

CHAMBERS'S  
ENCYCLOPÆDIA

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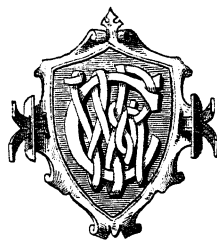
A DICTIONARY  
OF UNIVERSAL KNOWLEDGE FOR THE PEOPLE

ILLUSTRATED

WITH MAPS AND NUMEROUS WOOD ENGRAVINGS

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VOL. IV



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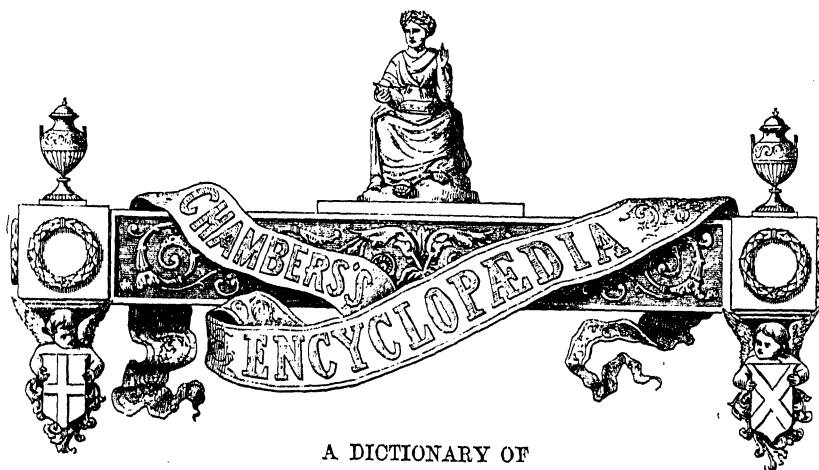
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A DICTIONARY OF

## UNIVERSAL KNOWLEDGE FOR THE PEOPLE

### ELEPHANT.

**ELEPHANT** (Gr. *Elephas*), a genus of quadrupeds, of the order *Pachydermata* (q. v.), and of the section *Proboscidea*. Elephants are the largest existing land animals. The ordinary height at the shoulder is about eight feet, but sometimes exceeds ten feet. The weight of a large E. is about five tons, the body being very bulky in proportion to its height. To sustain this weight, it is furnished with limbs of colossal thickness and strength, which are also remarkably straight, each bone resting vertically on that beneath it. From the appearance of inflexibility presented by the limbs, arose the notion prevalent among the ancients, and throughout the middle ages, that the limbs are destitute of joints, and that consequently an E. cannot lie down to rest like another quadruped, and if it were to lie down, could not rise again, but always sleeps standing, or leaning against a tree. It is indeed true that the E. often sleeps standing, and when fatigued, falls asleep leaning against a rock or tree, against which it may have been rubbing itself. The flexibility of the limbs is, however, sufficient to permit elephants to run with speed nearly equal to that of a horse, to indulge in playful gambols, and to ascend and descend steep mountains. Elephants are more sure-footed and serviceable than either horses or mules, in difficult mountain roads. On the very steepest declivities, an E. works his way down pretty rapidly, even with a *howdah* and its occupants upon his back, his chest and belly on the ground, and each fore-foot employed in making a hole for itself, into which the hind foot afterwards follows it, and to which the weight may be trusted, that another step may be ventured with safety. In lying down, the E. does not bring his hind-legs under him, like the horse and other quadrupeds, but extends them backwards (as man does when he assumes the kneeling position), an arrangement which, 'by enabling him to draw the hind-feet gradually under him, assists him to rise almost without a perceptible effort.' The E.'s pace, when exceeding a walk, is neither a trot nor a gallop,

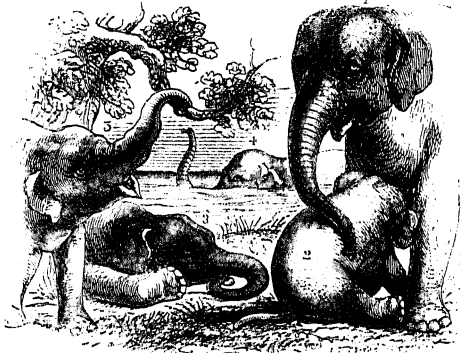
which would be too violent a motion for its conformation and huge body, but a sort of shuffle, the speed of which is increased or diminished without other alteration. The E. is incapable of springing like the deer, horse, and other animals which have the bones of their shoulders and hocks set at an angle.

The head in elephants is large; the neck is short and thick, the long flexible proboscis compensating both for the shortness of the neck, and for the inflexibility caused by the largely developed processes of its vertebrae, and enabling the animal readily to reach objects on the ground, or to a height of several feet above its head, or on either side. A great extent of bony surface in the head affords attachment for muscles destined to move and give power to the proboscis or trunk. This extent of bony surface is provided in a remarkable manner, which at the same time makes the head, heavy as it is, lighter in proportion to its bulk than is usual in quadrupeds; a great space separating the internal and external tables of all the bones of the skull, except the occipital bones, so that the space occupied by the brain is but a small part of the whole head. The space between the tables of the bones is occupied by cells, some of which are four or five inches in length; others are small, irregular, and honeycomb-like; 'these all communicate with each other, and through the frontal sinuses with the cavity of the nose, and also with the tympanum or drum of each ear; consequently, as in some birds, these cells are filled with air.' The huge and extraordinary bones of the skull, besides affording attachment for muscles, afford mechanical support to the tusks.

The nasal bones of the E. are scarcely more than rudimentary; but the tapering proboscis, to the very extremity of which the nostrils are prolonged, is nearly eight feet in length. Besides the great muscles connected with it at its base, it is composed of a vast multitude of small muscles variously interlaced, but chiefly either longitudinal, and divided

## ELEPHANT.

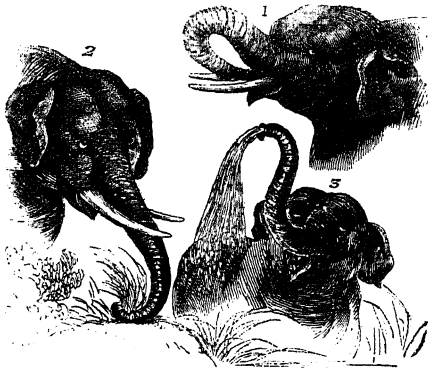
into successive arcs, of which the convexity is outwards, or transverse, and radiating from the internal to the external membrane. Cuvier states the number of muscles having the power of distinct action as not far short of 40,000. The trunk can be coiled around a tree, and employed to tear it from its roots; it is a formidable weapon of offence or



Various positions of the Elephant's Trunk :

- 1, female elephant suckling her young one; 2, the young one; 3, elephant reposing; 4, elephant swimming; 5, young elephant browsing.

defence, and is far more employed in this way than the tusks, even by those elephants which have tusks of great size; its extremity can be wound around a small handful of grass or a slender branch; it is even capable of plucking the smallest leaf, or of lifting a pin from the ground. To fit it for such actions as those last mentioned, and for many such as might be performed by a hand, it is furnished at the extremity with what may be likened to a finger and thumb; on the upper side, an elongated process—strong, soft, and flexible, like the rest of the trunk, and endowed with the most delicate sense of touch—on the under side, a kind of tubercle against which this process may be pressed. All the food of the E. is gathered and conveyed to the mouth by the trunk: by means of the trunk, also, it drinks,



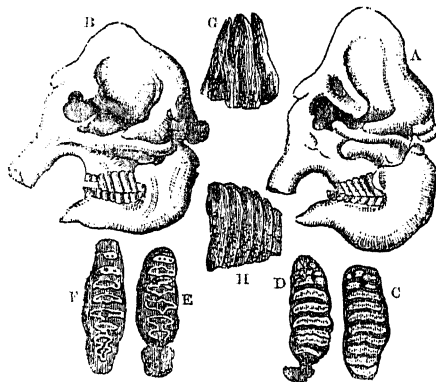
- 1, elephant drinking; 2, elephant gathering long herbage; 3, elephant spouting water over its back.

sucking up into it a quantity of water sufficient to fill it, and then discharging the contents into the mouth. Valves at the base of the trunk prevent the water from going too far up the nostrils. The trunk is constantly employed by elephants in providing in

many ways for their comfort or enjoyment, as in throwing dust over their backs, or in fanning themselves and switching away flies with a leafy branch, two practices to which they are greatly addicted. Their mutual caresses are also managed by means of the trunk, and through it they make a loud shrill sound, indicative of rage, which is described by Aristotle as resembling the hoarse sound of a trumpet, and from which this organ received its French name *trompe*, corrupted in English into trunk. With the trunk also, they sometimes, when angry, beat violently on the ground.

The sense of smell is very acute in the E., as is also that of hearing. The ears are large and pendulous, the eyes are small.

Elephants have no canine teeth, nor have they any incisors in the lower jaw. The upper jaw is furnished with two incisors, which assume the peculiar character of tusks, and attain an enormous size, a single tusk sometimes weighing 150 or even 300 lbs. The tusks are, however, often imperfectly developed, ten or twelve inches in length, and one or two in diameter. These stunted tusks are often used for such purposes as snapping off small branches and tearing climbing plants from trees. Those elephants which possess great tusks employ them also for such other uses as loosening the roots of trees which they cannot otherwise tear from the ground; or in a state of domestication, for such labours as moving great stones, and piling or carrying timber. A powerful E. will raise and carry on his tusks a log of half a ton weight or more. The tusks of the E. surpass in size all other teeth of existing animals, and are the largest of all teeth in proportion to the size of the body. They consist chiefly of that variety of *dentine* called *IVORY* (q. v.), and continue to grow—like the incisors of the rodents, to which they are in some respects analogous—even when the animal has



A, skull of Indian elephant; B, skull of African elephant; C, D, upper and lower molar teeth of Indian elephant; E, F, upper and lower molar teeth of African elephant; G, the original state of the grinders when the laminae of which they consist are as yet unconnected together; H, the laminae as they are attached in parallels one to the other by cortical substance.

attained a great age, if not to the very end of its life. The young E. is at first furnished with deciduous incisors, which are shed between the first and second year, and are succeeded by the permanent tusks.—The molar teeth of the E. are developed in succession; and at least in the Indian E., never more than two are to be seen in the same side of a jaw at one time. The first molars cut the gum in about two weeks after birth, and are shed about the end of its second year. The sixth molars,