

After Royal Game in Nepal: Rhinoceros-Shooting.

By G. M. DYOTT, F.R.G.S., Photographer of the Vernay-Faunthorpe Expedition. (See Illustrations on Pages 433-435.)

"WE will then go to Nepal in search of rhino," said Mr. Vernay. "Rhino?" I repeated. "Why, I never knew rhino were found in India." "Possibly not," came the cutting rejoinder; "but then, there are many things you don't know." For a moment I reflected on this unkind rebuff. There was no good arguing the point, as here was a flagrant example of my ignorance. My particular "job" on the Vernay-Faunthorpe Expedition was to take photographs, not to ask questions; still, my interest was aroused and needed satisfying, even at the risk of a further display of my appalling lack of knowledge: on this very large subject, so I continued unabashed in search of enlightenment.

This conversation took place months ago, and since then my education has advanced considerably. I have seen many of these wonderful animals, pursued them with cameras of all kinds, helped to skin them and scrape their bones, smelt them in the jungle, and even patted one on the head (he was dead)—in fact, I feel as if we had been on intimate terms for many years. Should anyone now make the remark that he thought rhino only lived in Africa, I should rejoice to think that there are still so many ignorant people in the world to keep me company.

There is very good reason why the great one-horned rhinoceros does not appear often in the limelight. He is a rare animal except in certain favoured localities, and within fifty years' time it is more than probable that he will be entirely extinct. In countries like Nepal, where he is still found, foreigners are not allowed unless by the very special permission of his Highness the Maharajah, and, even if a permit is granted to travel, permission to shoot even one rhino is very rarely given, this being a privilege which no amount of money can buy. For this and many other reasons I considered myself unusually fortunate to be attached to an expedition in which his Highness took a personal interest to the extent of allowing four specimens to be shot for scientific purposes.

The district visited was a secluded section of the great Gandak valley, difficult of access, and seldom, if ever, visited by foreigners—indeed, of foreigners there are not more than seven or eight in the whole country, all of whom are directly connected with the Government at Katmando, the capital.

From the Tribeni Canal-head our party travelled up the Gandak river in small boats as far as the Nepalese frontier. Here we were met by a convoy of pad elephants sent by the Maharajah to transport us over a steep ridge of wooded hills into the heart of the rhino country. Our final camping place was a pleasant spot called Koalwa, on the banks of the river, which we had once more encountered. Round about lay a fringe of jungle, a few open spaces cultivated by the industrious inhabitants, and in the distance a superb ridge of the Himalayas carved in bold outline against a chilly northern sky.

It is amongst such delightful surroundings that the great one-horned rhinoceros lives. He is larger than his African cousin, and even more ungainly. The first time I saw one cantering out of the jungle it was difficult to believe that I was viewing a real live animal, and not some grotesque idea of the imagination especially made to amuse the audience at a Christmas pantomime. The solitary horn on the end of the snout is very massive about the base, but of no great length—twelve inches would be considered very good for a male, whereas the female might have a slightly longer one. A length of twenty-two inches is recorded, but we were disappointed in not finding anything approaching this. Most of those we saw had been worn down and splintered till only an irregular excrescence remained on the end of the nose. Our best specimen had a horn that measured just over twelve inches, and he was an old male of very great size. The skin of the animal is of extraordinary thickness; great folds occur in the neck, and heavy creases

across the back near the shoulders; while on the flanks are regular shields of armour-plate to protect him. The surface of the skin is extremely rough, covered with lumps or tubercles, particularly pronounced on the legs and buttock. Not only is the skin thick, but it seems to have no flexibility. This was particularly apparent during skinning operations, a task that was more like pulling up planks from a dining-room floor than anything else I know of.

The recognised method of *shikar* (hunting) is with elephants. Trackers are sent out on foot very early in the morning, possibly two or three in company, and,

eminently satisfactory from every point of view, and, although we made use of the old *hathis* to ride to and fro from the chase, when we had approached the habitat of the particular animal we were after we took to our own feet.

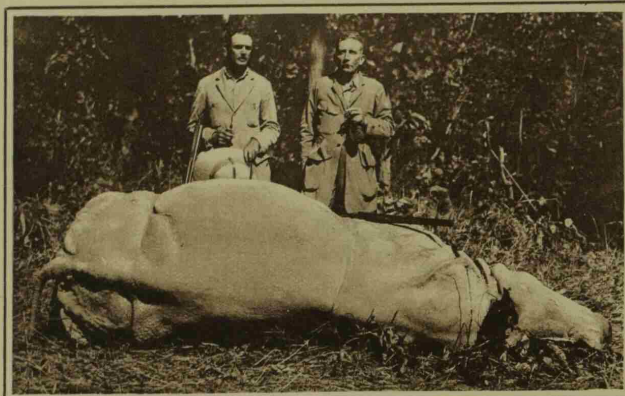
The rhino dearly loves a wallow: every evening he will roll about in dirty water and plaster himself with mud; then he comes out on to firm ground and browses to his heart's content for a large part of the night. His large three-toed track is easily followed up, but it is seldom necessary to do this, as one or more animals will live for a considerable time in a particular patch of jungle, through which they make regular tunnels in their passage to and fro. As a rule they lie up during the day, coming out to wallow about five or six o'clock, and feeding the rest of the night. On several occasions we tried beating the jungle with coolies. They were able to walk along the rhino paths quite easily, but a tall elephant with a howdah on his back was very much at a disadvantage in the high, thorny brush.

By reason of its defective eyesight one can approach very close to a rhino unobserved if care is taken to move up wind. On one memorable occasion we actually had a motion-picture camera as close as twenty-five yards to an old cow with her baby. There she stood for over half a minute, her ears moving back and forth, and a stupid look on her comic face as if uncertain what to do. One of the elephants was standing not far away, swaying nervously, and ready to bolt at a moment's notice. Mr. Vernay, who was in the howdah, had his rifle handy in case mamma should lose her temper and charge home; but she seemed to have no inclination to fight, and finally cantered off into the jungle with her infant at heel.

In shooting these colossal beasts it was extraordinary to note how instantaneously they succumb to a well-placed bullet in the neck or brain. Just one shot and all would be over; Mr. Rhino would collapse in a heap, stone-dead. They have the reputation of being able to carry away more lead than any other animal, providing they are not hit in a vital spot; but, be this as it may, a wounded animal can be very troublesome at times, to say nothing of a source of real danger; so that, quite apart from any humane motives, it behoves one to aim carefully with due regard to the creature's anatomy. Mr. Vernay's preference was the neck-shot with a .465 soft-nosed bullet; small-calibre weapons he looked upon with disfavour.

In Nepal rhino are considered royal game, and are strictly preserved; any unauthorised person killing one is fined a thousand rupees; if the offence is committed a second time the culprit pays for his foolishness with his life. All over the cultivated areas bordering on the jungle one sees *machans*, or observation posts, built on high poles, where continuous watch is kept at night to scare away marauding rhinos who come forth to feed on the crops. The natives suffer considerably from the raids of these large pachyderms, for, quite apart from the loss of anything that may be eaten, just to have one walk over a field in itself causes considerable havoc. Not only is a live rhino a source of much trouble and loss to the jungle folk, but a dead one has great monetary value in their eyes. After the skins and bones of the specimens we procured had been removed, the natives swarmed over what remained till there was not a vestige of anything left; ants could not have acted as better scavengers, since even the blood and refuse was carted away for the medicinal properties they are supposed to possess.

Under the circumstances, then, it can be well understood how the rhino cannot survive for long, and if they are to be saved from annihilation it can only be by the most rigorous protection possible.



"LARGER THAN HIS AFRICAN COUSIN AND EVEN MORE UNGAINLY": A HUGE ASIAN RHINOCEROS—WITH THE LEADERS OF THE EXPEDITION, MR. A. S. VERNAY (LEFT) AND COLONEL FAUNTHORPE.

if they are fortunate in coming up with a rhino, some of the party remain near by to watch whilst the remainder bear the news back to camp with all possible dispatch. The elephants now hasten to the spot, and the guns, mounted on howdahs, advance cautiously into the dense jungle. With luck a shot may be obtained; on the other hand, it may not, or—worse still—the elephants may be so unsteady that accurate shooting is out of the question. Elephants have a wholesome respect for rhino, as they have no



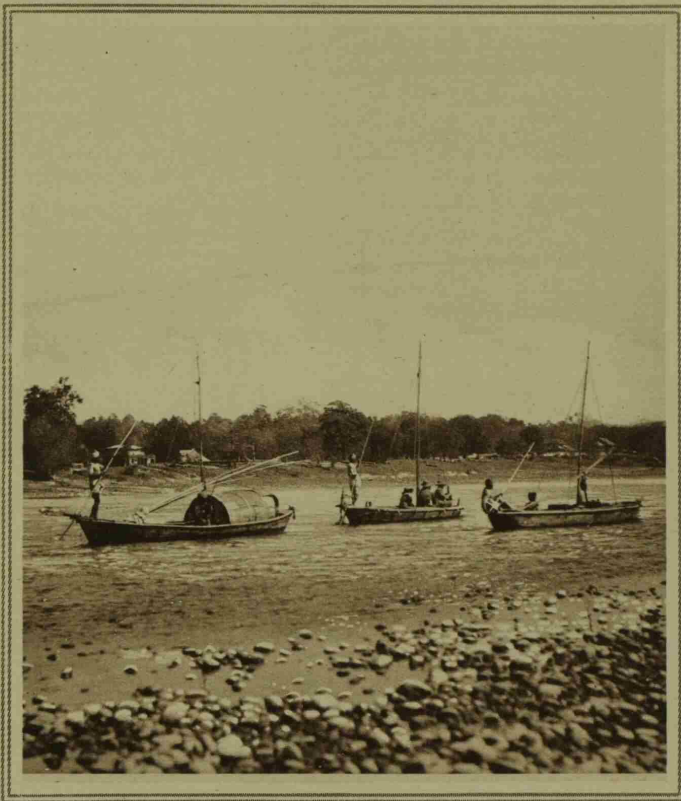
"GREAT FOLDS OCCUR IN THE NECK AND HEAVY CREASES ACROSS THE BACK NEAR THE SHOULDERS": THE GREAT ONE-HORNED RHINOCEROS OF THE NEPAL JUNGLE.

Photographs by Mr. G. M. Dyott, F.R.G.S.

means of protecting themselves from their mad onslaught, and a slit up the stomach from one of their tusches is not pleasant. This, then, is good reason for their not being staunch. They will generally stand still for a few seconds while taking in the situation, and so give you a chance to fire; but if you hesitate, off bolts your elephant with you on his back, and the chances of your remaining there for long are not very bright if the cover is at all thick overhead. So unsteady and nervous were our elephants in the first encounter that both Mr. Vernay and Colonel Faunthorpe decided it was better policy to stalk on foot, and so be sure of a steady aim. This proved

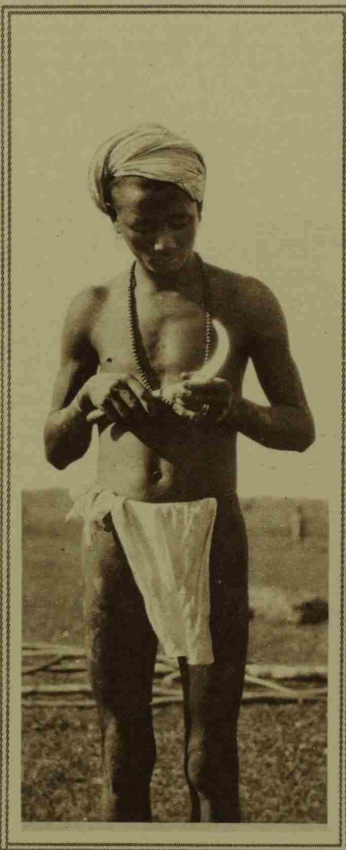
SPORT THAT MAKES ELEPHANTS NERVOUS: HUNTING ROYAL "RHINO."

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MR. G. M. DYOTT, F.R.G.S., OF THE VERNAY-FAUNTHORPE EXPEDITION.



ON THE WAY TO THE RHINOCEROS JUNGLES OF NEPAL: THE VERNAY-FAUNTHORPE PARTY TRAVELLING UP THE GANDAK RIVER IN NATIVE BOATS.

IN TYPICAL FOREST SCENERY BORDERING ON THE RHINO SWAMPS, WHERE POACHING MAY MEAN DEATH: A NATIVE OF NEPAL.



FINGERING HIS SICKLE-SHAPED KNIFE: A NEPALESE OF THE GANDAK VALLEY.

SURROUNDED BY GRAVE ELEPHANTS CONTEMPLATING WITH RELIEF THE CORPSE OF THEIR FORMIDABLE FOE: A SPLENDID MALE "RHINO."

Describing a rhinoceros hunt in Nepal, Mr. G. M. Dyott says (in his article on page 432): "Elephants have a wholesome respect for rhino, as they have no means of protecting themselves from their mad onslaught, and a slit up the stomach from one of their tusks is not pleasant. They will generally stand still for a few seconds while taking in the situation, and so give you a chance to fire, but if you should hesitate off bolts your elephant with you on his back, and the chances of your remaining there for long are not very bright if the cover is at all thick overhead. . . . A tall elephant with a howdah on his back was very much at a

disadvantage in the high thorny bush. . . . The district visited was a secluded section of the great Gandak Valley, difficult of access, and seldom, if ever, visited by foreigners. . . . From the Tribeni Canal-head our party travelled up the Gandak River in small boats as far as the Nepalese frontier. Here we were met by a convoy of pad elephants. . . . In Nepal rhino are considered royal game and are strictly preserved; any unauthorised person killing one is fined 1000 rupees; if the offence is committed a second time the culprit pays for his foolishness with his life." This expedition was approved and aided by the Maharajah.

ON THE TRACK OF THE NEPAL "RHINO": A THREE-TOED MONSTER.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MR. G. M. DYOTT, F.R.G.S., PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE VERNAY-FAUNTHORPE EXPEDITION.



"HIS LARGE THREE-TOED TRACK IS EASILY FOLLOWED UP, BUT IT IS SELDOM NECESSARY TO DO THIS": THE UNMISTAKABLE SPOOR OF A RHINOCEROS ON SOFT GROUND IN THE NEPALESE JUNGLE.

SHOWING THE THREE LARGE TOES ON EACH FOOT WHICH MAKE THE TRACKS SEEN IN THE UPPER PHOTOGRAPH: AN ENORMOUS SPECIMEN OF THE ONE-HORNED ASIATIC RHINOCEROS SHOT IN NEPAL.



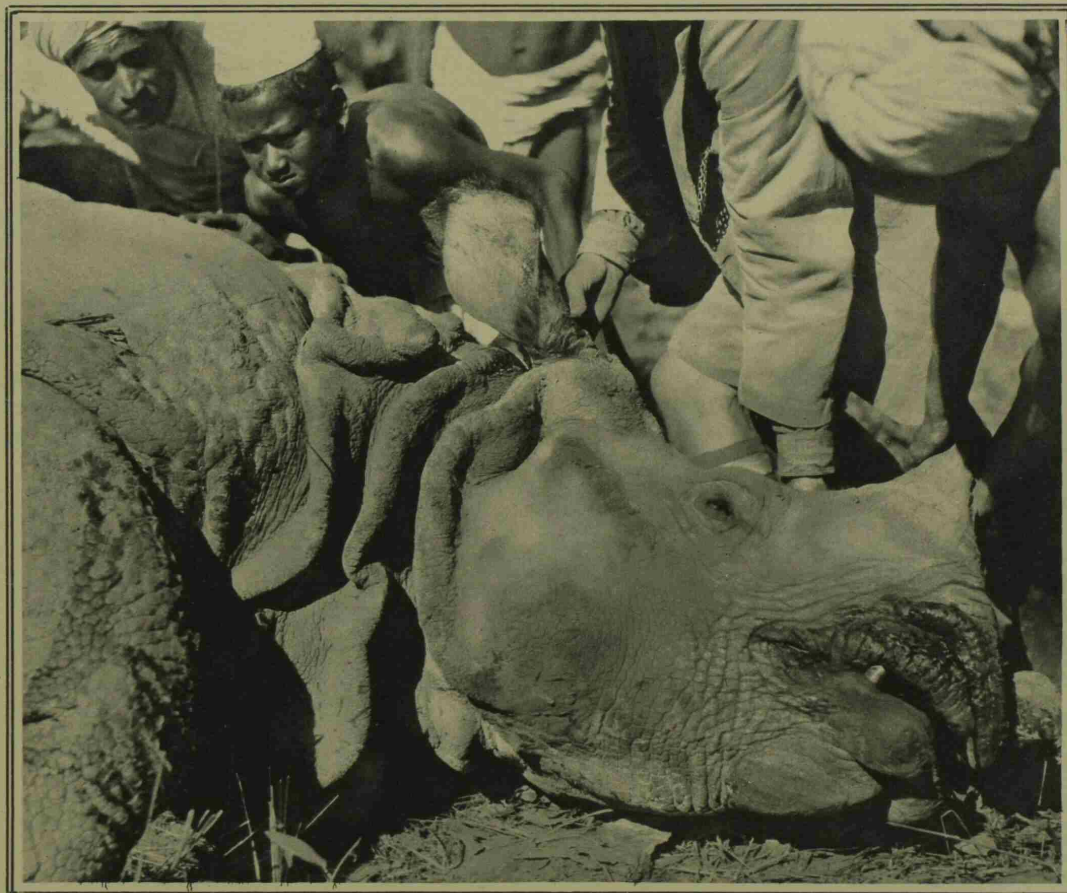
"There is very good reason," writes Mr. G. M. Dyott in his article on page 432, "why the great one-horned rhinoceros does not appear often in the limelight. He is a rare animal except in certain favoured localities, and within fifty years' time it is more than probable that he will be entirely extinct. In countries like Nepal, where he is still found, foreigners are not allowed unless by the very special permission of his Highness the Maharajah, and, even if a permit is granted to travel, permission to

shoot even one rhino is very rarely given." The Maharajah, however, took a personal interest in the Vernay-Faunthorpe Expedition, and allowed them to shoot four specimens for scientific purposes. Describing the rhino's habits, Mr. Dyott says: "His large, three-toed track is easily followed up, but it is seldom necessary to do this, as one or more animals will live for a considerable time in a particular patch of jungle, through which they make regular tunnels in passing to and fro."

HARD TO SKIN: THE NEPAL RHINOCEROS AND HIS HAUNTS.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MR. G. M. DVOTT, F.R.G.S., OF THE VERNAY-FAUNTHORPE EXPEDITION.

"THE RHINO DEARLY
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SHOWING THE ENORMOUS
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 BONES BEING EXTRACTED.

The single-horned Nepal rhinoceros, as Mr. Dyott mentions in his article on page 432, lives in swamps, in which he "dearly loves to wallow." The horn is thick at the base but comparatively short, usually about twelve inches in the male and slightly longer in the female. "Not only is the skin thick," writes Mr. Dyott, "but it seems to have no flexibility. This was particularly apparent during skinning operations, a task that was more like pulling up planks from a dining-room floor than anything else I know of. . . . In shooting these colossal beasts it was extraordinary to note how instantaneously they succumbed to a well-placed

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