

## THE CROCODILE.



THOUGH the crocodile is no longer seen in the Delta, it is abundant in the Thebaid and the Upper Nile, and in the tributary branches throughout Nubia and Abyssinia. In Dongola it is killed for the sake of its flesh, which is regarded as a delicacy. Thèvenot, who tasted crocodile flesh in Egypt, found it good, though rather insipid. The skin of the crocodile has been tanned for use in place of common leather.

The mode in which this powerful and ferocious animal is captured in Angola is described as follows by Dr. Rüppell, who often witnessed it:—

“The most favourable season,” he observes, “is either the winter, when the animal usually sleeps on sandbanks, luxuriating in the rays of the sun, or the spring, after the pairing time, when the female regularly watches the sand-islands where she has buried her eggs. The native finds out the place, and on the south side of it, that is to the leeward, he digs a hole in the sand, throwing up the earth to the side which he expects the animal to take. There he conceals himself; and the crocodile, should it fail to observe him, comes to the accustomed spot, and soon falls asleep. The huntsman then darts his harpoon, with all his force, at the animal, for in order that the stroke may be successful, the iron ought to penetrate to the depth of at least four inches, in order that the barb be fixed firmly in the flesh.

The crocodile, on being wounded, rushes into the water, and the huntsman retreats to a canoe, with which a companion hastens to his assistance. A piece of wood, attached to the harpoon by a long cord, swims on the water, and

shows the direction in which the crocodile is moving. The huntsmen, pulling at this rope, drag the beast to the surface of the water, where it is again pierced by a second harpoon. The skill of the harpooner consists in giving to the weapon sufficient impulse to pierce through the coat of mail which protects the crocodile.

When the animal is struck, it by no means remains inactive; on the contrary, it lashes violently with its tail, and endeavours to bite the rope asunder. To prevent this, the rope is made of about thirty separate slender lines, not twisted together, but merely placed in juxtaposition, and bound round at intervals of every two feet. The thin lines get between the teeth, or become entangled about them.

It frequently happens that the harpoons, by the pulling of the men, break out of the animal's body, and it escapes.

If I had not seen the fact with my own eyes, I could hardly have believed that two men could drag out of the water a crocodile fourteen feet long, fasten his muzzle, tie his legs over his back, and finally despatch him, by plunging a sharp instrument into his neck, so as to divide the spinal cord.

The iron part of the harpoon which is used by the huntsman is a span long, and formed towards the point like a penknife, being sharp on one edge; beyond this edge there is a strong barb, while on the back of the blade a piece projects to which the rope is fastened. This iron head is affixed to a shaft of wood eight feet in length. The flesh and fat of the crocodile are eaten by the Barabas or Berberines, who consider them excellent; both, however, have an odour of musk so strong that I could never eat crocodile's flesh without sickness following. The musk-glands of the

AN UNEQUAL COMBAT.



animal form a great part of the profit which results from this capture; as the Berberines will give as much as two dollars for them, the unguent being used as a perfume for the hair.

In some of the rivers of Africa, the negroes are bold enough, and indeed skilful enough, to combat the crocodile in his own element. Armed only with a sharp dagger, they dive beneath him, and plunge the weapon into his belly. It often happens, however, that the combat is fatal to the man, and frequently his only chance of escape is to force his dagger, or if this be lost, his thumbs, into the animal's eyes, with all his might, so as to produce great pain and blindness."

Herodotus explains the mode of crocodile-hunting in his time, which was managed by means of a hook, baited with the chine of a pig, while the attention of the monster was aroused by the cries of a living pig, which the fishers had with them on the shore. In anticipation of prey he dashed into the river, and meeting the baited hook, instantly seized and swallowed it, and was then dragged ashore: the men then endeavoured to blind his eyes with mud, and when this was accomplished, his destruction was easy; but if not, so violent were his struggles, and so dangerous was it to approach him, that it was not without difficulty that he was despatched.

Fish, floating carrion, pigs, dogs, and other animals surprised on the banks of the river, are the food of the crocodile; yet on land escape is by no means difficult, as the legs are ill-formed for running, and the little false ribs, or appendages to the vertebræ of the neck, limiting the lateral motion of that part, render sudden turns a matter of great difficulty.

In water, on the contrary, the animal is prompt and rapid; lashing his tail from side to side, he cleaves the waters like an arrow, leaving a track behind him from the impetuosity of his progress. Sometimes, it is said, he will dart forward into the middle of the river, uttering a loud bellowing, his eyes glaring and his body swollen, while with his powerful tail he lashes the surrounding water, till it is worked into a foam. This exhibition of excitement ended, he darts off to his accustomed covert, and regains his concealment.

The eggs of the crocodile are of an oblong shape, hard, and somewhat larger than those of a goose; and the young, compared with their gigantic parents, are very small, but display, even at that early period, their innate ferocity. Numbers, both of young and eggs, are destroyed by beasts and birds of prey. The ichneumon has been from an ancient date celebrated for the havoc it makes among them.



## A LONDON OPIUM-DEN.

THE following vivid account of a visit paid to an East-end opium-den, is given by a writer in the *Daily Telegraph*:—

"I suppose a powerful, able-bodied African, raving drunk, is about as ugly an illustration of the depths of degradation to which intoxicating liquids can

reduce a human creature as the most zealous Lawsonite could desire to make use of. I am sure of this, however, that Sambo at his worst, and when his opal eye-balls, rolling in frenzy, gleam like the jewel to which they are likened when it is exposed to the sun or to fire, and when his protruding lips shrink back and look as hard as ridges of black bone, hedging his double row of vicious teeth,