

## Locusts Threaten Eastern Europe

*Entomology*

THE locust plague that has appeared clear across northern Africa, from Egypt almost to Gibraltar, and has extended into the Near East and the Balkan countries, is a distinct menace to the great wheat areas of eastern Europe but is not likely to make trouble in the countries with which American travelers are most familiar.

This is the kernel of the opinion of entomologists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, as given to Science Service. Locusts are more or less chronic in what might be called the drier cereal areas all over the world. The wheat and barley lands of northern Africa, Palestine, Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, and all the Black Sea basin, both in Europe and in Asia, have to contend with them every year. But some years are much worse than others, and the present outbreak may indicate 1930 as one of the bad ones.

The presence of swarms of the insects in Roumania is the first hint of big trouble, for Roumania is a major wheat country. If the locusts spread farther and reach Ukrainia and other parts of Russia, which are comparable with the western United States and Canada as wheat regions, the results might be disastrous. There have been no indications as yet of locusts in Russia, but the

real crisis will come a little later, when warm weather sets in.

The old-world locust is a large, long-winged grasshopper, that flies in swarms so vast as to darken the sun. When such a swarm settles on a field or orchard it often wipes out every trace of green leaf and stem in fifteen minutes or less. The devastation they can cause, and the terror they bring, have never been told more graphically than by the writer of the Book of Exodus, in chapter 10, verses 12 to 20. "There remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field" has been written many times since, and of many other lands besides Egypt.

The locusts of Europe, Asia and northern Africa are all members of one species, usually called the Moroccan locust. There is a short-winged locust, but it is considered by most entomologists to be simply a form or life-phase of the long-winged locust. During part of its life the swarm will travel by hopping and crawling along the ground. In this stage it can be fought by poisoned baits, by trenching and by various other mechanical and chemical means. But when the insects have grown their long wings and taken to the air, no method so far devised can avail to stop them.

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## Polish Rhinoceros

*Paleontology*

ONE of the most interesting of recent finds in paleontology has been the complete carcass of a Pleistocene rhinoceros, unearthed in an abandoned mine in the Starunia region in Poland. Skin, hair, muscles and all other tissues were well preserved, owing to the sealing up of the monster in a kind of oily earth, which kept out the micro-organisms of decay for many thousands of years.

Bringing the big body to the surface presented a considerable problem in mining engineering, for the shaft of the old mine was too small and its sides slippery and treacherous. The Polish Academy of Science borrowed a company of soldiers from the Army, and with their assistance enlarged the pit and finally hauled their bulky find to the top.

The carcass has been dissected and studied with the care that the great rarity of such a find merits. Its skin and skeleton will become permanent exhibits.

The SCIENCE NEWS-LETTER is indebted to Tytus Filipowicz, Polish Minister to the United States, for the photograph on the cover, showing Prof. Jan Stach, director of the physiographic museum of the Polish Academy of Science, measuring the massive skull.

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Shade trees are often "gassed" and even killed by illuminating gas from leaky pipes in the soil.

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