



THE WORLD OF SCIENCE.

A PLEA FOR THE RHINOCEROS.

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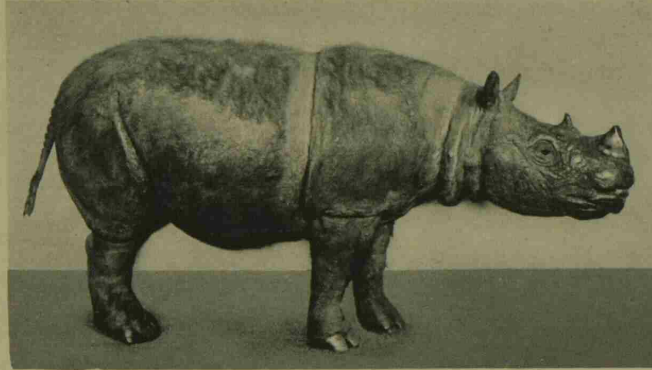
AS a member of the Society for the Preservation of the Wild Fauna of the Empire, my withers are constantly being wrung by the endless tale of needless slaughter of wild animals which for long years has been going on, and is still going on. More especially is this true of our larger "game-animals"—elephants, rhinos, antelopes, and so on. Recently I was asked to help in giving publicity to efforts which are being made to stem the alarming depletion of the game-animals of India, which has too long been regarded with indifference, or with futile laments. But now, at last, a society has been formed in the United Provinces to secure legislation, backed up by propagandist work. It is the only society of its kind in India, but it is devoutly hoped that its work and influence will rapidly spread. Much can be done if only the interest of the native princes can be aroused. The statement of the condition of affairs, as they now exist in India, in this regard, reveals the most urgent need of immediate action.

The existing close-season regulations, we are told, have become practically a dead letter; while the issue of licenses to all and sundry has been reckless, for these include, not merely ordinary fire-arms, but quick-firing and magazine rifles. A plea is urged for a revision of the present system of licensing, and an embargo on shooting from motor-cars over water-holes and salt-licks, and between the hours of sunset and sunrise. It is also proposed to reduce the abuses which now exist in regard to licenses to natives for the protection of crops. Here, as in Africa, this

shape and character and function is impossible. Think of the miraculous and imperceptible changes enacted before our very eyes, in watching the growth of the human body from the cradle to the grave.

under-fur, ranged up to, and even within, the Arctic Circle. Its bones are common in British Pleistocene deposits, and are still occasionally dredged up in the North Sea. They have also been found at Chatham, in Kent, and were no strangers to the thick forests which flourished where Fleet Street now stands. But, more than this, they had to compete with three other species, long since extinct, as remains from the Thames Valley prove to us.

What led to their disappearance from Europe we do not know, but probably Stone-Age man was largely responsible, for, like the savage hunters of Africa and America a hundred years ago, they slew far more than they needed on each of their hunting forays, a form of improvidence and greed not unknown to-day. To-day no more than five species of rhinoceros remain, and their continued existence hangs on the efforts of the Society I have mentioned to secure as large a measure of



1. A MOST INTERESTING ANIMAL WHICH HAS NOW BECOME ALMOST EXTINCT: THE SUMATRAN RHINOCEROS, THE SMALLEST AND MOST HAIRY OF THE FAMILY.

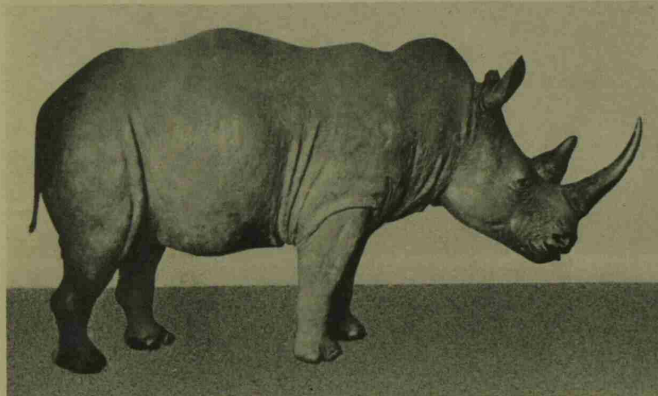
protection as is possible in the face of strenuous, and often surreptitious, opposition. The Indian rhinoceros is now limited to a small remnant in Assam, and possibly Siam, and there are some in Nepal. The Javan rhinoceros is now, perhaps, the rarest of the large mammals of the world. Once common in Malaya, it is now reduced to two or three survivors. A few may, perhaps, survive in Java. The Sumatran rhinoceros is the smallest of the Asiatic species, and has been wiped out in Sumatra, though a few may still exist in Borneo. The "black" rhinoceros of Africa once ranged from the Cape to the southern edge of the Sahara. It is now restricted, and in small numbers, to Tanganyika Territory, Kenya, and Northern Uganda. One of the game-wardens of Africa tells us that an area in Kenya of about 1600 square miles harboured several thousands: to-day they have entirely disappeared, partly by the guns of sportsmen, and partly by poaching. The "white" rhinoceros, the largest of all, ranged from Cape Colony to the Sudan, but it has been practically wiped out over most of its range by native hunters. The only survivors are a small colony of twenty-five to thirty in Zululand, a larger colony north of Lake Albert, and perhaps a few more in Sudan territory.

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2. THE "WHITE," OR "SQUARE-MOUTHED," RHINOCEROS OF AFRICA: THE LARGEST OF THE FAMILY, WHICH ONCE RANGED FROM THE CAPE TO SUDAN, BUT IS NOW CONFINED TO A SMALL GROUP OF TWENTY-FIVE OR THIRTY IN ZULULAND, A LARGER GROUP NEAR LAKE ALBERT, AND PERHAPS A FEW IN SUDANESE TERRITORY.

The great square muzzle of this rhinoceros is adjusted to grazing. In the "Black" African rhino the muzzle tapers, and the upper lip is more or less prehensile, recalling that of the tapers, and is used for browsing off leaves rather than grazing.

plea of protecting crops from the ravages of elephants and other large animals has been most grossly exploited for quite other ends, and chief among these stands commercial gain, either for hides or horns, or ivory. In some areas of the United Provinces, once carrying a large head of game, that game has been absolutely wiped out.

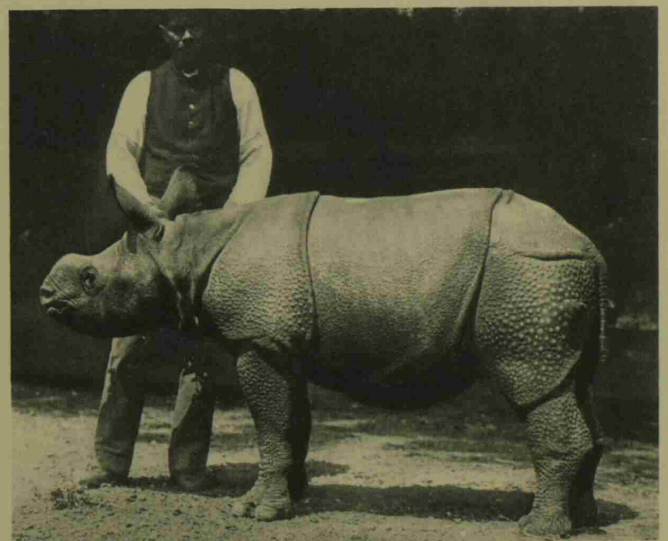
Vested interests and apathy, between them, render the task of those who take wider views inconceivably difficult, so much so that some are inclined to desist from their efforts with a feeling of helpless impotence. Yet even a measure of success is worth having, for each bit of ground won slows down this appalling waste of life. I use this term, "waste of life," not in a humanitarian, but in a far wider sense. These are not merely creatures of flesh and blood, standing in need of protection from those who, for one reason or another, desire to slay them. They are figures in the Pageant of Life which we cannot spare. And they are yet more than this. They have come to us out of the Past—a Past dating back for millions of years. We have no right to say here they shall end. On the contrary, it is our bounden duty to see that, so far as in us lies, they shall keep their places in this Pageant, as it marches forward into the Future.

For nowadays we have begun to realise that they are so many witnesses of that strange, imperceptible, but inexorable "seething and fermenting" which marks living from non-living bodies, so that fixity of

guides to life. And, in this regard, some types of animal are especially valuable, and these are those just in need of the most strenuous endeavours to save them from extinction—the great game-animals and the cetacea.

Of the former, I am specially interested, just now, in the rhinoceroses. Of the primitive, ancestral types, which show us the early stages of the rhinoceros in the making, I cannot now speak. Suffice it to say that, even before the advent of what we may call the "typical" rhinoceroses, their geographical range had already undergone curtailment, since they had disappeared from America. But in Africa, India, and Europe they evidently found congenial conditions, since they branched out into many species. Moreover, some species had become acclimatised to climatic conditions which none of their surviving relatives could stand. For the "woolly rhinoceros," clad in coarse hair and a woolly

A grave responsibility rests on us. We must show, not merely as much, but even more zeal in this than we do in the matter of guarding our ancient monuments. These are but empty shells of things that were. Living bodies are not only bodies in being, but "about to be." So long as these creatures are alive, they are sources of inspiration and



3. A YOUNG INDIAN RHINOCEROS: A SPECIES WHICH, IN SPITE OF BEING PROTECTED BY GAME LAWS AND CLOSE SEASONS, IS BEING RAPIDLY REDUCED IN NUMBERS.

When fully grown, the Indian rhino attains to a great size, standing 6 ft. high at the shoulder, but the horn does not exceed a length of 2 ft. The hide, which is of great thickness, is remarkable for the fact that it is thrown into a series of great shield-like plates, clearly seen in the photograph.