

The RHINOCEROS BICORNIS SOMALIENSIS. By H. A. Bryden.

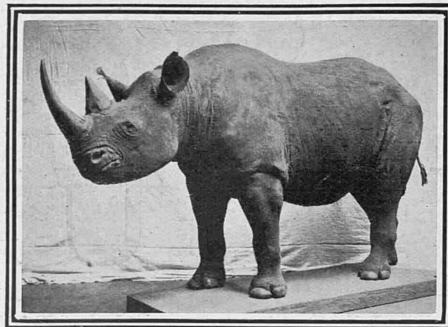
There has just been added to the fine collection of the British Museum at Cromwell Road an excellent specimen of the Somali rhinoceros, which has been set up in life-like fashion in Messrs. Rowland Ward's studios. This animal belongs to the species known to all hunters and sportsmen as the black rhinoceros (*rhinoceros bicornis*), and has all the well-known characteristics of that beast. Scientific naturalists have decided, however, in recent years that the Somali race, owing to its inferior size and certain skull characteristics, should be dignified by a title of its own, and it is now known in these circles as *rhinoceros bicornis somaliensis*.

In habits and general characteristics the Somali rhino differs not at all from its larger brethren of other parts of Africa. It is a browsing animal, feeding mainly on vegetation plucked from bushes and undergrowth. For this purpose it is furnished with the slightly prehensile upper lip, to be observed in the illustration.

The huge white rhinoceros (*r. simus*), now nearly extinct in South Africa, and only to be found in one other part of the continent, the Lado Enclave and a tract of neighbouring country, is, on the contrary, a grass feeder, and has no prehensile upper lip. It is sometimes for this reason known as the square-mouthed rhinoceros, or Burchell's rhinoceros, from the name of its earliest discoverer.

The black rhinoceros, in which group I include, of course, the Somali variety, is certainly one of the strangest beasts in the world, a creature belonging to ages now long remote, and ill-fitted, since Africa has been opened up, to maintain existence amid modern conditions. It is suspicious, solitary, morose, pugnacious, and extremely irritable. Possessed of such feeble eyesight that it will often pass within a few yards of a man who remains perfectly still, it has an extremely keen sense of smell, and often charges furiously in the direction of whatever it may suspect, utterly regardless of consequences. It has thus scattered many a South African Boer trek and many an East African caravan of carriers on *safari*. Simon Van der Stel, an old-time Dutch Governor of the Cape, furnishes the first instance on record of such a mishap. He was travelling in his coach through Piquetberg in the year 1685, on his way to Namaqualand, when a black rhinoceros got wind of the trek, charged the governor's coach, and easily overthrew it with its strong horn and immense bulk and strength. Van der Stel himself miraculously escaped injury. A large black rhinoceros stands about 5 ft. 5 in. at the shoulder and weighs well over a ton. The forehead, as may be seen, is strong and curved, the record

specimen attaining a length of 4 ft. 5½ in. This specimen, obtained in East Africa by Dr. C. H. Orman, is, however, of quite unusual length, and anything over 25 in. is nowadays considered a fair trophy. The reason for this is, of course, that immense numbers of black rhinoceroses have been shot during the last score or two of years, and that the best heads have been picked off. Much the same process has been going on in our highland deer forests, with the result that really fine antlers are now conspicuous by their absence. The rhinoceros is a beast of slow



The Somali Rhinoceros

Rowland Ward, Ltd.

Presented to the British Museum by the Rowland Ward Trustees

growth, and is probably not at his prime till he is twenty or thirty years old.

Many serious accidents have occurred in the chase of the black rhinoceros, fatal encounters have been not infrequent, and narrow escapes have been innumerable. Captain Stigand, the well-known sportsman, was charged and tossed a few years since by one of these animals, which caught him fairly in the chest and sent him high into the air. He was sorely wounded and had a truly marvellous escape. The Somali rhinoceros is no whit less irascible than its bigger brethren. Mr. C. V. A. Peel, hunting in that country some years back, was charged furiously by one of these animals, which caught his gun-bearer and threw him yards into the air. In this case also the man recovered from his wounds as it were by a miracle.

It is difficult to say why the black rhinoceros of Somaliland should be inferior in size to his congeners of other regions of Africa. Possibly the solution may be found in the fact that a good deal of the country is extraordinarily waterless; that the rhinoceroses of these districts have developed in the course of ages the habit of existing for long periods without drinking; and that they have somewhat declined in stature as a consequence. In other parts of Africa these and the white rhinoceros, although they often roam in very dry and desert country, drink usually once in a couple of days, even in time of drought. But according to the evidence of Captain C. W. Stockley of the King's African Rifles, contributed to *The Field* four or five years since, the Somali rhinoceros in certain places is able to exist, and does exist, for some months without drinking, but is able to procure a substitute for water in the shape of "dar," a kind of aloe having thick juicy leaves. A good many animals live without water in time of drought in Africa, among them the graffe, springbok, gemsbok, hartebeest, duiker, and steenbok, as well as the addax and various gazelles of North Africa. This thirst-resisting trait has no doubt been developed compulsorily during the course of many thousands of years.

ODDS AND ENDS OF VARIED INTEREST

The R.S.P.C.A.

Her Majesty the Queen and Her Majesty Queen Alexandra have graciously given their patronage to the matinee which is being organised by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in aid of the special fund for the sick and wounded horses of the British Army at the front at the St. James's Theatre on November 16, at which the following artists, among many other stars, have already promised to appear: Miss Percival Allen, Miss Louise Dale, Mr. Ben Davies, Mr. Neil Kenyon, Mr. Nelson Keys, Miss Violet Lorraine, Miss Jean Stirling Mackinlay, Mr. Cooper Mitchell, The Popinjays, Mr. Robert Radford, Miss Jeanette Steer, Mr. Harry Tate, Madame Gleeson White, and Mr. Bransby Williams.

Five o'Clock

Owing to the darkened conditions of the streets Harrods are now closing at five p.m. In arriving at this decision the directors have taken into consideration the convenience and safety of the public and of their assistants in allowing them to reach their homes at an earlier hour, and finally to afford as much assistance to the authorities as possible in getting all lights extinguished. They hope the public will support the new movement by shopping earlier. Harrods, as in many other things, again lead the way.

DELICIOUS FRENCH COFFEE.

W. L. C. L.

LADIES

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