

brute with a single straight horn protruding from its forehead. And every school-boy has probably been told that there never was such a creature. Yet modern science not only destroys some old-time beliefs, but vindicates others, and shows many a grotesque fairy tale to have a basis of solid fact. Shakespeare repeated not a myth but truth in speaking of the poison which the toad distills. Midsummer madness and moon madness are recognized as facts by the latest science. And if no man ever saw in life the lind-worm and the griffin, we need only to look into a paleontological museum to find their prototypes.

So with the unicorn. For ages its only known habitat was on a coat of arms. True, the ancients had written of it as real; but were they not notorious liars? Herodotus, for example, with his story of a race of dwarfs in the region of the mountains of the moon, and near the source of the Nile, was the very prince of liars—until Mr. Stanley rediscovered those very dwarfs in that very region, and Emin Pasha sent some living specimens of them to Europe. The one-horned beast was similarly discredited, until an actual one-horned rhinoceros was found in India and Sumatra, when folk began to revise their syllabus of repudiated legends. Still the Asiatic rhinoceros was a poor sort of creature for such heroic fame, and it was not until the opening of the present century that the unicorn was fully identified with the uncouth pachyderm. At that time Burchell discovered, in the region of South Africa, between the Orange and Zambesi rivers, the stupendous creature known as the rhinoceros simus, or, in common phrase, the white or one-horned rhinoceros. This animal was not at all like the heraldic unicorn. But it was of heroic mold, and it wore on its forehead, or on its snout, one enormous horn, long, sharp and powerful. Huge and unwieldy as it was, it was swift of foot; in temper it was choleric; in valor it was fearless. Wherefore the classic legends and the mediæval heraldic designs stood at last approved. The unicorn was at last materialized. Nor did the remoteness of its habitat debar such identification. That very region was the ancient land of Ophir, familiar to King Solomon and to the Phœnician merchants. But at any rate the great white one-horned rhinoceros was shown by Burchell to be a reality; though, indeed, neither white, strictly speaking, nor one-horned. Its color was a dirty gray, almost verging on mouse color. And it had two horns, though one was so small as to be scarcely perceptible; a mere hump with a tuft of stout bristle, three or four inches high. The other real horn was from three to four feet long, thick and tufted about with bristles at the base, and curving and tapering gracefully to a hard, sharp point. This might have been a formidable weapon in a battle, though the rhinoceros usually dealt with his foes by trampling them under foot, and used the horn as a rod of guidance for its young.

The full grown white rhinoceros was nearly seven feet high at the shoulders, and from fourteen to sixteen feet long, and thus, in bulk, surpassed every modern quadruped except the elephant, which it almost rivalled. Its head was three or four feet long and held very low, its chin being normally only a few inches from the ground. Its truncated muzzle was a foot and a half broad, and designed to facilitate the cropping of grass, the sole food of the creature. The brain, placed just

The Last of The Unicorns. ...The White Rhinoceros.....Montreal Witness

A wonderful brute, which only within the present century emerged from the land of myth into that of scientific knowledge, has within the present year passed into the realm of history. Reports from South Africa declare that the last white rhinoceros has been killed, and that its skeleton, hide and horns are now being shipped to England to enrich the Natural History Museum. Thus the largest of modern quadrupeds, excepting the elephant, becomes extinct, along with the beautiful quagga, the dodo, the great auk, and other noteworthy members of the animal kingdom which have vanished from the world before the rapacity of man. The white rhinoceros demands some special obituary notice, partly because of his extraordinary physical characteristics, and partly because of the part he and his kin have played in legend and in heraldry. Every school-boy, as Macaulay would say, is familiar with the conventional figure of the unicorn, a sort of horse-shaped

beneath the big horn, was scarcely as large as that of a man. The eyes were very small, and so set as to have a remarkably limited range of vision. For this reason the animal, when either pursuing or pursued, invariably ran in a straight line, and thus was easily dodged. In habit the white rhinoceros was usually more dull, slow and wallowing than its black, two-horned kinsman. But, like the latter, it was singularly stubborn and perverse, and subject to sudden and causeless fits of the most violent fury. It would at times, for no conceivable reason, bar the passage of a road with the persistence of the Greeks at Thermopylæ; or bound from its lazy wallowing and pursue some inoffensive passer-by with the utmost manifestations of ferocious wrath. It was, however, little feared by the natives, who easily avoided its straightforward charges and drove their heavy assagais into its sides with deadly effect. The Zulus and Matabeles called it the Mohoohoo, and greatly prized its flesh for food, its hide for whips and shields, and above all its horn for the handle of the battle-ax. When killed, the giant creature did not fall upon its side, but sank down upon its knees and hands, doubling its short, thick legs beneath it. This giant unicorn was gregarious, and Burchell found it in vast droves all through the Bechuana country. Many years later Captain Harris found it still numerous, encountering scores in the course of a day's ride. But as the number of European hunters increased, the number of these great brutes decreased, and when firearms came into general use among the natives, the work of destruction went forward at a fearful pace. Of dull perception and sluggish habits, the white rhinoceros fell an easy prey to the Bechuanas and Matabeles, who slaughtered thousands merely for their horns and for their humps, which were a favorite article of food. A few years ago the animal was believed to be extinct. Then a group of six was discovered in Mashonaland. These have now all been killed, and there is no reason to suppose that a single specimen remains alive. No one who has not visited South Africa has ever seen a white rhinoceros, since no living specimen was ever taken out of that country for exhibition. No complete skeleton, or entire hide, even, has ever before found its way to Europe or America.