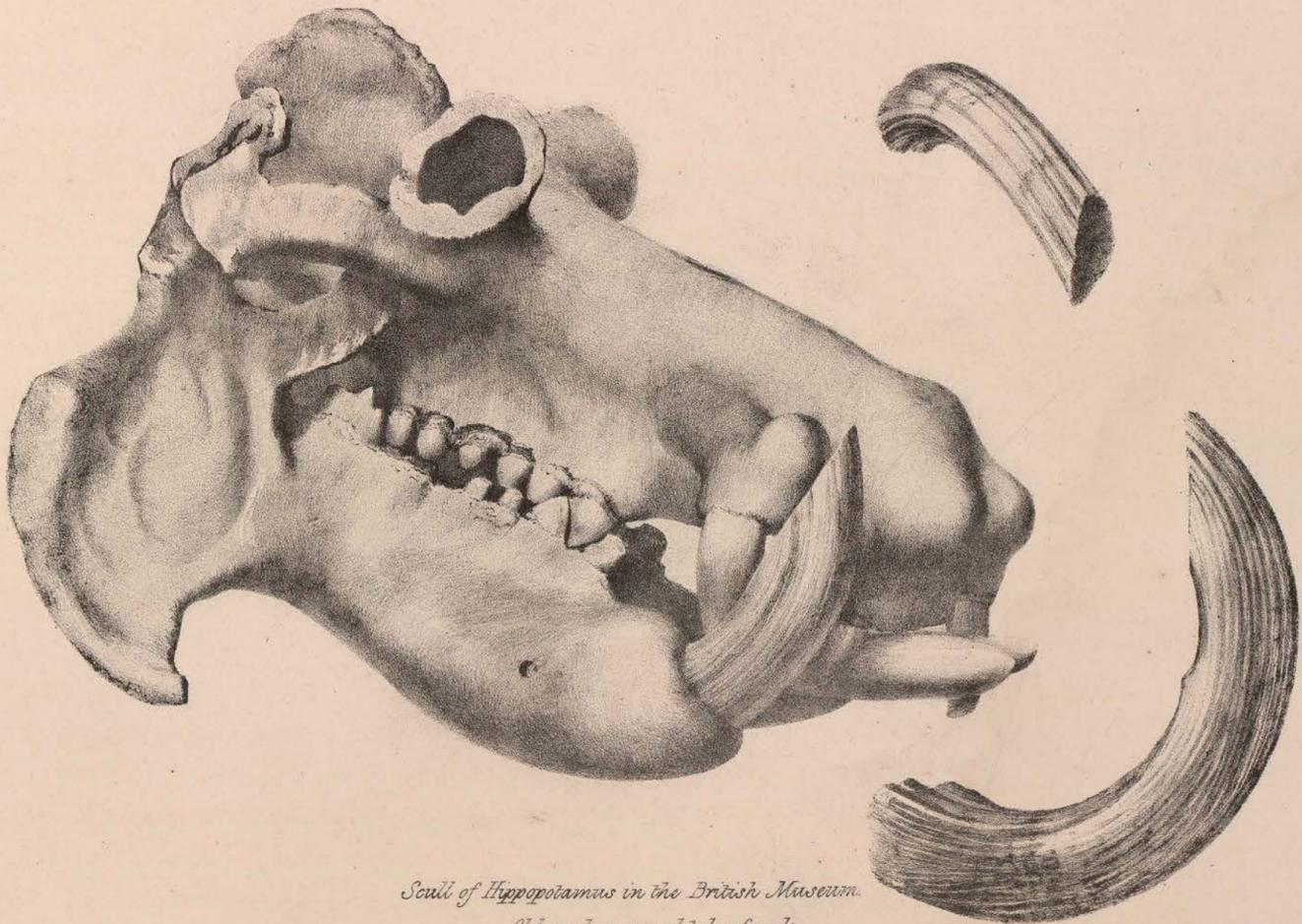
There the Chaldee willow weeps
Drooping o'er the dangerous steeps,
Where the torrent in his wrath
Has rifted out a rugged path
Like fissures cleft by earthquake's shock
Through mead and jungle, mound and rock.

Beyond, clumps of airy acacias, with a countless multitude of stems, form vistas and mazes, overshadowing grassy banks, which, under a fervid and cloudless sky, are doubly refreshing to the eye. Gay flowers deck the path of the hunter, as he wanders down the shady labyrinth of these delightful groves—greeted at one moment by the noisy cackling of a troop of loquacious Guinea fowls—at the next, by the recent footprints of the Lion, the Rhinoceros, or the stately Water-Buck. Winding on amongst the grass-grown ravines, his progress is presently obstructed by a chain of yawning sepulchres, especially constructed for the empalement of the mighty River Horse, and surrounded, perhaps, by the bleaching bones of some unwary victim that has recently been entrapped and eaten. That shapeless skull, despoiled of its ivory armament, resembles a huge mass of rock—and those picked thigh bones, are like the trunks of trees, newly stripped of their bark. Emerging with a snort and a splash from beneath yon belt of Babylonian willows that fringe the opposite shore, behold Behemoth suddenly cast his unwieldy circumference into the flood. Next see him warily lifting out his visual organs, to steal a glance at the intruder—and then, crack! he is treated to two ounces of hard lead through his attic story. Blowing and floundering, down he pops his tiny ears again, sending a thousand bubbling circlets eddying round the spot where his funny snout has disappeared—while the outposts and head quarters of an encampment of clamorous baboons, are heard to challenge all down their line, as the vibrations of the echo prolong the report of the rifle along that chain of mountains which flank the river. A few seconds more, and bursting bubbles, dyed with a crimson tide, rising rapidly to the surface of the stream, attest the accuracy of the aim, and tell of the giant's death-struggles. They are presently followed by the enormously fat carcass, slimy and cylindrical, which having been towed and floated to the bank, and hauled ashore with considerable difficulty, appears perfectly black—the colour gradually waxing fainter as it becomes dry. Now the cutting up has commenced—every knife and assagai is at work, and the barely flexible hide, fully an inch and a half in thickness, is being dragged in long strips from off the ribs, like the planks from a ship's side. Beneath them appears a deep layer of fat, known to the epicures in the colony by the appellation of *zeekoe spec*, (sea-cow's pork) and esteemed so great a rarity, that to obtain it, the utmost influence is exerted with the traders and border colonists. As this delicacy would at once be turned into oil by exposure to the sun, it can only be preserved by salting; for which purpose a vat having been formed of the immoderately thick hide, the choicest morsels are laid in pickle; a number of self-invited guests, by whom the death of such a beast is esteemed the greatest of jubilees, then proceeding to help themselves liberally from the mountain of fat and lean. Like a flesh market, banks and bushes are presently garnished with flaps and fids of meat, nor is anything to be seen, but hacking, carving, slicing, and gnawing—whole hordes of indigent and starving wanderers removing their domicile to the shambles, in order to admit of their feasting more entirely at leisure. Resembling the finest pork in flavour, the flesh is so surpassingly delicious, that none who have once partaken of a steak, can fail to unite with Burchell in recommending the English lovers of good eating not to rest, until they shall have caused "fine lively Hippopotami" to be an article of regular importation.

Our wild camp on the Molopo was one dark night thrown into the greatest consternation by an obtrusive visit from a River-Horse, whose heavy footsteps caused the vigilant Cœur de Lion to scramble up to the top of the baggage waggon, and there scream for assistance; whereupon, each Hottentot, springing from his slumbers, instantly discharged his loaded piece in any direction that the muzzle might happen to have assumed! In the course of one afternoon, five goodly carcasses were hauled out of a small pool near the source of the osier-fringed Limpopo, to be stripped of their tough panoply; and had we not been weary of the occupation, the list of casualties might have been doubled without difficulty. So abundant was the species in the Likwa, that when we reached its banks on our return from the Cashan mountains, more than forty of the amphibious monsters, like demons of the river, protruded their waggish countenances at the same moment, blowing aloft a tremendous spout of muddy water, as if in honour of our arrival. Well might the savage loneliness of that spot have consti-

tuted it the metropolis of *feræ*, and the panorama that there presented itself have called to mind the inconsistent medleys of a dream. Two shaggy lions had been seen to enter a ravine, hard by, only the moment before; yet the thoughtless Hottentots, without unyoking the oxen, left the waggons standing on the very brink of a perilous precipice, and all scampered like school-boys to the water's edge, to *kek to de Zeekoes*. One gigantic bull was making directly for the shore by a succession of plunges — his broad snout appearing nearer and more near every time he rose, puffing, to the surface. Creeping towards him, I was in the act of projecting a leaden sphere through one of his garret windows, when my eye was attracted by the tail of a couchant lioness, thumping angrily within a few yards of my foot. To Piet she was nearer than to myself, but I silently drew him back by the arm, and her ladyship's attention being completely engrossed by the oxen, she fortunately did not condescend to notice us, and was retiring — when Cobus, like a blockhead as he always was, discharging his rotten old musket at her, she galloped back, roaring, through the middle of our party, and being joined by her mate, vanished amid the bushes.

Although, to us, the disposition of the Hippopotamus appeared indolent and peaceable enough, the animal is doubtless quite capable of being bullied into a rage, and then his strength and bulk could not fail to render him a formidable antagonist in the water. If wounded on land, he is said to charge with reckless fury, and the females are reported occasionally to display great ferocity in the defence of their young. Will not an old village cow do the same, if people either torment her calf, or persist in firing leaden bullets into herself. The few specimens that were slain by our party on *terra firma*, being unfortunately killed outright from behind the ambush of a willow grove, by a single shot below the ear, we found no opportunity of taking evidence touching the behaviour of the species when worried. In the unwieldy obesity and swinish outline of the defunct subject, in vain was it that I sought for that colossal head, or for those cavern-like jaws, garnished with a double row of elephantine tusks, with which, after tearing off the keel of a vessel, Behemoth wantonly cuts in twain the bodies of her crew. Fruitlessly did I search, too, for those ponderous feet, under which the "formidable and ferocious quadruped" is prone, during his nocturnal forays, "to trample down whole fields of corn during a single night!" Defenceless and inoffensive, his awkward, bloated, and shapeless trunk, is but feebly supported upon clumsy and disproportioned legs; and his cylindrical barrel almost trailing upon the ground, whilst he might not inaptly be likened unto an overgrown prize pig, a still more befitting similitude would probably be found in a tun of blubber, hoisted upon a wooden rack. Though the bulls may often weigh about three tons, the largest of many goodly specimens of obesity that were hauled on shore during our campaign, measured less than five feet at the shoulder; and the reality falling thus lamentably short of the monstrous conception that I had formed of the mighty River Horse,—His Corpulence proved the first, and indeed the only, South African game quadruped, in which I felt disappointed.



Skull of Hippopotamus in the British Museum.

Old and supposed to be a female.

Teeth preserved by Capt. Harris.