

By the same Author

DOCTOR JIMEK I PRESUME

B.4.23



No Room For Wild Animals

DR BERNHARD GRZIMEK

With
20 photographs
and
3 maps



THAMES AND HUDSON

LONDON

1956

Original Kein platz für wilde Tiere.
Translated R.H. Stevens

xi, 250

Kingdoms of Ruanda and Urundi, on Lake Kiwu and to the north of Lake Tanganyika, which had formed part of German East Africa. The ruling class in these territories are the Watussi, a clan of very tall, dignified and dark-skinned men; they are obviously not Negroes, but Hamites, who, it is presumed, once emigrated from Egypt. These Watussi are famous for the rare cattle with enormous horns which they breed; these they seldom milk and never slaughter, but simply maintain in mighty herds (in 1950 they had 900,000 head of them!) because they regard an abundance of cattle as the hall-mark of human dignity and prosperity. These striking animals can be seen in a number of zoological gardens. Ruanda-Urundi with its 4.1 million inhabitants, of whom only 7,000 are Europeans, is one of the most densely populated territories in Africa (196 inhabitants to the square mile, approximately the same as France). The administration of this mandated territory is independent of that of the Congo. It is ruled by two native Mwami or Kings, both very prosperous and civilized in European fashion, who reside in the two towns of Kigali and Kitega.

CHAPTER VI

White and Black Rhinoceroses

Thunder and lightning and torrents of rain from all directions—in short, a real tropical storm. We sat in the driving cab of our truck, our knees tucked well in to avoid the drips from innumerable leaks, and listened anxiously to the rhythm of the engine. It was already missing on one cylinder and was pulling much more sluggishly on the up-gradients. The self-starter had ceased to function, and that morning twelve men had with difficulty pushed us into motion. For eight hours we had not dared to stop the engine. Again and again we had found the road in front of us transformed into a long lake, whose depth we could not gauge but into which we had plunged with the courage of desperation. Nor had we dared to drive slowly, for had we done so, we should certainly have been bogged down in the thick, red slime. Our speed sent the water flying in giant fountains from our wheels on both sides; but we didn't care. "Keep moving!" was our watchword, for once we stopped we knew it would mean spending the night where we were, in the torrential rain. At all costs we had to reach Watsa, which possessed the only workshop for miles around. Just as I was picturing in my mind's eye what would happen to us if we overturned again, the truck swerved violently to the right and went into a bad skid, which Michael succeeded at the last moment in rectifying by bringing the vehicle to a halt.

We breathed a sigh of relief—and then I was suddenly struck by the utter silence that surrounded us. Save for the hissing of the rain which poured in sheets from the clouds, not a sound was to be heard. Then I realized what had happened; Michael had applied the brakes so fiercely that he had stalled the engine! There was now nothing for it but to get out into the swirling waters and push. Our boy, Hubert, and I pushed for all we were worth, and at last the truck began to move; even so, we would never have managed it had it not been for the lucky fact that the road began to slope gently downwards at this point. Soaked to the skin, covered in red slush up to the waist but delighted to hear once more the hum of the engine, I crawled back into my seat.

When, just as we were setting out on this journey of ours, I had stuffed an ordinary thermometer into my bag, Michael had shaken his head. But now I could at least console myself with the thought that we were quite justified in shivering—the temperature was 68° F. and later in the night it went down to 64.5° F. We felt frozen to the marrow, even though we hastily got out our pull-overs—and how we wished we'd had long pants to go with them! (Two days previously, Michael had refused to get into a bath because, he said, the water was "ice-cold"; when I took the temperature of the water I found it was 88° F! I don't know why, but in Africa of all places I acquire a preference for really boiling hot baths.)

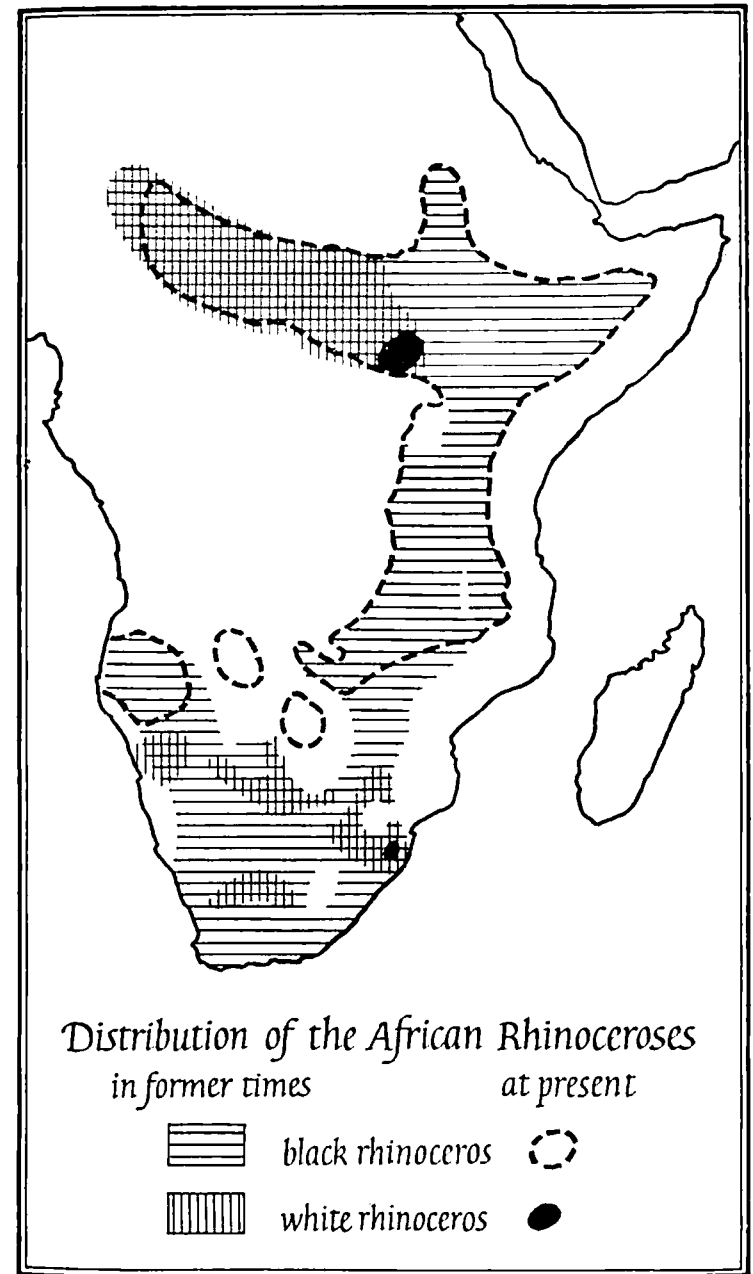
Watsa, if you please, boasted even of a telegraph office. I dictated a telegram addressed to Frankfurt/Main, which the native postmaster immediately transcribed as Frankfurimain; and I began to wonder how much more phonetically African the name would become on its subsequent transmissions and whether, indeed, my message would ever reach the banks of the Main. It did, though. Somewhat

to my astonishment, our boy Hubert also sent a telegram—to his wife—or rather, to one of his four wives in Stanleyville. All he told her was that we had had "un accident". As our journey progressed, Hubert made a point of sending a telegram whenever I did so—and I regret to say that on several more occasions it was to report "un accident". Only later did I discover why he indulged in this somewhat costly form of correspondence. Hubert, you see, was illiterate, and that, of course, made letter-writing a problem. But the few words of a telegram could be dictated by word of mouth to the telegraphist, who would write them out for him on the appropriate form.

The man in the telegraph office was at first a little averse to disclosing whether, during the last few days, a telegram had been received which concerned me. But when I pushed towards him the word GRZIMEK, written in block capitals on a label, a glimmer of recollection seemed to light up his swarthy face. Such a tongue-twister of a name causes any amount of difficulty in Germany itself, let alone in Africa! The man bent down and began delving into his waste-paper basket; in due course he extracted a crumpled bit of paper, which he smoothed out on the wooden desk with his slender fingers. On it he had taken down the text of an incoming telegram from Brussels, before transcribing it on to the proper form. The telegram was addressed to the Curator of a very particular little plot of land in the heart of Africa, and it contained the news for which I had been hoping—instructions to the Administrator of the Garamba National Park to permit me to enter this strictly cordoned estate of some 2,000 square miles on the frontier between the Belgian Congo and the Sudan, the only place in the whole of the Congo where white rhinoceroses are to be found.

Do you know what a white rhinoceros is? After the elephant, it is the second biggest land animal in the world. It stands nearly 6 feet 6 inches at the shoulder—is quite appreciably taller, that is, than I am—is over 14 feet long and weighs 2 tons. As late as the last century it was to be found in large numbers all over South Africa and in Central Africa as well. Confident in their herculean strength, these giants had always been good-tempered and placid, and they had never had any reason to run away from any living creature. Consequently, to shoot them down was the easiest thing in the world—and shot down they were. At the last moment the South Africans created an animal sanctuary of some sixty-five square miles on the Umfolosi river in Zululand and not far from the Mozambique frontier, in which the few surviving white rhinoceroses have been able recently to increase their numbers. By 1952 the total had reached 600, of which 70 were calves. There are a further 20 in the Hluhluwe Reserve. Later, it was discovered that there were still some white rhinoceroses also in Central Africa, and particularly in the southern regions of the Sudan. Where the Sudan adjoins British Uganda there are a further 300 of them in a sanctuary, and in the Belgian Garamba Park, according to the latest estimate, about 500. Of this very peaceful species of animal, which in the days of our grandfathers lived in their hundreds of thousands all over Africa, there now remain 2,500 all told.

Everybody in the district was talking about an experience which M. Lefebvre, the Commandant of the Elephant Training Centre, had had one night a few weeks before on one of the main roads. He and his assistant were driving home in a car, when suddenly in the arc of their headlights they saw two white rhinoceroses standing on the edge of



the road. The Commandant immediately stopped the car, and even as he did so, the rhinos lowered their heads—a thing which they very seldom do. Fortunately, the car had powerful lights also at the rear, and all the startled driver could do, was to switch them on and retire at full speed in reverse. (He certainly would never have had time to turn the car round.) In this way, doing about twenty miles an hour he drew away from the animals without undue difficulty, though once or twice they caught up to within a couple of yards of the car. But when he thought they had given up the chase and he stopped and switched off the lights, the animals at once attacked again. In all, they pursued him for nearly four miles.

In our truck an incredible number of things came adrift, parts to whose presence or function one normally gives never a thought. The starter, for all practical purposes, had "had it", the distributor was broken beyond repair and a new one would have to be installed. To get a spare cylinder for an International was out of the question. The garage proprietor pointed to another truck of the same make; it had been standing in his workshops for four months, waiting for spare parts, which had been ordered by telegram and had not yet arrived. Our Greek friend in Wamba would certainly have whipped a cylinder out of this truck and popped it into ours in place of our faulty one—and would have charged us an enormous sum for the favour. But the present gentleman was only prepared to weld our cylinder for us, saying at once that it might hold out for a couple of thousand miles or more, but on the other hand, it might well go after a couple of hundred. In the event, both his estimates proved to be wrong. We had gone three miles, when the cylinder again broke in two.

As the necessary repairs would take some days, he hired

us an automobile complete with chauffeur. I was a little disturbed when I found myself required to sign a long document in French, in which, at his dictation, I undertook to make no claim against him, as owner of the vehicle, and further guaranteed to inform him of the exact day and hour of our return. If we failed to arrive at the specified time, the document continued, the owner would send out another vehicle to search for us. . . .

As was only to be expected, the good man was very contemptuous about our blue International and asserted that we had been done in the eye. His own vehicle, however, very quickly showed that it had some even more peculiar characteristics. Every time the native chauffeur turned the steering-wheel to the left, the horn blared—and went on doing so until he straightened out again. At first we found this rather amusing, but in the long run it became a bit of a bore. The driver did his best to sever this mysterious connexion between steering-wheel and horn, but without success. On the contrary, the only result of his efforts was that the horn took charge and started blaring continuously. In the end, he firmly disconnected the wire, and that was that. A little farther on, a native on a bicycle, whom we thus approached silently and without warning, was so taken aback, that he careered wildly down the bank and finished up with a sort of buck-dive over the handle-bars a good fifteen feet below—a spectacle over which Hubert and the native chauffeur laughed till they cried, notwithstanding the fact that the unfortunate man was hardly able to pick himself up again.

The cap of our petrol tank was missing, and a bung of paper had been rammed into the hole; but this did not prevent the chauffeur from smoking quite unconcernedly close beside it. When the exhaust pipe fell off, he searched

in vain for a bit of string or wire; then he opened the engine-hood, borrowed my penknife, calmly cut off a length from one of the many wires to be found in the vehicle's intestines and with it tied on the exhaust again. The missing sinew seemed to make no difference to the engine, which ran merrily on. I always suspected that there were any number of superfluous things in the innards of an automobile.

The road leading into the Garamba Park branches very unobtrusively off the main road and is not marked by any signpost. The curious are not encouraged to turn into this side road and drive the three miles to the Curator's house, a modern and spacious villa, which had been completed only two years earlier. The place, which will probably very soon be marked on the map, is called in the Asandeh dialect "Nagero", which means "Mother of the Gero-trees", large, leafy trees, which here cast their shadow over a spring. A fine building opposite the Curator's house contains a first-class museum, in which are kept stuffed specimens of all the animals to be found in the vicinity—birds, lizards, mice, hamsters—not, be it noted, for the edification of visitors, but for the information of the native game wardens. If verbal instructions are given to catch or observe a certain animal, mistakes frequently occur as to what creature is actually meant. But when the stuffed specimen is pointed out, there can be no question.

The Curator had already gone out into the Reserve by the time we arrived, but his native subordinates knew all about us and gave us a message telling us to follow him. So we crossed the Dungu river on a ferry, whose floats consisted of empty petrol drums—yet another use for these handy objects, which are absolutely indispensable adjuncts of building and construction work in Africa. Opened up,

they serve as roof covering or for any other purpose for which corrugated-iron sheeting is normally used; filled with cement, they form sections of thick columns; with hides stretched over their ends, they make excellent giant drums for summoning the native labourers. They make ovens, water containers, flower-buckets, pipes, bridges over road-side ditches and goodness knows what else besides.

In one direction the Garamba Park is seventy-five miles long, and for the first twenty-five miles one can drive along a well-defined track, for the Curator uses it at least once every day.

The native warden who was accompanying us laid his hand on my arm, and we pulled up gently. From the right, four giraffes came galloping towards us, curious to have a look at the vehicle. Fifty yards from us, they stopped and stared.

During the course of my life I have had all manner of experiences with animals. But at a moment like this, I am always constrained to hold my breath—it affects me as does the sound of the deep, sonorous chords of an organ. I glanced behind me out of the corner of my eye and there, standing in the long grass were a whole herd of hartebeest, those astonishing creatures with almost incredibly long heads and truly comical horns. They are the most inquisitive of all animals, and apparently they station sentries all around; consequently they run away much later than any other animal when one approaches them. Cautiously we advanced across the bumpy ground. In front of us twenty guinea-fowl, all complete with crest, trotted unconcernedly along. A wart-hog boar stood, tail erect, at the side of the road and eyed us for a long time before disappearing; a hundred yards farther on we came upon the sow in the middle of a half-grown family.

Wart-hogs look hideous only when one sees their curious heads close to. Looking at them here from some distance away, I was struck by their slim, up-standing bodies, reminiscent almost of the antelope.

Since they are classed as "destructive" animals and can therefore be shot in unlimited numbers nearly everywhere, and as in addition they move about by day, these wart-hogs are generally very shy; but one cannot always rely on their being so. A few years ago, a game warden in Uganda came upon a family of wart-hogs. The father and mother disappeared into the bush, but the children played possum where they were in the grass. The man picked up one of the young boars, which immediately began to struggle and squeak, whereupon the mother rushed snorting from her hide-out. The warden dropped the animal, and both parties took to their heels—the hog family in one direction and the warden in the other. . . . Our wart-hogs in the zoo cannot be described as friendly animals. While their keeper was on leave, his deputy tied long wires to the gates in order to be able to close them from outside. He then rather timidly poked into the cage with a piece of wood or a broom in an effort to drive the animals into their stall for the night. The wart-hogs, their little tails erect, repulsed all these attacks without any difficulty but with obvious relish. I was later very impressed, when the regular keeper came back, to see the way in which the old man walked into the cage as a matter of course, driving the animals before him with words of reproach and even adding point to his remarks with an occasional slap on the backside. . . .

In the distance elephants were to be seen. After half a dozen miles we had another surprise: a lion cub was sitting in the road, looking at us with astonishment. We stopped, and then about five yards away we discovered a lioness

with three more cubs. Greatly interested, they came almost up to the radiator of our automobile. I had hung my camera in readiness round my neck, and at once slipped out of the vehicle to try and get a rapid snap. But the lioness drew back and hid behind some small shrubs, and all I could see was an occasional eye or the tip of an ear. Father lion sat all this time some little way off and watched me with detached interest. It was only when I got back into the saloon that I realized how foolhardy I had been. When one is dealing with these great beasts day after day at home, and they have become so tame that they allow themselves to be stroked, one subconsciously thinks that one can deal with all of them in the same manner.

Deep in the park we met the Curator. To be the Director of a Zoo is certainly a fine job, but I am quite sure that no forest Curator would change places with me. He is all alone in his gigantic kingdom with 500 white rhinoceroses and 3,000 elephants. There are no hordes of sightseers running round, trying to stroke all the animals or give them lumps of sugar, asking irritatingly stupid questions and strewing the place everywhere with empty cigarette packets, and the litter left over from their picnics. A Curator is rather like an Archangel Gabriel, standing with flaming sword at the gates of his park and defending its peaceful inmates against all comers.

Towards us this Archangel was most friendly. He, at once drew my attention to a "cabinet de rhino" at the side of the road. At first I was not quite sure what he meant, but in this case "cabinet" simply meant a "convenience," and the whole phrase can be literally translated as a "rhino's latrine". The rhinoceros has the habit of defecating always in the same place and then of scattering his droppings with his horn. This almost certainly is his way of

staking a claim to his preserve and of warning any stranger that this particular bit of ground is already the property of another rhino.

The natives, as a matter of fact, have a different explanation. When God created the animals, they say, he gave the rhinoceros a needle and told him to sew on his own skin. The rhino, however, dropped the needle and lost it, and so with great difficulty and trouble he set to work with a thorn, through which he bored an eyelet. When this process was beginning to pall, it suddenly struck him that he might have swallowed the needle when he stuck it in his mouth for a moment while adjusting his skin for sewing. And that is why to this day he always turns over his droppings with his horn and searches anxiously for it.

White rhinoceroses had also passed along the motor track, and their footprints were beautifully clear; while, between these, curved lines had been scraped. So far no one has been able to find out what the rhino uses to make such scrapes, though it seems probable that he does it with his foot. One thing is quite certain—they are not made, as has often been asserted, with the horn; for this would necessitate holding the head bent downwards at a completely unnatural angle. I need hardly point out that the "white" rhinoceros is not, in fact, white, but of exactly the same grey as the "black" rhino. How it came to get this peculiar name will probably never be satisfactorily explained. It is possible that when the Boer, who originally coined the name, saw rhinoceroses for the first time, they were some that had been wallowing in light-coloured clay. A more appropriate name for the "black" rhinoceros would be the "sharp-mouthed rhinoceros", from the kind of prehensile finger which it has on its upper lip; for the "white" rhino I would suggest "the broad-mouthed rhinoceros".

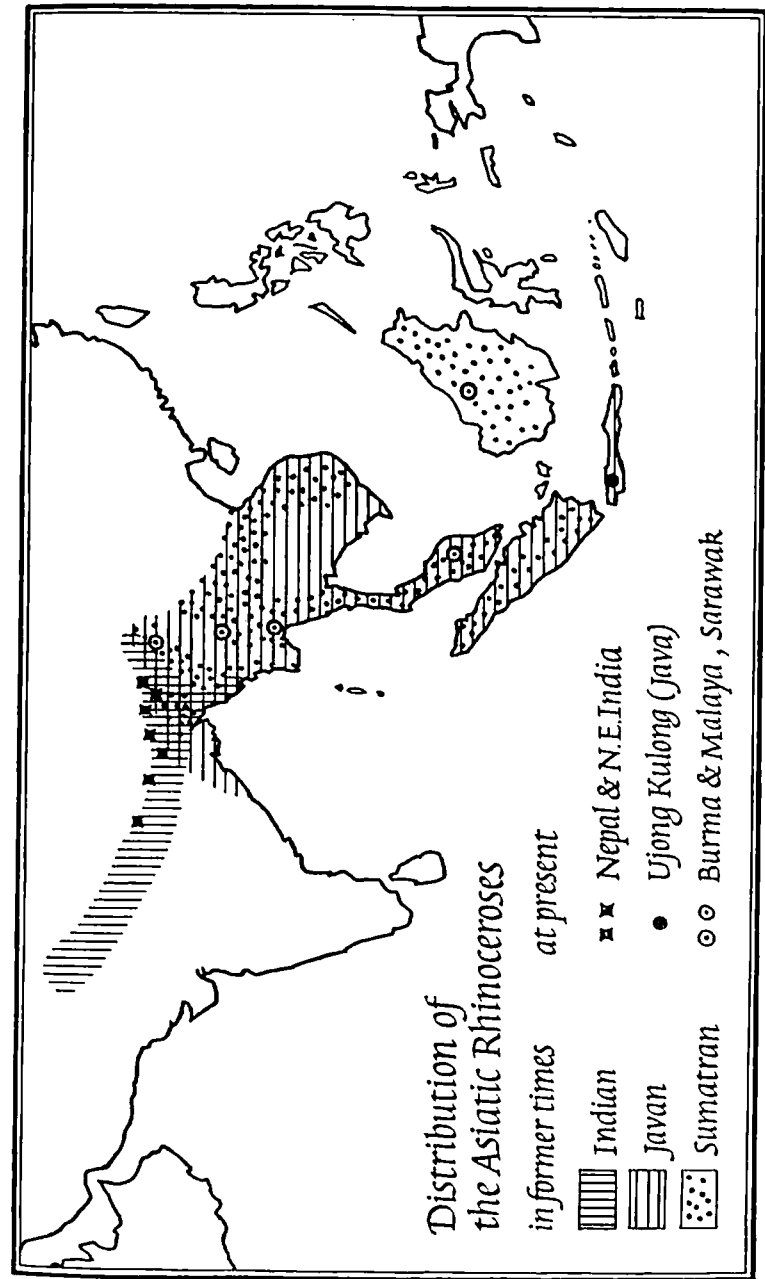
The Curator drew me to one side and asked me whether our native boy was an "intellectual". It was only then that I noticed how Hubert had dressed himself up for the occasion. In a snow-white shirt, new brown shoes, long brown trousers, a hat and dark spectacles, he was looking most elegant. He is a queer fellow. Shortly before this, he had bought himself a couple of tins of sardines; he would not, however, carry them himself, but gave them to the errand boy from the shop to carry for him. He was very superior in every way and was most generous in his tips to other natives. These tips consisted for the most part of things like the empty aluminium tins in which the Adox films are supplied. Everything of this kind which we threw away as useless he used carefully to retrieve, and it must be admitted that in outlying districts he made many a simple soul happy with his gifts. To call him an "intellectual", however, would be to exaggerate somewhat. When I asked him how old he was, he said rather vaguely: "About fifty—or about twenty", and he certainly had no idea how long he had been married.

The Curator employs thirty native game wardens, who have to range constantly over the whole huge area. Although they wander about the bush day after day with bare feet or at least bare-legged, during the last seven years not one of them has died as the result of snake-bite. Nor has any of them ever been attacked by a rhinoceros, for the animal is both easy to avoid and not dangerous at close quarters. On the other hand, three of these rangers had been killed and two severely injured by wild elephants. Particularly at this time of the year, in the rainy season when the grass grows several yards high, it is very easy for men and elephants to come upon each other suddenly and unexpectedly; and a startled elephant is very prone to attack

at once. If one is in a motor-vehicle, one simply accelerates and is quickly out of harm's way. But on foot there is no escaping.

Nothing worse can happen to any animal than to have some human superstition attached to it. In Switzerland, in spite of very strict Game Laws passed 400 years ago for its protection, the ibex has everywhere been exterminated. The quacks used to assert that ibex kidneys were very beneficial in cases of stones in the kidney—because the ibex were always running about among stones! Marmots were slaughtered because their fat was said to be a specific against tuberculosis, and the saiga—a species of antelope—was exterminated in Eastern Europe for some equally silly reason. Rhinoceros horn is said to possess some property which causes any and every poison to effervesce. Anyone, therefore, who fears that someone may poison him, has only to possess a beaker made of rhinoceros horn to be perfectly safe. Much more serious, however, is the fact that the Chinese lay great store by rhinoceros horn as an aphrodisiac, and ageing mandarins pare off slices of it and brew it in their tea. As a result of this nonsensical rubbish practically all the rhinoceroses in Asia have perished. It does not, however, behove us Europeans to smile condescendingly at such superstitions; a year or two back a great many people in Europe swore by lightly incubated "tropon eggs" as a cure for all forms of vomiting, while others still seek to diagnose their troubles by means of wishing-wands and crystal-gazing.

Rhinoceros horn is exported from Africa to Eastern Asia in large quantities, and some of the white hunters are not above slaughtering great numbers of the giant animals for the sake of the high price which Eastern superstition puts on their horns. Against the temptation of high prices



no Game Laws are of any use, and the best way of protecting the Asiatic species of rhinoceros, which is in particular danger, would be to initiate a reasoned campaign of explanation and expose the fatuousness of the superstition. Incidentally, the rhinoceros sheds its horn about every ten years; thereafter a new horn takes about a year to grow. Rhino horns do not, like those of, for example, a cow or a goat, form a horn sheath above a long strip of bone, but simply consist of a thickening of the hide and, to a certain extent, of hairs grown together and closely compacted. Thanks to the friendly character of our two rhinos in the Frankfurt Zoo, I was easily able to establish the fact that the horn is readily moveable at its base and is, indeed, a little loose.

In books on wild animal hunting, the rhinoceros is generally portrayed as a particularly dangerous beast. It is really quite disconcerting to note the childish vituperation which is hurled at an animal just because it will not tamely allow itself to be shot dead, but tries to turn the tables. It is then immediately dubbed "spiteful, cunning, a vile brute, stupid, evil" and the rest, as memoirs of big-game hunters show. If it followed the example of the deer and the stag and ran away, even when grievously wounded, then it would earn the epithet "noble wild animal".

Animals which for millions of years have had no cause to fear anyone, cannot be expected to alter their instincts within a hundred-odd years, simply because man in the meanwhile has invented firearms. Rhinos sleep very soundly, they have no reason to be particularly alert, and when they are disturbed, the short-sighted beasts snort loudly, stamp with their feet and make tentative sorties, with the object either of chasing away a potential enemy or of finding out who he is. Among writers on the subject

there are those who on paper are exceptionally valorous and assert that one should calmly allow the animal to charge and then step aside like a toreador. In actual fact, these sorties on the part of the rhino are not meant to be serious attacks at all. There is, for example, the case of a very famous old bull rhino of the Hluhluwe Reserve, which died in 1951 and which was called, of all names, Mathilda. He was the most photographed wild animal in the world, and when he got fed up with the hordes of tourists with their cameras, he used to charge towards them and put them to wild flight. Never once, from 1922 till his death, did he hurt a soul.

On the other hand, Oskar Koenig tells of another rhino which in the course of a few days overturned three cars and two trucks on one of the main roads. The animal used to stand four-square in the road and wait for its next victim. It also completely demolished two native huts and gravely wounded a man and his wife. But Koenig confessed to the indignant Curator—who in the meanwhile had shot the animal—that it was none other than the hunter himself who had wounded it in the hindquarters. The bull, it appears, had planted itself in the middle of the road, barring the way, and neither yells, bangs nor the ear-splitting din of crashing pots and pans could persuade it to move. So Koenig had at once given it "one to remember him by"—an action which he immediately regretted. The startled and indignant rhinoceros, not unnaturally, from then onwards dealt with this new, strange four-footed animal, which stank of petrol and had a small radiator, head and headlights for eyes, just as he would, quite justifiably, have dealt with some other rhinoceros which had slyly bitten his behind.

The rhinoceros is conservative and often does not take

kindly to innovations. One rhino payed regular visits to the garden of the Curator of the Hluhluwe Reserve, of all places, and there it systematically destroyed all the foreign plants, such as oleanders and dahlias, but left the indigenous plants untouched. Rhinos, too, will frequently dig up the stakes of a new fence, gouging them laboriously out of the earth with their horns and removing them often as much as fifty yards.

One day a large cow rhinoceros went up to the automobile of one of the game wardens, pushed its head under it and lifted the vehicle into the air—all this, quite obviously, without any evil intent, but just for fun. With praiseworthy courage and presence of mind the warden stepped out of the saloon and hit the rhino over the head with his belt, to which a pair of handcuffs was attached. Taken completely by surprise by this attack, the rhino drew back, and its retreat was further hastened when the warden proceeded to throw his belt at it, and the handcuffs became caught on its horn. Thus adorned, the animal was seen to gallop off quite a long way. The vehicle, incidentally, was quite undamaged.

To obtain one of the rare white rhinoceroses for a zoo had always been regarded as an impossibility. But in 1947 a young calf was found beside its dead mother, whose body it was defending with furious attacks against the vultures which were approaching nearer and nearer. The little creature was caught and taken to the Pretoria Zoo. There it became quite tame, and by great good fortune another orphaned broad-mouthed rhino calf of the appropriate sex was found soon afterwards. Transportation was no easy problem. To provide food for the young rhino on the journey, which for part of the way took them through bare and freezing-cold mountain terrain, the zoo people took

a domestic cow with them. The orphan was being brought from a district in which the cattle were badly diseased, and for that reason no cattle were ever permitted by the veterinary authorities to leave the area. The cow, therefore, had to be killed at the frontier.

Recently, a pair of white rhinoceroses were successfully brought from Africa to Europe and are now housed in the Antwerp Zoo. They did not come from the Belgian Congo, as one would have expected, but from the British Sudan. Including transportation charges, the two animals cost about £7,000. So far, rhinoceroses have only once been known to breed in a zoological garden; that was a few years ago, when a pair of "black" rhinos in the Brookfield Zoo in Chicago produced two offspring.