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## Dodos of the Future—I

### The Vanishing Rhinoceros.

By Major R. W. G. HINGSTON

*'This march to inevitable extinction' is how Major Hingston describes the process by which so many of our most remarkable animals are well on their way to becoming as dead as the Dodo*

IT is a melancholy fact that the most remarkable forms of animal life are disappearing from the earth with alarming rapidity. Several have already gone; they have vanished within human memory. There is the great blaubok. It was a huge antelope which once inhabited Cape Colony; it went about the year 1800. There is the quagga, a species of South African wild ass; it went in the year 1858. A race of Burchell's zebra once lived in British Bechuanaland; it vanished about 1910. The European bison was the largest and most notable animal in our own continent; it became extinct in the wild state only since the Great War. These are just a few that have passed into oblivion and of which we have now only skins and bones. The invention of lethal weapons was the death-knell of many species. Since then man has carried extinction into every continent and ocean. He has swept away the herds of bison from America; he has eradicated the Manchurian deer from Asia; he has brought the white rhinoceros of Africa to the verge of extermination. From New Zealand he has all but wiped out the kiwi and other unique flightless birds; he has swept the Antarctic wolf from the Falkland Islands; he has totally destroyed the multitude of great auks that once flocked around the shores of the Atlantic; he has gone north into the Arctic ocean and obliterated its vast schools of whales.

#### Disappearing Pachyderms

This is a bad enough record in all conscience. Yet there is worse to come. The largest of our beasts have

as yet escaped complete annihilation. But their day is coming; it is actually in sight. The huge pachyderms—rhinoceros, hippopotamus and elephant—are advancing rapidly to final extinction. We have five different kinds of rhinoceros; three of them live in Asia and two in Africa. Everyone knows what they are like, those huge, heavy beasts with short, stout legs, elongated heads with small eyes, bare skin that looks like a coat of mail, and one or two horns projecting upward from the middle of the front of the head. The largest of the Asiatic rhinoceroses is the Indian rhinoceros. It is the animal you usually see in the Zoo carrying only one horn. This great beast once ranged over the whole of India. Only about eighty years ago it vanished from the peninsula, but a few still remained in the Ganges valley, and forty years ago it was driven completely from that refuge, though some still remained along the foot of the central Himalaya. They, too, have now gone. There are in India to-day probably only a few hundred survivors in the remote jungles of Assam and northern Bengal. Their numbers are dwindling owing to intense persecution, and it is certain that this animal will in the near future vanish completely from the earth. A smaller species is the Javan rhinoceros. It, too, carries only a single horn. Once it inhabited an immense area—Assam, Burma, Malay, Siam, the islands of Borneo, Sumatra and Java. To-day there are left only about fifty individuals in Java and a very few, believed to be only three in number, in a secluded corner of Malay. It is the rarest mammal on earth and its hour of extinction has arrived.



Rescued from extinction—White Rhinoceros in a Zululand Reserve

Photo: R. E. Symon

The third Asiatic species is the Sumatran rhinoceros, also excessively rare. Once it had an extensive range. It inhabited Assam, Burma, Malay, Siam, Sumatra and Borneo. Where is it to-day? It is thought that a very few may still remain in the inaccessible forests of Borneo; but, if so, their number must be extremely small. It also is waiting for the last blow that will drive it completely from the world.

#### Wiped Out

Then there is the African rhinoceros. We find two species of the animal in Africa: they are usually called the black rhinoceros and the white rhinoceros. Both kinds carry two horns. How they got their names is beyond belief, for the black rhinoceros is not black, nor the white rhinoceros white. Both are grey, something like the colour of a battleship. The black rhinoceros is the more numerous. It is spread in fair numbers through the central region of the continent; indeed, it is the only rhinoceros which is not in danger of very early extinction. It lives in thickets where there is water near at hand, eats the scrubby vegetation, and goes about either solitary or in parties of two or three. Its sense of sight is poor, but it has good hearing and a very acute sense of smell. It is an inquisitive and bad-tempered animal. When you disturb it, it has the alarming habit of dashing blindly in any direction, and this has given it the undeserved reputation of making an unprovoked charge.

The last species is the white rhinoceros. It is the most remarkable of all and virtually extinct. After the elephant it is the largest land mammal in the world. Its habits are different from those of the black rhinoceros, for it is a grass eater and keeps to open plains, and though formidable through its huge prehistoric appearance, in reality it is harmless and inoffensive. It loves to wallow like a pig in muddy places, and in times of drought will wander long distances in order to find a suitable wallow. Within the lifetime of many of you the white rhinoceros covered a vast area of Africa. It was so numerous in 1836 that Sir Andrew Smith saw between one hundred and one hundred and fifty during one day's march in the Transvaal. To-day it is extinct in that region and there are few more in the whole continent of Africa than Sir Andrew saw in a single day. There are twenty individuals still surviving in Zululand, one hundred

individuals in the north of Uganda, and a few, not yet counted, in the Sudan and Belgian Congo.

#### Sacrificed to Superstition

It is sad, this march to inevitable extinction, and one naturally asks what is the cause of it. There is an idea in the minds of some of the people of China that there can be manufactured from the horn of the rhinoceros a stuff which medical men call an aphrodisiac. It is a concoction which is believed to give potency to people who are tired and worn out. One of the insistent demands of the East, the teeming millions of China included, is some efficient aphrodisiac. They are all seeking after artificial vigour; they want their children to be boys. We hear a good deal in Europe of the value of monkey gland, a substance supposed to have the same effect. Possibly in England many people use it. But the Chinaman in search of the same object, does not want it. The horn of the rhinoceros is his form of monkey-gland. A fragment of it is one of his dearest possessions. He grinds it in a mortar, then adds some condiments and mixes the lot into a gelatinous substance. He then swallows a fragment of it, imagines that he is invigorated and can defeat the natural consequences of old age. Is it not almost unbelievable that the rhinoceros should be exterminated in order to satisfy this extraordinary superstition?

#### Poachers of Rhinoceros

But if we are to save the few remaining from extinction, it is not with the Chinaman that we have to deal. Our business is with the middlemen in Africa and Asia; the poachers, the smugglers, the business concerns who are engaged in pandering to this superstition. Against these it is possible to take action, and action is legitimate and urgently necessary. It is in the main from possessions under British administration that we find this deplorable traffic. For example, in 1924 there were sold in Uganda 136 horns of the white rhinoceros. There are to-day 130 of these animals in Uganda, so that only seven years ago there were sold in one year a larger number of horns than the whole present white rhinoceros population of that country. Officially the proceeds from the sale of horn go to swell public exchequers. But many persons, in addition, are engaged in smuggling it. The animals are killed by natives who pass the horns on to dealers; they

conceal the loot in petrol tins and bundles of hides and smuggle it from the country in Arab dhows. It is difficult to catch these poachers, though now and then a haul is made. A case came not long ago before the courts in Kenya in which five men were charged with smuggling 187 horns, which represented a slaughter of ninety-three rhinoceroses. It is worth the smuggler's while to run considerable risk, since there is likely to be large profits. Rhinoceros horn in 1929 reached 40s. per lb., a price higher than that paid for ivory. The Chinaman values all rhinoceros horn, but pays highest for that of the Asiatic species. The Indian horn is worth at its source nearly half its weight in gold. Last year a single horn sold in India fetched £150.

It is a case for stronger administrative action. The traffic

in horn is rapidly exterminating these remarkable animals. Extermination in the past has always ended in bringing disrepute on the territories engaged in it. The present destruction is tremendous, and the rhinoceros is an animal above all others which cannot possibly face severe wastage. Its rate of reproduction is extremely slow. The white rhinoceros does not breed till it is twenty-five years old. It then produces a single calf at intervals of about six or seven years, so that it cannot compete with those forces of destruction that demand its sacrifice to Chinese superstition.

I know it is a very difficult problem. Something is being done, but not enough. It is possible to do a great deal more both to give rigid protection to the species, and to make the trade more dangerous and more difficult.

## Ghostly Reflections

By DESMOND MacCARTHY

WE were talking the other day in a library which contained the works of Harrison Ainsworth and Dickens in editions illustrated by Cruikshank and Phiz; and as we turned from one picture to another, we showed each other those at which, in childhood, we had stared in fascinated horror; the tall and tattered figure of 'Herne the Hunter', with white eye-balls and crowned with antlers, appearing on the battlements of Windsor Castle to Henry VIII or sinking through the floor of the chamber in the Curfew Tower; Solomon Eagle gesticulating above the plague-stricken city of London, or Cruikshank's Fagin peering in at the parlour window at poor little Oliver after his escape from the thief's kitchen—vividly terrible images, though intensely enjoyed, and fruitful of subsequent nocturnal sufferings.

### Midnight Terrors

But I like to think that it was not, after all, in vain that we suffered from night-fears and supernatural terrors as children. Now I no longer lie rigid in bed listening to 'the tiny, stiffling voices of the dark', or wake screaming to find myself in the presence of the Impossible. I cannot regret having experienced them. I say to myself that an imagination which does not contain some such dark deposits of experience would afterwards reveal but a pale, superficial glitter. How shallow otherwise would my responses be now to all in Nature and in Art that, to be felt with rapture, must also be apprehended with a touch of fear! What a loss it would be to be excluded from the cosy, sociable qualms of the story-teller's circle, or to be incapable of disquiet at the sight of waving branches outside in the night! I should be really sorry if when I went to bed with a solitary candle, I did so without one glance at queer shadows; and still more sorry if in the stillness of my distant room, I did not find the companionship of the fire doubly welcome. These, no doubt, are little things. But who wishes his sensibilities more limited—provided his nerves are now fairly strong? And we owe such sensibility to our childish terrors. The reward of the child who starts from his little midnight pillow 'in sweats to which the reveries of the cell-damned murderer are tranquillity', is in after years the possession of a richer imagination. Besides, next morning he is strangely little the worse for his awful experiences; the price paid is seldom too great.

### Mistaken Kindness

The modern parent, however, would exorcise spectres with nightlights and bedside bells, and enforce a most rigorous censorship of books. Grimm's stories are forbidden as frightening. Even natural history is falsified, and the child is told that jaguars never bite. Only in the case of exceptionally nervous children are such precautions justified. Of the many people you know who like to recall their childish terrors and to commiserate themselves on their past sufferings, who among them have seemed the worse for what they once went through? I have only come across one case in which fright had bad consequences, and then the circumstances were peculiar. A timid boy, the son of a soldier who was ashamed of his son's

timidity, was sent to the top of a dark house to fetch a book. It was done to test him and he was not allowed to take a candle. He got upstairs, but half-way down a dark passage he met two glowing eyes, and the next moment out of the blackness something as black rushed at him: it was his father's retriever. He told me this shook his nerves for many years. In this case, you notice, there was an external cause of terror. In cases where fear has produced the apparition instead of an apparition the fear, the shock seems to have no after-effects except on the imagination, one which I maintain to be by no means undesirable.

Besides, this shielding of children's imaginations from all ideas likely to frighten them is a hopeless business. I know a boy who was so alarmed by the picture of Alice's neck shooting up like a drawn-out telescope after she nibbled the mushroom, that he could not enjoy *Alice in Wonderland* until that page was pasted up; and yet that was a picture so obviously intended to amuse, so funny in itself, that no parent, however anxious, could have foreseen its effect upon him. Even a single word may open the door to fear. I remember in my own case the phrase 'thought-body', dropped casually in conversation at luncheon, bred in me visions of tormenting terror. One was of two girls standing on the steps of a country house and looking out across a flat stretch of sunlit fields. Over the furthest hedge, and against the sky, something small was moving. As it came towards them, it was seen to be a little elderly man, without a hat, in black Sunday coat, racing across the green fields and leaping the hedges with extravagant agility. He came nearer and nearer, clearing the fences with balled fists high in the air, and as he was in the act of bounding over the last, the girls on the steps recognized him: 'It's Uncle', one remarked. 'It's his *thought-body!*' There was, too, a kind of perverse ordinariness about the scene, the house, the steps, the fields, which was very unpleasant.

### Dulling the Edge of Thrills

But unpleasant as such experiences were, without them none of us would now be in the happy position of being still distinctly afraid of ghosts without needing to take them seriously. I commiserate the unfortunate people who do take them seriously, but seem at the same time to have lost all sense of the gruesome or mysterious. One constantly meets people interested in the supernatural, who are like the hero of the story, 'Oh! if I could but shiver'—on whom the most hair-raising spectres took no effect, and who concluded he had felt the sensation of fear when some one emptied a basket of wet fish over his back. The man who would hit a ghost, said Charles Lamb, would stick at nothing; and how many people of that kind there are!

I slept in a room once adjoining that of a young man whose life was wrapped up in the investigation of the occult. Far into the night I heard a voice of rather sulky, good-humoured remonstrance rumbling on and on. Next morning I asked him whom he had been talking to. 'Oh, to ghosts', he replied casually, 'they kept coming, and I wanted to sleep'—and then he began to discuss cricket. Now, this is lamentable! Think of the envy of eager investigators (though they, too, seem pain-