

Southern Africa. The monstrous white rhinoceros seems destined to stand second on the list of a lost fauna.¹

After coming down-country at Christmas 1890, my friend Mr. J. E. Yale and I photographed several

¹ Since writing the above, an interesting letter from Mr. Selous has appeared in the *Field*, a copy of which I annex :—

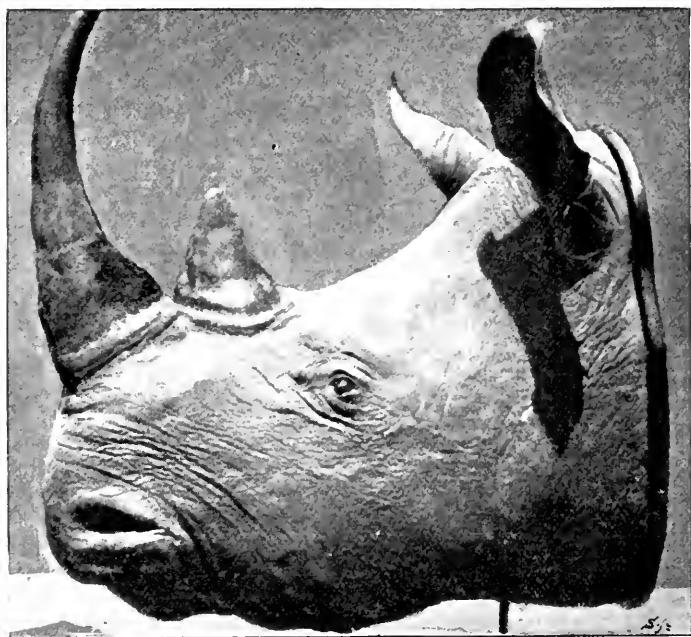
“AFRICAN RHINOCEROSES.

“SIR,—It may interest some of your readers (especially my friend Mr. H. A. Bryden) to know that the great square-mouthed, grass-eating rhinoceros (*R. sinus*) is not yet extinct. I have just heard from a reliable source that one of these animals (a female) has been killed lately about 100 miles N.W. of Salisbury, Mashunaland. This animal was one of six that were consorting together, and the two gentlemen who shot it—Messrs. Eyres and Coryndon—have, I believe, preserved the skin and skeleton. Whilst on this subject, I will take the opportunity of saying that I have never stated that the white rhinoceros was extinct, although I have often lately seen myself quoted as having done so. What I have said, and what I still say, is that this most interesting animal, the largest of terrestrial mammals after the elephant, is on the verge of extinction, its range being now confined to a very small tract of country in Northern Mashunaland.

“Had it not been for the occupation of this country by the British South Africa Company, I believe that the white rhinoceros would already be extinct; but that occupation having kept all native hunters from Matabeleland to the west of the Umniati River, has happily preserved the few white rhinoceroses still left alive from the constant persecution which, in less than twenty years, has utterly exterminated them in every other portion of South Central Africa. There may yet be ten or even twenty of these animals left, but certainly not more, I think, than the latter number. I have some evidence that one or two have again crossed the Umfuli River to the west, and are now living in the Linnaga, as the country is called between that river and the Umzweswe. They were very plentiful there in 1878 and 1880. I had always intended, after my term of service with the British South Africa Company was over, to make an attempt to secure a skin and skeleton of the white rhinoceros for our own magnificent national collection at Kensington, and left Salisbury last June for that purpose. Unfortunately a fall from my horse, whilst chasing an ostrich, bruised my leg, and laid me up for a time, and when I was all right again, my time was too short to allow of a journey into the rhinoceros country.

“Before closing this letter, I wish to call your attention to an article on African rhinoceroses, which appeared in the *Field* of July 2 last,

natural history specimens in the Cape Town Museum. Among these was the head of the last white rhinoceros brought down-country. This head belonged to an animal shot after much trouble and search by Mr. Selous in Mashonaland some ten years since; and



HEAD OF WHITE RHINOCEROS.

Shot by Mr. F. C. Selous in Mashonaland. From the Cape Town Museum.

it is undoubtedly the last (almost the only) specimen now left to us of an exceedingly rare and singular form. It is a thousand pities that no complete

from the pen of the eminent zoologist, Mr. R. Lydekker. In the course of his interesting and instructive letter, Mr. Lydekker says, *à propos* of the black rhinoceros (*R. bicornis*), 'Mr. Selous attributes to this species a gentle and unoffending disposition, but in this respect he is not in accord with Mr. Drummond and most other writers on African sport.' If Mr. Lydekker will refer to my book, he will find that he

skin of the entire animal has ever been brought to Europe.

The fore-horn is not so straight or so prolonged as in some specimens obtained in bygone years, when this animal wandered over nearly all South Africa: but on the whole the head is a good and typical one. Mr. Lydekker gives the extreme recorded length of such a horn as fifty-seven inches over the curve. This is an excellent record undoubtedly, and will now in all probability never be beaten. Yet in the old days when *Rhinoceros simus* abounded, and every chief's ambition was to possess a long kerrie or staff fashioned from the fore-horn of this beast, some horns of extraordinary measurement must have been in existence. There are still here and there in South Africa, in remote places, such kerries, but they are scarce, and the traders and hunters have had the pick of them. Probably at this day in England, in forgotten corners, some of these trophies are lying away in melancholy obscurity.

It has been the fashion to assume, since Cornwallis Harris's day, that the white rhinoceros was never found south of the Orange River. Undoubtedly in modern times (seventy or eighty years past) it was not; but there has always been a tradition, supported by Barrow and other travellers, that the mighty quadruped once wandered and fed in the open wastes

has entirely failed to convey the sense of my remarks upon the general character of the black rhinoceros. The passage to which I presume Mr. Lydekker refers reads as follows: 'What I wish to argue is, not that the black rhinoceros is a sweet-tempered animal, but that, at any rate, in the great majority of cases, he is by no means the surly, morose, and dangerous beast that some travellers would have one believe.' And to this opinion I still adhere.

F. C. SELOUS.

"CAPE TOWN, November 4." (1892.)