

A ONE-HORNED WHITE RHINOCEROS.

AMONG a collection of, mostly anthropological, photographs made in 1870 by M. Ernest Héritte, Consul General of France at the Cape of Good Hope, and presented in 1906 by Colonel A. G. Anson to the Natural History Museum, is one of a freshly killed white rhinoceros, which is of interest from two points of view. In the first place it is the only photograph of an entire specimen of the South African race of this species with a really fine front horn which has ever come under my observation; while, secondly, it is remarkable as representing a specimen with practically only a single horn. In the original album the photograph is labelled *Rhinocéros à une corne*, and although examination with a lens reveals the presence of a minute tubercle representing a second horn, the description is practically correct. The single (front) horn is about a yard in length. At least two of the older writers on African natural history refer to a native belief in the existence of single horned rhinoceroses. In 1838 Sir Andrew Smith, for instance, in his *Illustrations of the Zoology of South Africa* (vol. i., description of pl. i.), alludes to the existence of such a belief; but it is somewhat difficult to determine whether the accounts referred to are founded on fact or are of purely fictitious origin. Again, in 1848, a French writer, M. F. Fresnel, contributed a paper to the *Comptes Rendus* of the Paris Academy of Sciences (vol. xxvi., p. 281) entitled "Sur l'existence d'une espèce unicolore de rhinocéros dans la partie tropicale de l'Afrique." The reports alluded to in this communication relate to the Lake Chad district and the White Nile, but there is the same difficulty as in the last in deciding as to what value should be attached to them. If based on fact, they may refer to the northern race of the white rhinoceros, of which, as pointed out by Sir Andrew Smith in the work cited, two horns, now in the British Museum, were brought from the neighbourhood of Lake Chad by Messrs Denham and Clapperton.

In regard to the variation in the length of the posterior horn in specimens of the white rhinoceros which came under his own observation, Mr Selous states (*A Hunter's Wanderings in South Africa*, p. 194) that this appendage may range from a horn of a couple of feet in length to a mere lump two or three inches high. The animal represented in M. Héritte's photograph may accordingly be regarded as representing the extreme stage in the degeneration of the second horn, and is in no wise entitled to recognition as a distinct race, still less a species.

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