

nor eternal frost and snow, nor burning waterless steppes, nor robbers, nor wild beasts, presented any impediment,—fairly confesses his conqueror in the mosquito. The gnat alone, of all creatures, elicits from him a word of dread;—he could not brave the mosquitoes. Over and over he tells us in his mountain scrambles, that the mosquitoes were there “in millions,”—that they were “taking a most savage revenge on him for having sent his horses out of their reach,”—that they were “devouring” him,—that he “neither dared to sleep nor to look out;”—that “the humming sound of the millions was something awful;”—that he found himself “in the very regions of torment,” which “it was utterly impossible to endure;”—that “the poor horses stood with their heads in the smoke, as a protection against the pests;”—and that “to have remained on the spot would have subjected them to a degree of torment neither man nor beast could endure, so that they were obliged to retreat.” “I wish I could say,” he feelingly adds, “that we left the enemy in possession of the field. Not so; they pursued us with blood-thirsty pertinacity, until we reached some open meadows, when they were driven back into their fenny region by a breeze,—I hope to prey on each other.”

THE VAST.

Though great and small must always be comparative terms, the human mind does ordinarily set up some standard of dimensions, for this or that particular class of entities, and is affected with emotions of surprise and admiration, in proportion as some examples either exceed or fall short of it. In living creatures, probably, the human body is the tacitly recognised medium of size; for we call a horse or a buffalo a large animal, a cat or a weasel a small one; while, in such as pass beyond these limits in either direction, we are conscious that the dimension becomes a prominent element in the interest with which we regard them. The first exclamation of one who sees an elephant for the first time, would probably be, “How big he is!” and in like manner the first impression produced by a humming-bird, in most cases, would not be “How beautiful! How glittering!” but “How very small!”

I well remember the interest and almost awe with which, on my first voyage across the Atlantic, I saw suddenly emerge from the sea, the immense black oily back of a whale. It was almost close to the ship, and it rose like a great smooth bank out of the water, gave a sort of wallowing roll, and quietly sank from sight again. The excitement of the momentary sight prevented my attempting to estimate its measurement, besides that the entire animal was not exposed, but it seemed to me nearly as large as the vessel in which I sailed. The species was no doubt the great rorqual, since the whalebone whale is said never to venture beyond the limits of the Arctic Seas. This is the most enormous of all the animals known to inhabit this globe, attaining a length of a hundred feet and even more. The skeleton of one which was stranded near Ostend in 1827, which was subsequently exhibited in Paris and London, measured ninety-five feet. Two specimens have been measured of the length of a hundred and five feet, and Sir Arthur de Capel Brooke asserts that it is occasionally seen of the enormous dimensions of one hundred and twenty feet. (1)

The “right” or whalebone whale, the object of commercial enterprise in the Polar Seas, is little more than half as large as this last-named bulk. Eighty and a hundred feet are mentioned, indeed, by the earlier writers, as occasional dimensions of this species, but these statements are possibly exaggerations, or else the distinction between this and the rorqual may have been overlooked. A tradition exists of one Ochter, a Norwegian, of King Alfred’s day, who “was one of six that had killed sixty whales in two days, of which some were forty-eight, some fifty yards long.” The discrimination here would seem to imply actual measurement, though perhaps it was not very precise. At present, nothing like such a length is attained. The late Dr. Scoresby, who was personally engaged in the capture of three hundred and twenty-two whales, never found one of this species that exceeded sixty feet. There is, however, one caveat needful to be remembered; that an animal naturally long-lived, and which probably grows throughout life, is not likely to attain anything like its full dimensions when incessantly persecuted as the whale of the Arctic Seas has been for ages past. However, a whale of sixty feet is estimated to weigh seventy tons, or more than three hundred fat oxen.

The sperm-whale or cachalot, whose home is the vast Pacific, from north to south and from east to west, holds a place as to bulk between

the whalebone whale and the rorqual. Mr. Beale, who is the authority in all that concerns this animal, gives eighty four feet as the length of a sperm-whale of the largest size, and its diameter twelve or fourteen feet. Of this huge mass, the head occupies about one third of the entire length, with a thickness little inferior to that of the body; while, as this thickness is equal throughout, the front of the head terminating abruptly, as if an immense solid block had been sawn off, this part of the animal bears no small resemblance to an immense box. The appearance of a whale when disturbed, and going what seamen call “head-out,” this vast bluff head projected every few seconds out of water, has a most extraordinary appearance.

Undoubtedly the largest of terrestrial animals is the elephant,

“The huge earth-shaking beast;
The beast on whom the castle
With all its guards doth stand;
The beast that hath between his eyes
The serpent for a hand.”

But the specimens with which we are familiar in our zoological gardens and menageries, are inadequate representatives of the race. It is in their native regions, of course, that we look for the most magnificent specimens. Some exaggeration, however, has prevailed respecting the dimensions attainable by the elephant. “Seventeen to twenty feet” have been given as its occasional height in the Madras presidency. The Emperor Baber, in his Memoirs, alludes to the report that in the islands the elephants attain ten gez, or about twenty feet; but he adds, “I have never seen one above four or five gez,” (eight or ten feet.) The East India Company’s standard was seven feet and upwards, measured at the shoulder. Mr. Corse says the greatest height ever measured by him was ten feet six inches. As an example of the deceptiveness of a mere conjecture even by experienced persons, he mentions the case of an elephant belonging to the Nabob of Decca, which was said to be fourteen feet high. Mr. Corse wished to measure particularly, as he himself judged him to be twelve feet. The driver assured him that the beast was from fifteen to eighteen feet;—yet when carefully measured, he did not exceed ten feet. The Ceylon specimens rarely exceed nine feet; yet Wolf says, he saw one taken near Jaffna, which measured twelve feet one inch, of course to the arch of the back.

The elephants of the farther peninsula much excel those of India and Ceylon, perhaps because they are less disturbed. The skeleton of one in the museum at St. Petersburg, which was sent to Peter the Great by the Shah of Persia, measures sixteen feet and a half in height; and probably this is the highest authentic instance on record.

The African elephant is perhaps not inferior to that of Pegu. Mr. Pringle, in a very graphic picture, has described an unexpected rencontre with an enormous elephant in an African valley. “We halted, and surveyed him for a few minutes in silent admiration and astonishment. He was, indeed, a mighty and magnificent creature. The two engineer officers, who were familiar with the appearance of the elephant in his wild state, agreed that the animal before us was at least fourteen feet in height.” Major Denham in his expedition into Central Africa, met with some which he guessed to be sixteen feet high; but one which he saw killed, and which he characterises as “an immense fellow,” measured twelve feet six to the back. (1) Fossil remains of an elephant have been discovered at Jubbulpore, which measure fifteen feet to the shoulder.

I need only advert to other colossal quadrupeds, the seven or eight species of rhinoceros, the hippopotamus, the giraffe, the camel, the gaur, the gayal, and other great wild oxen of India; the urus, the bison, the Cape buffalo, the eland. Most of these dwell in the poor and arid regions of South Africa; where the nakedness of the country permits them to be seen to advantage. Dr. Andrew Smith, in one day’s march with the bullock-waggons saw, without wandering to any great distance on either side, between one hundred and one hundred and fifty rhinoceroses, which belonged to three species; the same day he saw several herds of giraffes, amounting together to nearly a hundred; and, though no elephants were observed, yet they are found in this district. At the distance of little more than an hour’s march from their place of encampment on the previous night, his party actually killed at one spot eight hippopotamuses, and saw many more. In the same river there were likewise crocodiles.

Among birds, the condor of the Andes has been the subject of greatly exaggerated reports of its dimensions. When it was first discovered by the Spanish conquerors of America, it was compared to the Rokh of Arabian fable, and by some even considered to be the

(1) The gigantic whales that inhabit the Indian Ocean are probably of this genus. One was stranded on the Chittagong coast in August 1842, which measured ninety feet in length and forty-two in diameter; and another on the coast of Aracan in 1851, which was eighty-four feet long. (See *Zoologist for December 1859*, p. 6778.)

(2) Sir E. Tennent, (*Ceylon*, ii, p. 291.) quoting this account, says “nine feet six inches;” but this is a mis-reading. It was nine feet six inches to the hip-bone; and three feet more to the back.