HARPOONING A HIPPOPOTAMUS.

The howartis entered the river and swam down the center of the stream toward the rock. This was highly exciting; the hippos were quite unconscious of the approaching danger, as steadily and rapidly the hunters floated down the strong current; they neared the rock, and both heads disappeared as they purposely sank out of view; in a few seconds later they re-appeared at the edge of the rock upon which the young hippo stood. It would be difficult to say which started first, the astonished young hippo into the water, or the harpoons from the hands of the howartis. It was the affair of a moment; the hunters dived directly they had hurled their harpoons, and, swimming for some distance under water, they came to the surface, and hastened to the shore lest an infuriated hippopotamus should follow them. One harpoon had missed; the other had fixed the bull of the herd, at which it had been surely aimed. This was grand sport. The bull was in the greatest fury, and rose to the surface, snorting and blowing in his impotent rage; but as the ambatch float was exceedingly large, and this naturally accompanied his movements, he tried to escape from his imaginary persecuter, and dived constantly, only to find his pertinacious attendant close to him upon regaining the surface. This was not to last long; the howartis were in earnest, and they at once called their party, who, with two of the aggageers, Abou Do and Suleiman, were near at hand; these men arrived with the long ropes that form a portion of the outfit for hippo hunting.

The whole party now halted on the edge of the river, while two men swam across with one end of the long rope. Upon gaining the opposite bank, I observed that a second rope was made fast to the middle of the main line; thus upon our side we held the ends of two ropes, while on the opposite side they had only one; accordingly, the point of junction of the two ropes in the centre formed an acute angle. The object of this was soon practically explained. Two men upon our side now each held a rope, and one of these walked about ten yards before the other. Upon both sides of the river the people now advanced, dragging the ropes on the surface of the water until they reached the ambatch float that was swimming to and fro, according to the movements of the hippopotamus below. By a dexterous jerk of the main line, the float was now placed between the two ropes, and it was immediately secured in the acute angle by bringing together the ends of those ropes on our side.

The men on the opposite bank now dropped their line, and our men hauled in upon the ambatch float that was held fast between the ropes. Thus cleverly made sure, we quickly brought a strain upon the hippo, and, although I have had some experience in handling big fish, I never knew on a pull so lustily as the amphibious animal that we now alternately coaxed and bullied. He sprang out of the water, gnashed his huge jaws, snorted with tremendous rage, and lashed the river into foam; he then dived and foolishly approached us beneath the water. We quickly gathered in the slack line, and took a round turn upon a large rock within a few feet of the river.

The hippo now rose to the surface, about ten yards from the hunters, and, jumping half out of the water, he snapped his great jaws together, endeavoring to catch the rope, but at the same instant two harpoons were launched into his side. Disdaining retreat and maddened with rage, the furious animal charged from the depths of the river, and gaining a footing, he reared his bulky form from the surface, came boldly upon the sandbank, and attacked the hunters open-mouthed.

He little knew his enemy; they were not the men to fear a pair of gaping jaws, armed with a deadly array of tusks, but half a dozen lances were hurled at him, some entering his mouth from a distance of five or six paces, at the same time several men threw handfuls of sand into his enormous eyes. This baffled him more than the lances; he crushed the shafts between his powerful jaws like straws, but he was beaten by the sand, and, shaking his huge head, he retreated to the river.

During his sally on the shore two of the hunters had secured the ropes of the harpoons that had been fastened in his body just before his charge; he was now fixed by three of these deadly instruments, but suddenly one rope gave way, having been bitten through by the enraged beast, who was still beneath the water. Immediately after this he appeared upon the surface, and, without a moment's hesitation he once more charged furiously from the water straight at the hunters, with his huge mouth open to such an extent that he could have accommodated two inside passengers. Suleiman was wild with delight, and springing forward lance in hand, he drove it against the head of the formidable animal, but without effect. At the same time Abou Do met the hippo sword in hand, reminding me of Perseus slaying the sea monster that would devour Andromeda, but the sword made a harmless gash, and the lance, already blunted against the rocks, refused to penetrate the tough hide; once more handfuls of sand were pelted in his face, and again repulsed by this blinding attack, he was forced to retire to his deep hole and wash it from his eyes.

Six times during the fight did the valiant bull hippo quit his fortress and charge resolutely at his pursuers; he had broken several of their lances in his jaws; other lances had been hurled, and, falling upon the rocks, they were blunted, and would not penetrate. The fight had continued for three hours, and the sun was about to set, accordingly the hunters begged me to give him the *coup de grace*, as they had hauled him close to the shore, and they feared he would sever the rope with his teeth. I waited for a good opportunity, when he boldly raised his head from the water about three yards from the rifle, and a bullet between the eyes closed the last act.—Ex.

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