

HAUNTS OF THE INDIAN RHINOCEROS.

SIR,—I have just seen an article, "Oriental Big Game Notes," by Mr R. Lydekker in the *Field* of May 29 last. His statement that the *Fauna of British India* (Part II., page 473) is incorrect in the supposition that the *Rhinoceros unicornis* is not found in India west of the Teesta river is certainly true. This rhinoceros is found in the Nepal Terai, in Morang north of Purnea, on the Kosi, at Patharghatta, on the banks of the Bagmati north of Muzaffarpur, and, as stated by Mr Lydekker, it is even more numerous still further to the west, in the Chitwan and Naolpur valleys along the banks of the Gandak and the Rapti rivers.

In justice to his Highness the Maharaja of Nepal, and the other Nepalese sportsmen who took part in the great hunt referred to in the above article, I can, as an eye witness of what occurred, assure your readers that the account which Mr Lydekker has heard is entirely garbled and misleading. The ground that was shot over in January and February, 1907, was the tract originally preserved by the Nepal Government for the shooting which they had hoped to give his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales in February, 1906. This, unfortunately, had to be abandoned owing to a severe outbreak of cholera in the Maharaja's camp, which spread among the elephant drivers, and rendered all question of a successful undertaking that year an impossibility. The total number of rhinos bagged was twenty-eight (fourteen males and fourteen females), and in addition six rhino calves were caught.

The Maharaja's object in trying to catch young rhinos was not, as might be inferred from your correspondent, either to sell them or to start a new form of sport (*i.e.*, rhinoceros racing), but to turn the young ones down for breeding purposes in the Eastern Terai, where these animals had become scarce through a disease which broke out some years ago. This, however, he was unable to do, as all six calves proved to be males.

In spite of the numbers of rhino which were killed in January, 1907, the forests in Chitawan are still so full of them that no appreciable diminution in the stock has been made. The Maharaja was good enough to let me invite his Highness the Maharaja of Bikaner and another friend to shoot in February, 1908, in the Naolpur valley bordering on Chitawan. My friends had no difficulty within two days in securing the four rhino for which I had asked the Nepal Durbar to limit the permit.

The following extract of a letter, dated May 25, 1909, from Mr F. W. Gordon-Canning, of the Pursa Factory, Champaran, who was fishing in the Rapti this year, will also corroborate what I say:

My principal fun was going out on an elephant photographing rhinos. I hope some will come out well. I took a lot, and came as near as 15 yards. Once or twice we were in a tight place, but the rhinos did not make good their charge. They are simply in swarms; I counted twenty within a mile of my camp, and I did not go into the good ground. There were ten big ones in a small piece of grass not more than 5 acres in extent.

I do not know to what young stag from Sikkim Mr Lydekker refers, but the designation "Sikim stag" for the shou (*Cercus affinis*) is, as Hodgson pointed out, incorrect, for the shou does not appear south of the Brahmaputra watershed. If the young stag from Sikkim is *Cercus affinis*, the probability is that he came from Tibet *via* Sikkim, and was not reared in Sikkim.

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(British Resident in Nepal).

BIG GAME IN B.E. AFRICA AND N.E. RHODESIA.

SIR.—I read with interest an instructive article for people

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