

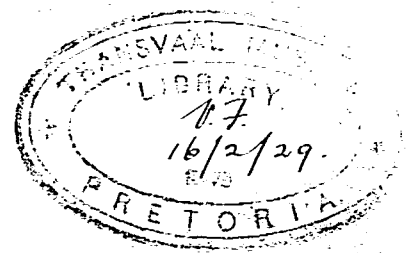
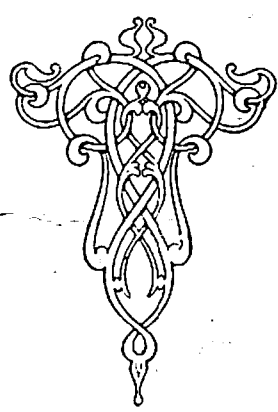
TRANSVAAL MUSEUM,  
LIBRARY

CLASS No. P599.728 MFO

AC. No. 2347

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ 19\_\_

# THE SOUTHERN WHITE RHINOCEROS



Its History, Peculiarities, Habits and  
Behaviour

By 'MFOHLOZA  
*H. Vaughan - Kirby.*

5144

Issued by the Wild Life Protection Society,  
Natal Branch, Durban.  
P.O. Box 230.

[1920]

THE NATAL WITNESS, LTD.

599.728  
MFO

P. 599.728  
MFO

171.

# The Southern White Rhinoceros.

**I**N view of the fact that all Natal has recently been stirred by the news of the wilful slaughter of a cow and calf White Rhinoceros, and even more recently by the outrageous and wicked proposal put forward by the Union Government to destroy the game in the Mfolozi Reserve, and thus most certainly to imperil the safety of the White Rhinos therein, an article dealing with these great creatures may be of some interest to the general public, the majority of whom have only heard of them, and have but little knowledge of their habits. Such an article will also serve, it is hoped, to emphasise the enormity of the crime which has deprived not Natal alone, but the whole scientific world, of yet two more of these prehistoric monsters.

## Prehistoric Descent

The palæontological affinities of *R. simus* are somewhat obscure. A considerable number of fossil forms which

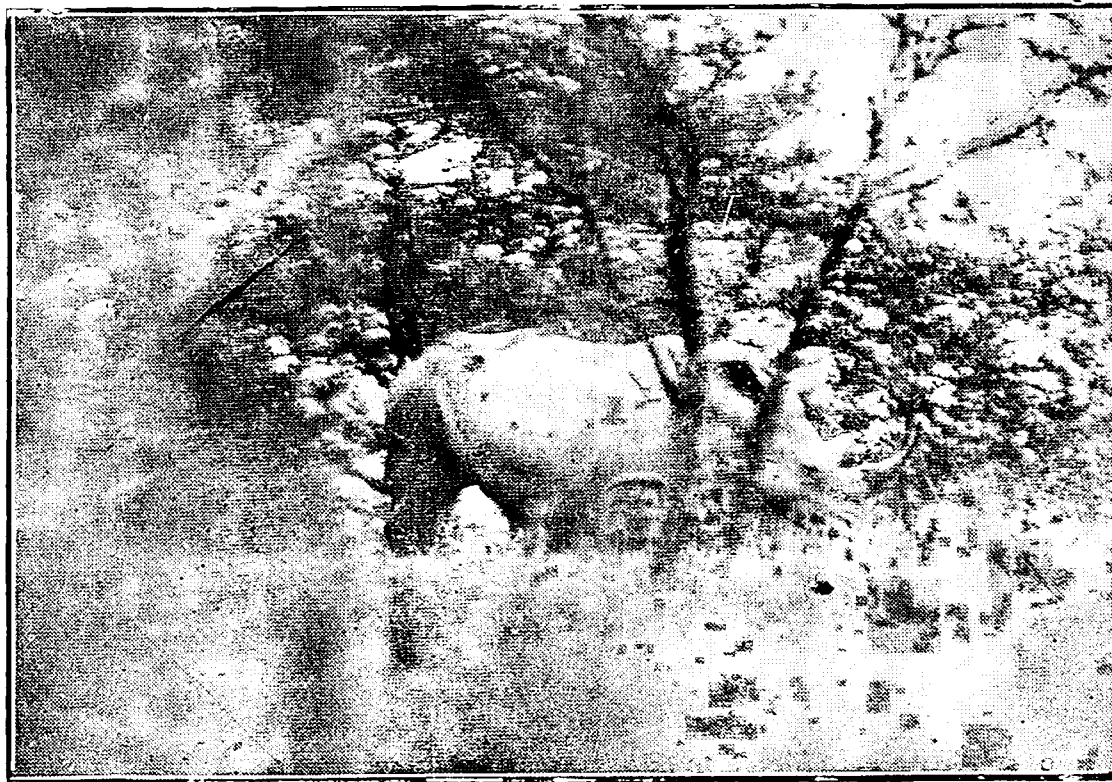
may be referred to the genus *Rhinoceros* as a whole have been found, which date as far back as Upper Eocene (Tertiary Period) of Central Europe. The Atelodine group of the family *Rhinocerotidae*, which includes both the African species, *bicornis* and *simus*, were represented in past ages (when they were, geographically, very widely spread over the earth) by the two huge forms *Rhinoceros platyrhinus*, of the Asian Pliocene, and *Rhinoceros antiunitatis* (the so-called Woolly Rhinoceros) of the European Pleistocene. Fossil deposits of *Rhinocerotid* ancestors have also been found in the Tertiary rocks of North America, deposits which clearly indicate that the fauna of the whole of North America was in those times far more closely allied to that of the Central regions of the Old World than it is in the present day.

The family *Rhinocerotidae*, of the great zoological Order *Perissodactyla* (Odd-toed Ungulates) is represented at the present day by five species and one

sub-species, two of the former and the latter having their habitat in the Ethiopian Region, viz., the Black or Prehensile-lipped Rhinoceros, and the White, or Square-lipped species, with its sub-species the Northern White Rhinoceros (*R. simus cottoni*); both species carry two horns and an extremely heavily plated hide; a fourth species is the Javan Rhinoceros (*R. sondaicus*) with one horn, and a fifth the Sumatran Rhinoceros (*R. sumatarensis*) with two horns.

## Northern Relations

The discovery in the year 1900 of the Northern form of the White Rhinoceros (*R. simus cottoni*) in the Nile-Congo regions drew attention to the vast distance—something like 1,500 miles—separating the habitats of the Northern and Southern forms, and through the whole of which vast extent of country, so far as is at present known, no traces of any previously existing links between them exist. This interrupted distribu-



COGITATION.—A photograph, taken by the author, of a White Rhinoceros Bull (*Rhinoceros Simus Typicus*) aroused from sleep.

TRANSVAAL MUSEUM.  
LIBRARY

CLASS P  
No. 599-7284

2347

tion, however, occurs in respect of other creatures than the White Rhinoceros, amongst which may be noted the Giraffe, the Oryx antelopes, the Gazelles, the long-eared foxes, the Caracal Lynx and the Aard-wolf (Proteles).

There are certain well-marked structural differences between the two African forms; the Black species is decidedly the smaller of the two, and is easily distinguished from the White by its pointed, highly prehensile upper lip and by its deeply grooved molars, with high crushing ridges, which enable the animal to bite off and masticate the thorny twigs and branches upon which it feeds, and which are drawn into the mouth by the aid of the prehensile snout. The ear-conches are much rounded and fringed with hair round their outer edges.

The White Rhino is a far more bulky creature, though standing comparatively lower on its legs; the head is huge and of great length, due to the remarkable occipital projection of the skull, the dorsal outline of which presents a triangular appearance. In place of the prehensile upper lip of the Black species the White has a broadly truncated snout and broad straight lips, the lower one armed with horny substance along its edge, which assists the animal to gather its grass diet. The nostrils are wide and open, the ear-conches large and elongated, and carry a few stiff bristly hairs, slightly curled, at the extreme tips. The molars, in marked contrast with those of its congener, have broad flat grinding surfaces, whereby it is enabled easily to dispose of the grass which forms its sole food supply.

### *Muscular Development*

Looking at one of these great beasts as it stands broadside to the observer, the great nuchal hump in front of the shoulders at once attracts notice, and adds very considerably to the idea of the animal's great height and bulk. This hump is caused by the presence of an immense band of muscle which extends from the occiput to the remarkably high vertebral processes, and by further masses of muscle on either side of the central band. It is these great muscular attachments which enable the beast to move its vast head about as freely as it does.

The Square-lipped Rhinoceros has but few hide-folds. The most conspicuous

are those which completely encircle the outside of the forelegs, passing transversely above the elbow joint; these are well marked in any position that the animal may assume, and are present in young and adults alike. There is a fold at the back of the thigh, and another behind the elbow, the latter, however, being very inconspicuous in some positions of the animal. A heavy fold passes over the neck (the writer has indeed seen two such heavy folds in some individuals) and a lighter one encircles the throat; when the animal is standing; in an alert attitude, with head raised, the neck folds are particularly well marked, but becomes somewhat flattened out, and the throat fold correspondingly brought into prominence when it assumes its more normal and characteristic attitude with head lowered to the ground.

### *Common Characteristic*

One characteristic the White Rhino shares with all of the group is a flattened compressed ridge of stiff hide standing out along the front edge of the thigh. Like all Perissodactyle the Rhinoceros walks on its toes, the heel nowhere touching the ground, the whole weight falling upon the great elastic pad, and the protuberant flexible sole of the foot. The middle toe is greatly enlarged, and the sole of the

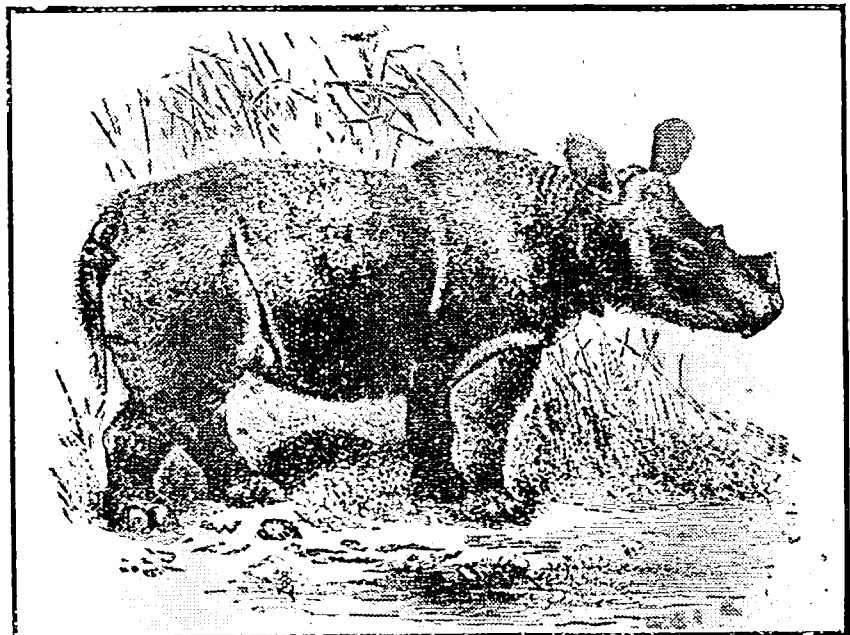
hind foot elongated, comparatively more so in the female than in the males.

The eyes are singularly set in the head, slightly behind the posterior horn, and at such an angle that it does not seem possible for the animal to see anything in front of it unless the head is considerably lowered; when the head is held horizontally the eyes look upward at an angle of nearly 60 degrees. The eyes are well protected from harm when the animal is forcing its way through thick bush, often at speed, by the thick and prominent folds of hide around them.

The natural colour of the square-lipped Rhinoceros may be described as from medium to dark mouse-grey, really differing very slightly from that of the Black species. Neither, in fact, is black and neither white.

### *Mud Baths*

The White Rhino is very partial to wallowing and mud-bathing, and also to rolling in sand and dry earth. Indeed it is entirely essential to its well-being that it should be able to do this. During the great drought year, when there was not a vestige of wet mud to be found throughout the length and breadth of the Reserve, these animals



THE LITTLE SUMATRAN RHINOCEROS.—He is the smallest of all Rhinoceros, but he resembles the African species rather than his nearer Indian neighbour in carrying two horns.

suffered heavily, grew thin, and developed numerous sores all over their bodies. The writer cannot say definitely that this condition was actually due to the absence of wallowing places, but he believes that it was so; certain it is that, when at last good rains fell and filled the mud-holes, they regained their health and former appearance with a rapidity that was nothing less than marvellous.

This habit of wallowing and rolling sufficiently accounts for the weird colours which the hides of these animals assume at times; the writer has seen them yellowish-brown, black, pale grey and red.

### *An Apparition*

On a never-to-be-forgotten day an old cow with a small calf was encountered (and photographed) near the Impila Hill. When the former emerged, in broad daylight, from a clump of bushes less than 25 yards distant, it presented an animal in the shape of a rhinoceros, and with two horns on its snout, but the colour of a bright bay horse, and was followed by an equally brilliantly coloured calf. I set to wondering whether my eyesight had gone in entirely!

I have never observed these animals wallowing or bathing in the clean water of the rivers, nor have any places been seen that might indicate that they had done so; on the other hand, last year I saw a large cow, accompanied by a well-grown calf, and another, apparently a yearling, stroll up to a small pan well filled with muddy water, drink, and then lie down at full length in it. Both the calves drank, or at least lowered their heads to the surface of the water, but they then moved away and stood together under a shady tree by the pan; the cow must have lain in the water for nearly an hour, during the whole of which time she was under observation from a bush about 40 yards distant.

### *Family Bathing*

On another occasion my attention was drawn to a spot in some thick bush between the Ndengeza and the Impila, whence peculiar grunting

sounds emanated, and upon investigation I traced them to a rather small but deep water-hole, in which the mud below the water was probably over three feet in depth; on the bank stood a two-year-old White Rhino calf, plastered with greyish-brown mud from head to foot, some of which, dropping from the belly indicated that the animal had but recently emerged from the hole. When we sighted them the calf was standing on the edge of it, intently watching the antics of its maternal parent who now occupied the tub, rolling from side to side, throwing up waves of mud, splashing and grunting and most evidently enjoying life to the full. They were quite unconscious of the presence, some 25 yards away, of my little party, so we were able to observe them unhurriedly. After about a quarter of an hour the cow sat up on her haunches, then stood upright, climbed out of the hole, stood again in pensive enjoyment, then with the calf walked to a nearby patch of scrubby bush and long grass, in which they both threw themselves down and rolled about at leisure. This occupied close on half an hour, when they once again stood up, and we left them.

When proceeding at its ordinary walking pace the head is carried very low towards the ground, and in passing through scrub and long grass it nods slowly, and is swayed from side to side, the great anterior horn thus warding off all obstructions. Doubtless this contact with the hard bushes and sharp grasses accounts for the flattened front surface of the horn, which is peculiar to this species; as the horn often comes in contact with the ground and ant-hills, further abrasion is thus brought about. It is noteworthy that the base of the horns of the White Rhino are roughly square in shape, as distinct from the round bases of those of the Black Rhino.

The large anterior horns appear frequently to become broken and splintered at the tips. This is probably done when the animal is rushing at speed through heavy bush. Such a rush is irresistible and the monsters break through all opposing obstacles,

so it is not surprising that the front horn should come in for some hard knocks.

### *Hunters' Tales*

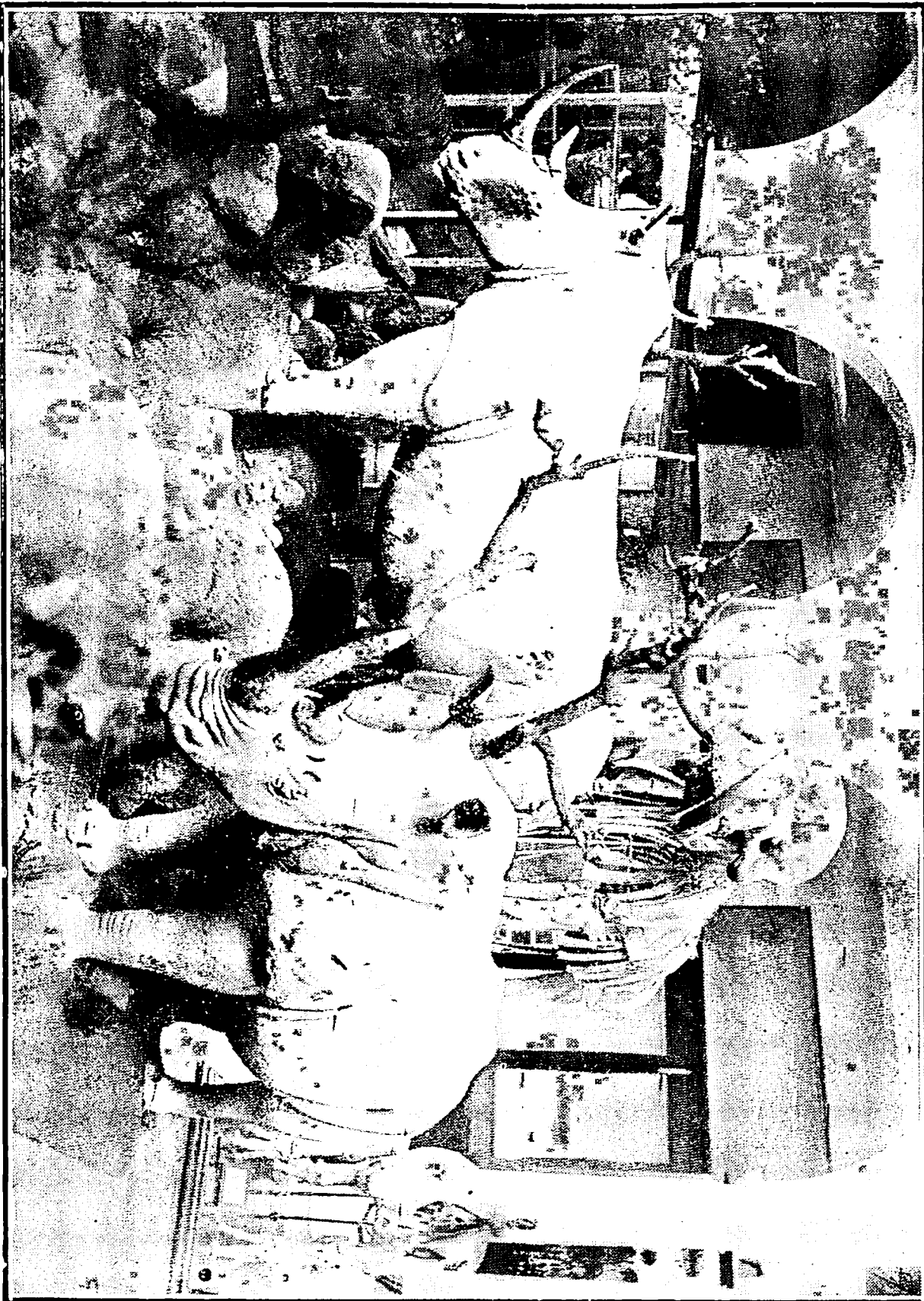
The standing shoulder height of the White species would appear to have been exaggerated by some writers, just as are so many "field measurements," whether of tigers, lions, leopards or mambas! Personally I do not question the accuracy of the conclusions reached by Mr. Edmund Heller as expressed in an article published in the Smithsonian Museum Collection (U.S.A.), Vol. 61, 1913.

"It is extremely doubtful," he writes, "if the square-mouthed Rhinoceros ever exceeded a standing height at the withers of six feet."

At the present day the average height of an adult male in Zululand is about 5 feet 8 inches, though if the measurement be (incorrectly) taken from the top of the nuchal hump it would show an extra foot or 12 inches.

Thus if Rowland Ward's measurements may be taken as correct the great single-horned Indian Rhinoceros is a larger animal than our White Rhino, as he gives the shoulder height of two of the former, shot by the Maharaja of Kuch Behar, as 6 feet 4½ inches, and 6 feet 1 inch respectively.

The square-lipped Rhino is mainly nocturnal in its habits, hence the difficulty of presenting anything more than a very sketchy record of its movements and activities. During the noonday heat they always rest, lying down or standing about under a tree; they never appear specially to select any place for their siesta, but will dump themselves down round about 9 a.m. in almost any spot where they may happen to be when the desire for sleep overtakes them. Often it is in the open under the blazing sun, though they more frequently take to the shade of some large tree or dense thicket. During the hot summer months they invariably repair to the higher ridges or the summit of a hill, where they can catch such cool breeze as may be blowing, and at the same time avoid many of the persistent attentions of biting flies.



GROUP OF WHITE RHINOCEROS IN THE GOVERNMENT MUSEUM, MA PITZBURG.—The square formation of the lips can be plainly seen in the photograph.

### *Preliminary Caution*

On reaching the spot where it occurs to them that further wandering under the hot sun is rather a futile proceeding they seldom lie down at once, but are more likely to stand about for an hour or so, shifting about at first in an uneasy manner, but very soon becoming lethargic; the head is lowered almost to the ground, and the huge bulk betrays scarcely any sign of movement, save for the monotonous fanning of the ears and occasional flicking of the tail. There is little doubt that they frequently sleep thus in a standing position, the ponderous head held low; at other times they will merely sit down with their legs doubled under them as shown in the photograph. Again they may be seen lying flat down on their sides, when the hind legs are usually stretched out fully, but the forelegs are apt to be partly doubled up towards the chest, probably to ensure speedy recovery of position.

But in whatever attitude they may rest, it is certain that one who has never seen it would not credit the celerity with which these ponderous creatures get to their feet from the sitting position; in the wink of an eye a movement of the elbows jerks the forelegs from beneath them, and at the next wink the animal is standing upright—it has to be seen to be believed. I have usually noticed that when desirous of rising to their feet from a fully prone position, greater effort is required to rise to the middle or sitting stage than from the latter to the standing position.

### *Bewilderment*

When roused from sleep their movements are irresistibly comical, portraying every stage of hesitancy, doubt, and intense bewilderment, not unaccompanied with some nervousness. The animal shuffles its feet about, the ears constantly twitch backwards and forwards, the tail is twisted and untwisted, and the head alternately raised and lowered, and turned from one side to the other. Quite often the whole of the immense body is turned, now to the left now to the right, in the endeavour to ascertain the cause of the disturbance. It

seems silly, but is nevertheless a fact, that one may be standing or crouching in perfectly open ground at not more than 18 or 20 paces from the animal in such circumstances, and provided no movement is made, nine times out of ten the animal will be unable to make the observer out.

### *Speedy Flight*

But suddenly, though from what cause is seldom if ever patent, hesitation is changed to realisation, and, screwing the tail up over the back, the animal swings round and dashes off at a slashing trot. I do not for a moment believe that this decision to bolt off is always the outcome of their having realised the cause of their disturbance, or the nature of whatever it is that has aroused suspicion; on the contrary, I believe it is almost invariably the case that they have only realised their inability to ascertain the cause of the disturbance. Hesitation and doubt are thus merged into fear, and speedy flight is decided upon. They may run thus up wind for 150 yards or so, twisting and turning through the bush and between the trees with wonderful ease and speed, and generally making for the nearest game-tracks. They will then pull up, but still facing in the direction first taken; if followed they will repeat the performance, till finally, when convinced that pursuit is kept up, they break away down wind, and though they soon slow the pace, will put many miles between themselves and the suspected danger before again coming to a stand.

### *The Evening Meal*

Should their noontide rest remain undisturbed, they usually make a move again about 4 to 4.30 p.m., and after standing about for a time, commence to graze in the immediate vicinity, gradually working their way elsewhere, but always travelling in the direction of water. When at sundown they approach the neighbourhood of a suitable drinking place, they invariably get into and follow some old and well-worn game trail.

It is but rarely that they drink twice on successive occasions at the same spot. If drinking at one of the larger rivers they go straight down to

the water's edge, drink, and then move back again into the bush, making for their feeding ground, possibly some miles distant. They appear to dislike loitering about an open river, but when drinking at one of the smaller streams, which usually have high banks, they are apt to remain for a considerable time wandering up and down its bed. There is little doubt that the comparatively restricted area of their haunts, and the known proximity of man has imbued them with this fear or suspicion of the broad, open banks of the larger rivers.

### *An Obvious Trail*

They feed up wind, moving ponderously, and mowing down the grass and bush obstructions in their path by the side swing of the great head and heavy front horn. As the hours pass on towards daylight they draw nearer to the spot, where they will lie up for the rest of the day, as by this time they will generally have reached higher ground.

They seldom feed after 9 a.m. and in the heat of summer not so late, but on wet and cloudy days they may not infrequently be seen abroad at almost any time of day. Single animals invariably lie down head to wind, and one at least out of a group will so rest. They are more gregarious than the Black species, and it is not uncommon to see a group of four or five together. When a number of them are grazing together they usually keep fairly close to one another, and do not spread themselves over a very wide area.

The sight of these animals is very defective, no doubt partly due to the angle at which the eyes are set in the head, and partly also to the obstruction offered to clear vision by the great horn bases. The constant raising and lowering of the head when danger is suspected suggests that efforts are being made to get the object of its suspicion into view. On the other hand the senses of both scent and hearing is very acute, though it is to the former that the animal mainly trusts to warn it of danger.

## Deceptive Nervousness

When annoyed and irritated by the suspected presence of danger below wind, danger which its defective vision fails to locate, the animal becomes utterly bemused and nervous: its every action testifies to this, and in such circumstances the writer admits to having invariably anticipated an attack from the animal, though actually he has never known it to eventuate. But if one has crept up, armed with nothing but a camera, to a distance of 15 to 18 yards from one, or may be more, of these huge creatures, without a tree of any description between him and them—well, possibilities will intrude themselves, and he is apt to be making up his mind in which direction sprinting will be most easy. But as it usually ends in the rhino making the first move in an opposite direction the surprising thing is that the beast should hesitate at all. It is not aggressive. Then why stand staring, why not make off at once instead of hanging on in nervous doubt, and, incidentally, trying the nerves of the camera man?

At a distance of 25 yards a White Rhino has obviously detected the sound of the closing of a focal-plane shutter. It instantly swung round and stared hard in the direction of the camera. Ordinarily the sounds common to the bush and which are frequently made by other game, such as breaking sticks, and rustling leaves have only the effect of putting the animal on the alert, but if they sense an unusual sound, such as might be made by the scraping of leather gaiters or a camera case against bushes, or by the tinkle of metal, they at once take alarm, and no matter how thick the bush may be they share with the elephant the most marvellous ability to get away noiselessly.

## Sentry Duty

White Rhinoceros are almost invariably accompanied by those guardian angels of the larger game, the Red-billed Oxpeckers ("Buffalo birds," the Hlalinyati of the natives), which,

clinging with their stout curved claws to the hide, move rapidly all over the animal, removing the parasite ticks from their host. At the slightest sign of the approach of danger, they leave the latter and spring to flight, uttering sharp, shrill cries as they rise higher and higher, and the rhinoceros never takes long to respond.

The only sounds the writer has heard made by white rhino. are a loud snorting sniff and the grunting squeals made by a dying animal; a calf when deprived of its parent will utter shrill whistling cries.

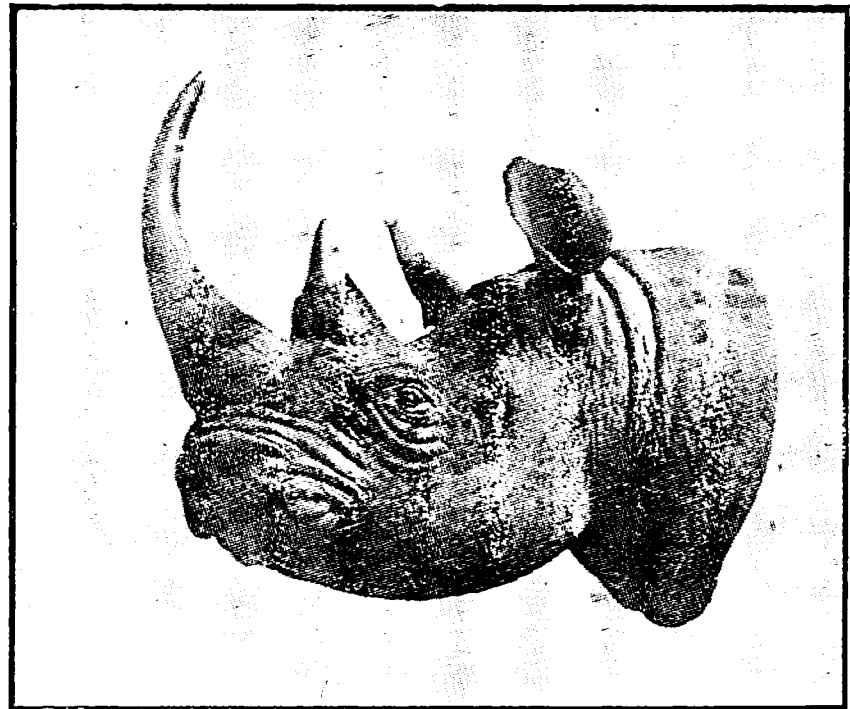
Opinions differ concerning the frequency of reproduction; in Zululand it is found invariably that if a cow is accompanied by two calves, there will always be a difference of three to four years between the ages of the latter. There is no regular rutting or calving season. If a rhinoceros cow is killed and leaves a calf I believe the latter is almost certain to be soon adopted by another cow; two definite cases of this have come under my observation.

## Altered Habits

Some years ago it was most exceptional to find white rhino. consorting

with other species of game, but in the present day the reverse is the case, and they are seldom found except in the quite near vicinity of other animals. These are usually either buffalo, wildebeeste or zebra. On one occasion I saw a single white rhino. bull lying down amongst a troop of about 20 buffaloes, but when they were disturbed each species took its own line of retreat.

Their habits have also changed in another direction, and from being animals of the open localities they have now become confirmed lovers of the bush, though naturally, when seeking their grass supply they must leave it and go to the open country. The reason for these changed habits is obvious. The limits of their range are, after all, very narrow, there is no vast expanse of grass country over which to wander, and which, by reason of its vastness might offer them a better chance of avoiding their enemies. Into this narrowed range some few years ago came a number of self-styled "sportsmen," who, to their eternal disgrace, set themselves out to slaughter these inoffensive creatures right and left, young and old alike. That this



HEAD OF BLACK RHINOCEROS.—This photograph clearly shows the pointed, prehensile upper lip, the most easily recognised point of difference between the Black and White Rhinos.

was done—not, be it noted, because of any antipathy towards the defenceless creatures themselves, but in order to gratify a spite, and to signify a protest against certain Government action or in-action—made the crime the more heinous. And from that day forth the White Rhino abandoned the habits which had grown upon them during the years when they were half-tamed and carefully protected. Never again would they trust themselves in the open country, never again rely upon their own defective senses. The thick bush offered at least some semblance of protection, and in the company of other game whose senses are more acute than their own they sought that measure of peace and safety which man had refused to accord them.

The White Rhinoceros differs from the Black in that it does not systematically deposit its droppings in large heaps, subsequently scraping and scattering them about with its hind-

feet. The White Rhino drops them anywhere, and it has not been observed to interfere with them afterwards. But though this is the usual custom, the writer has seen places where, in considerable hollows in the ground, the droppings of White Rhino had been deposited during a quite appreciable period of time. In one such case the animal was actually seen to visit it; whether these were the deposits of one animal or of several the writer could not ascertain.

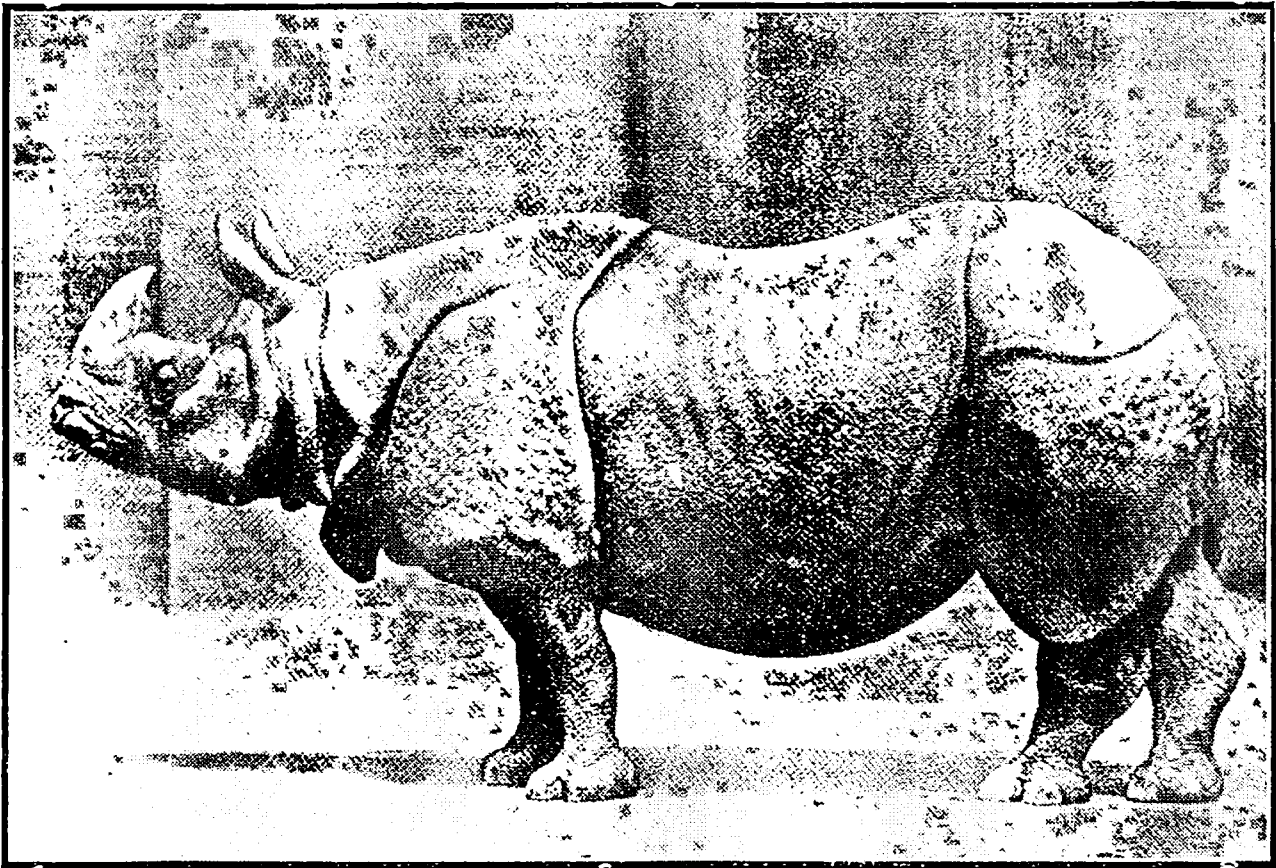
### *Annoying for the Ants*

On one occasion we found the spoor of a large White Rhino bull in the high bush below the Amatshemyama, and as it was heading in the direction we wished to take we followed it. The animal appeared to have been moving at a quick pace on the spoor of two cows, which however from the appearance of the tracks must have passed along several hours previously. Every

now and then they had walked close to one of the many antheps to be found in that locality, and the following bull, as he came up to these antheps had either ploughed the tops of them with his horn or scraped them with his feet; but as the furrows were deep we came to the conclusion that it had been done with the horn. In several places heaps of droppings from the cows had been nosed over by the bull itself. As the spoor eventually turned off in the wrong direction, so far as we were concerned, we left it, so I cannot say whether, had we continued to follow it, we should have been led to the cows.

### *Unprovoked Attacks*

The subject of attacks being made by unwounded animals is one which is of great interest, and calls for much diversity of opinion, but it must be conceded that only the testimony of those who have had wide experience of the animals in question can be of



THE INDIAN RHINOCEROS.—The single horn, heavy skin folds, and armour-plate appearance of the hide are the chief characteristics which distinguish him from his African cousin.



any real value. It is almost impossible to judge from the behaviour of an animal in one set of circumstances what another of the species might do in similar or other circumstances. Then there is the personal equation to be considered. What one man might call a "charge" another, probably nearer the truth, might consider merely a blind and almost unconscious rush in the direction of the person concerned. In the writer's extensive experience in different parts of Africa and with all classes of game animals he can recall but very few cases of unwounded animals charging deliberately. It has happened to him most frequently with elephant cows, with Black rhinoceros next, and then lionesses. Only once has a buffalo been the attacker. It will be noted that in the cases of both elephant and lionesses it has been the "female of the species" that has cut up rough, and therein is surely to be found an excuse for the attacks—they were made to protect their young from fancied danger.

Attacks made in these circumstances do not, in the writer's opinion, at all

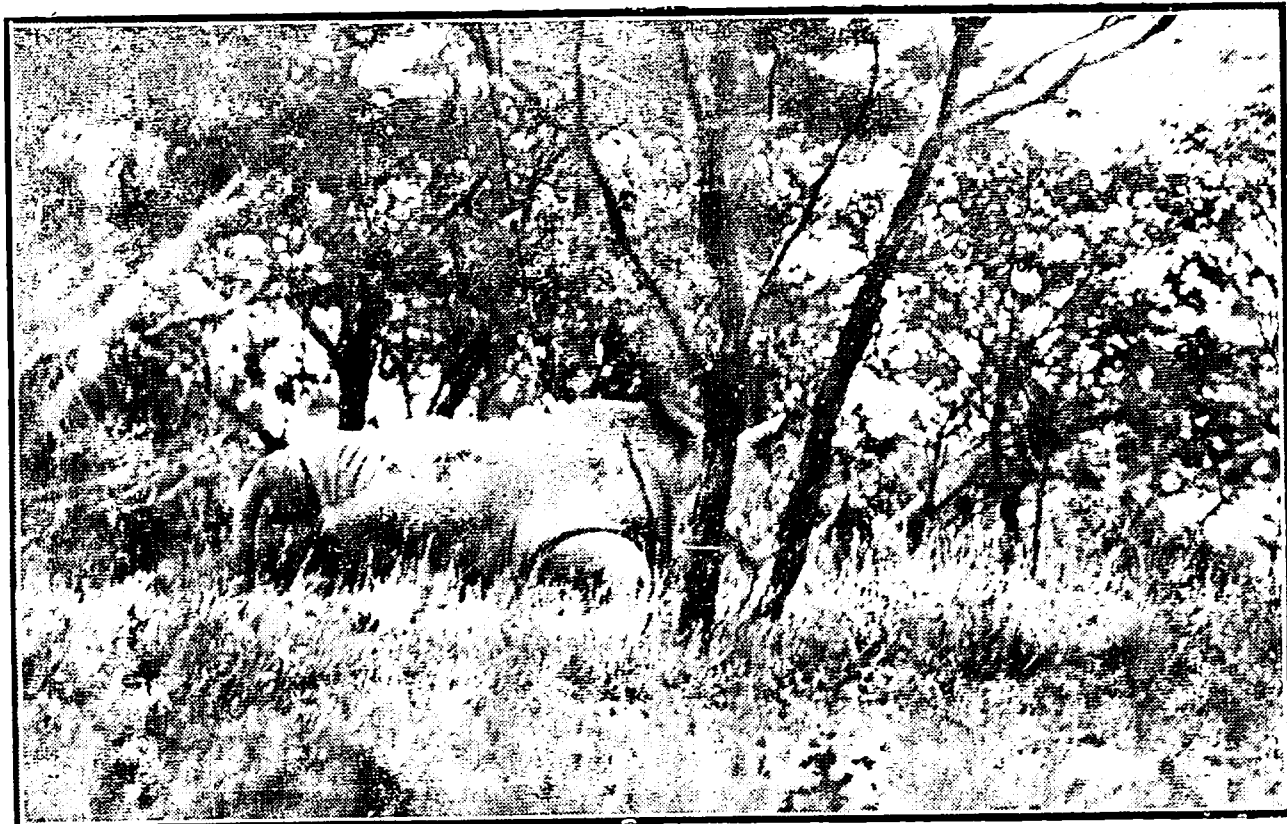
indicate an inherently savage nature. To connect so obviously inoffensive an animal as the White Rhinoceros with unprovoked attacks must seem somewhat absurd, and although I have once been attacked by a White Rhino bull which had not been fired at, yet I must admit that he had been badly aggravated, and moreover had quite recently been severely cut over the flank by, it must be supposed, another rhino.

### *David and Goliath*

It happened thuswise. I had been authorised to secure a male White Rhinoceros for Museum purposes, and one day met this particular individual. It being my wish to secure a photograph of the beast I proceeded to attack him with a most unsuitable weapon, a silly little vest pocket camera, which necessitated an approach to not more than about 15 or 18 paces if I wished to get the animal any size on the plate. For over half an hour I persistently followed him. He would run 100 yards or so then stand, and each time he pulled up would be aware of the camera-fiend close on his

heels. But he never stood for a sufficient length of time to permit me, puffing from the exertion, to get the camera steady on him.

As a matter of fact, the behaviour of the animal should have carried a warning, and doubtless would have done if I had had more experience of them than I had at the time. After the first bolt one may hope to come up with them, perhaps twice, but never again, whereas this animal stood at least eight or ten times. But at last he made off across a stretch of open ground at a pace which suggested that he was off for good and all. By this time my four or five attendant natives, one of whom carried my rifle, had been instructed not to follow so closely, but to keep well back, as it seemed likely that their near presence was causing the animal to break away so quickly each time. Having crossed the open space, over which I followed as fast as possible, he suddenly swung off to



THE NOON-TIDE SIESTA.—A pair of white rhinoceros asleep, photographed by the author.



GROUP OF WHITE RHINOS, from the Lado enclave, shot during Theodore Roosevelt's African expedition, and now exhibited at the American National Museum.

the right and immediately entered a strip of thick bush beyond which I knew there was another open stretch, and where I thought it possible he might stand again. It was not till later that I found out that immediately after entering the bush he had pulled up and swung round facing me. I stupidly put on a spurt as he entered the bush, but when about 20 yards from the edge of it I got a bad shock when I again sighted the beast, and not the tail end of him either. Simultaneously he made a furious rush from the bush straight at me. There was not a tree within reach, all I could do was to jump behind a small—very small—knoll from the top of which a skeleton bush grew.

### *A Narrow Squeak*

The beast did not take many seconds to cover the intervening distance;

three or four seconds at the outside. No doubt he was hazily conscious of the fact that the camera man who had been leading him such a dance was somewhere in the vicinity of the bush-crowned hillock, but exactly where he did not know, so thought the best thing to be done was to tilt at the hillock, en masse. I saw the front horn thrust forward and driven with the whole force of the mighty bulk behind it into the ground under the skeleton bush, and next moment there was a violent upheaval. Tree, roots and half a Sahara of sand and earth went skyward, and then fell in a shower over me, the camera being put entirely out of action for the rest of the day on account of the sand and dirt which got into it. The rhino did not turn but held on his plunging course, no doubt in the full belief that he had obliterated the pesky camera man.

It was at the moment that he thrust forward his horn that I noted two things, that the tip of the horn was slightly broken, and that he had the wound in the side; these points enabled me to recognise the animal again some days later, when not having found a larger specimen I decided to shoot this one for the Museum. There can be no doubt that the wound he had received when fighting, and the badgering to which he had been subjected were the sole cause of his apparent savagery, and it would be manifestly unfair to quote this as a case of an unwounded White Rhino attacking on account of a naturally savage disposition.

As with all wild creatures the maternal instinct in the parent is likely to arouse a ferocity which ordinarily is quite foreign to its nature, and it is certain that when a cow is running with a small calf she should always



AT CLOSE QUARTERS.—An unusually fine specimen of a female White Rhino photographed by the author at very close range.

be approached with the utmost caution and preparedness for eventualities. Another point should be stressed, and that is that an official in a Game Reserve has no authority whatsoever to shoot game therein, unless of course his life is endangered by any animal attacking him with which he has not interfered; therefore it is that I rarely carried my rifle at all, as I realised that if I wished to photograph an animal and to disturb it by a close approach it was my own lookout entirely, and there would be no excuse at all for shooting it if it attacked.

### *Making "Movies"*

The following is an amusing incident which occurred only last year, and serves to indicate the risk of too closely approaching a cow rhinoceros with a small calf at heel. I was out in the Reserve with a couple of native game-guards to try and secure a few feet of film of White Rhino with my kinematograph camera.

Rather late in the afternoon we came upon a little party of them, consisting of a bull about three-quarters grown, a large cow with a fine horn and a tiny calf. They were feeding in a small hollow high up on a bushy ridge, and a fairly dense little thicket growing round the base of two large trees offered a chance of approach to about 20 or 25 yards from the feeding animals. We quickly gained the shelter of this, unseen by the rhino, and telling the men to remain hidden in it I crept out into the open with the "movie" camera to a spot which we subsequently ascertained was exactly 19 yards from the animals. Resting on one knee I soon had the camera motor running, but the humming sound was instantly detected by the two adults,—the calf ran close to the mother, who, with the bull swung round directly facing me and thus stood, immovable, save for the twitching of the flexible ears.

### *Vehement Objections*

Not yet being a "movie" camera expert, it seemed merely waste of good film to keep it running on stationary objects, so I stopped it. For fully five minutes or more there was not a move out of the rhino, but at last the cow decided upon somewhat closer investigation, and walked forward in my direction; out of the corner of my eye I could see my men suggestively fingering their rifles, as I released the catch, and started the motor humming again. As the cow advanced at a very slow pace, the bull also began to move.

Then it all happened in a flash. The cow had stopped at some 15 paces from me, and the calf which had been a few yards behind the mother rushed up to her suddenly when instantly all three of them bore down full tilt upon the harmless camera man. He "stuck it" to the last moment, keeping the motor running all the time, then dived



ON THE ALERT.—A white rhinoceros bull wondering where the danger lies, photographed by the author.

MUSEUM  
PRETORIA

into the friendly shelter of the little bush. The bull passed me so closely that it could have been touched with the outstretched hand, the calf I lost sight of, but the cow which at first had headed straight for me when I was in the open, swerved to the left as I gained the thicket and dashed into it herself, evidently conscious that I was inside. But she had reckoned without the two large trees, behind which we stood, and which grew with their bases close together, and ran up, with slightly diverging trunks, for a considerable height. We knew, though the rhino did not, that she could not even get her head between the trunks, still less reach us behind them, but the great anterior horn passed through, and at once one of the men sprang up and caught a branch overhead while he furiously kicked at the rhino's head, shouting "Voetsak 'mkombe, voetsak." There is nothing in the telling of it, but it was indescribably comical to witness and I have since invariably called that native "Voetsak 'mkombe!" As for the old cow she must have felt the blow to her amour propre severely, for she refused to have any further dealings with such ill-mannered folk as ourselves, and rushed off snorting and blowing furiously.

When wounded the White Rhino might be expected to attack, but even in these circumstances I imagine that it very rarely happens, though I admit that I have not had sufficient experience of them to warrant making a definite pronouncement on this point. However the following circumstances are mentioned for what they are worth, and the reader is left to draw his own conclusions.

### *Hardly Heroic*

Some few years ago the notorious H. A. Snow obtained permission to shoot a White Rhino in the Mfolozi Reserve, and he obtained the assistance of Mr. E. D. Lightening, the Game Ranger, who accompanied him. I cannot just now recollect all the particulars of what happened, but at all events a large cow was wounded and I believe she attacked. Snow, who could talk

much but do little, completely lost his head (he could only keep it apparently when riding down wounded animals in a motor car!) and pulled off both barrels of a double rifle into the ground at his feet. An awkward situation was only avoided by the usual coolness and accurate shooting of Mr. Lightening who promptly fired and killed the animal.

The following incident serves to indicate what the writer believes to be the case, that a wounded White Rhino may be expected to charge if it suddenly sees its enemy at quite close quarters. I had wounded a White Rhinoceros in very thick bush, and followed it up closely. It ran into a deep dry donga with me following about a dozen yards behind it, unable, owing to the narrowness of the donga, to get out to one side of the animal to give it another shot. It finally left the donga by a game track, climbing out of the steep bank and as it topped the latter getting out of my sight. But I quickly followed up, taking the blood spoor up a shallow stony depression in the ground, at the head of which was a thick clump of trees and bush.

With my eyes on the spoor I came to within a few feet of this bush and at once caught the sound of rustling leaves. Quickly as I looked up, the animal was already in its stride. Stepping backward involuntarily a pace or two I slipped on a round stone, missed my gears, and fell full length backwards, the rifle flying yards away. I was practically under the enraged animal's nose, and it would certainly have been the last White Rhino I should have had any knowledge of but for the promptitude and good shooting of one of my men, who unknown to me had followed closely in my tracks. As the rhino broke cover he sprang up on to a large anthep at the side of the depression into which I had fallen, and shot the rhino in the head, the lowered position of which and the height advantage given by the ant-

heap enabling him to put the bullet into the brain.

### *Not Ferocious*

It may be justly claimed that there is nothing in the incidents above related which suggest that they are incompatible with the character for inoffensiveness which the White Rhinoceros has always borne. Under similar conditions elephants, black rhino, buffalo, lion, leopard and even inyala and sable antelope would have acted in much the same manner, but perhaps with this difference, that some of the foregoing would have turned upon their enemy if they missed them at the first attack.

There is no earthly reason why every resident in Natal, young and old alike, should not, if they wish it, and opportunity offers, personally visit the Reserve and view these huge creatures in their wild state. Certainly it is not on account of any fancied attendant risk that anyone need deprive himself of the pleasure.

### *A Priceless Heritage*

And now, what is to be the future of these most interesting and magnificent creatures? Is shooting of other game to be carried on in that Reserve, at the bidding of a disgruntled few, to the constant annoyance of the White Rhinoceros which only ask to be left in peace, till, bewildered and flustered, panic is established amongst them and in impetuous and blind fear of their lives they scatter all over the country to fall victims to the many gunners (not sportsmen!) who would only be too ready to put forward the lying plea of "self-defence," and to the crazy passion for slaughter inherent in the natives? Will Natal take anything like that "lying down?" I think not. These animals are a priceless heritage and Natal will surely prove worthy of her ownership of them.