

THE WILD BEASTS OF THE WORLD

BY

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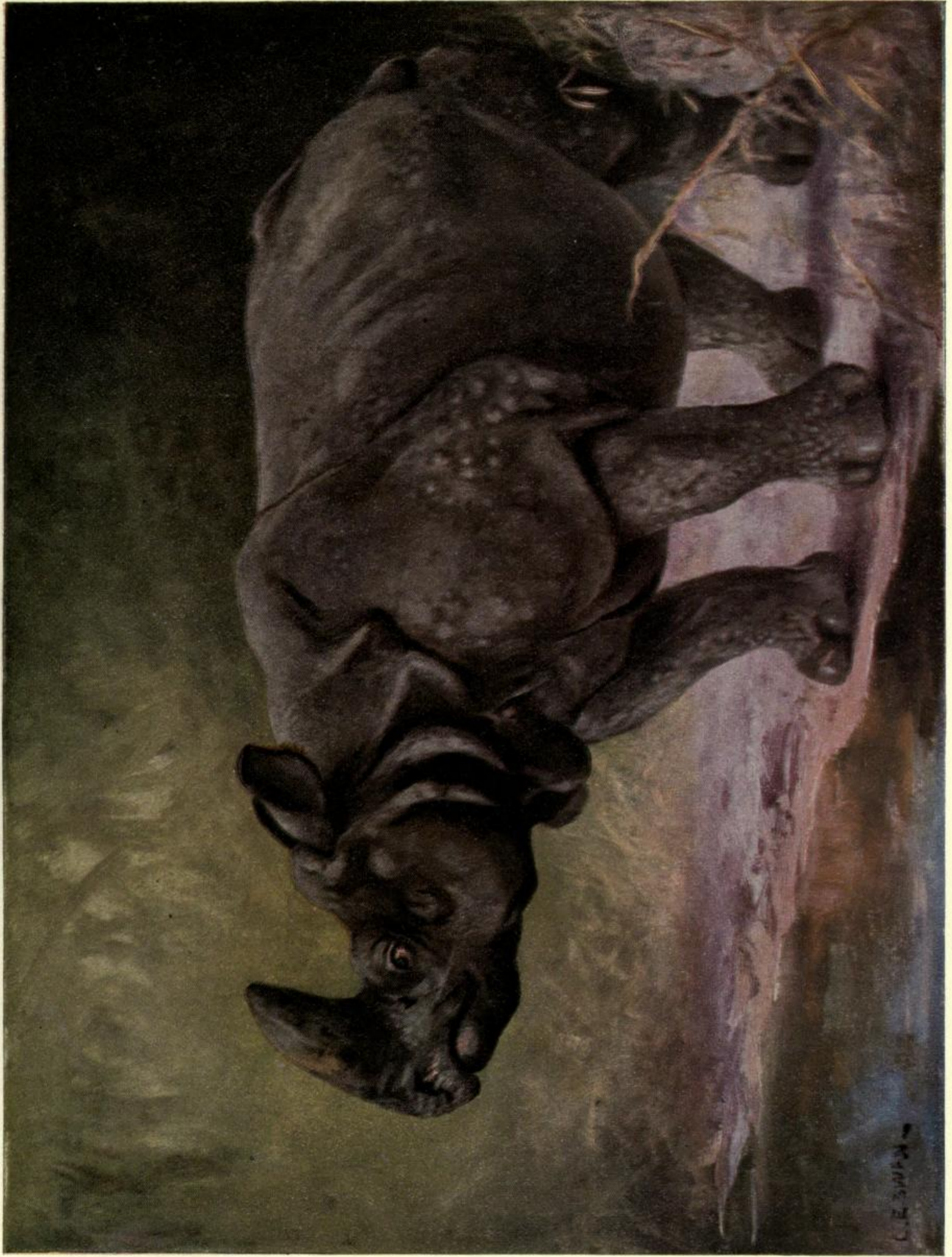
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VOL.



TWO

LONDON: T. C. & E. C. JACK
16 HENRIETTA STREET, W.C., AND EDINBURGH



INDIAN ONE-HORNED RHINOCEROS

By C. E. Swan

THE INDIAN RHINOCEROS

(*Rhinoceros indicus*)

OWING to its inhabiting a country of ancient civilisation like India, the great Indian Rhinoceros has always been the most familiar of the small family of large hoofed animals of which it is a member; while, though not absolutely the largest, it can challenge comparison with any of them in peculiarity of aspect, owing to the curious armour-plate-like arrangement of its heavy and folded hide, which is studded with tubercles simulating the rivets of real armour.

The horn on the nose is solid throughout, and composed of a mass of horny fibres like agglutinated hair; it is merely seated on the skull, having no bony core, and a captive individual in the London Zoological Gardens once accidentally wrenched his off, to his exceeding pain and dismay. The hoofs are three in number on each foot, but the animal is not supported entirely on them, like a Horse or Cow, but treads also on a pad covering the bases of the toes. The skin is naked and very thick, but in the fresh state is not impenetrable to bullets as used to be supposed.

The mouth is provided with a good set of flat-crowned grinders, but the front teeth are very scantily represented, there being no canines in the upper jaw and usually only one pair of incisors, while the lower jaw has only a pair of small incisors and an outer pair of rather large sharp-edged teeth, which some regard as canines and some as incisors. Whatever they are, the animal knows how to make use of them, ripping an adversary with them as a Boar does with his canine tusks.

This Rhinoceros is one of the largest living land animals, measuring from five to nearly six feet at the shoulder, and exceeding at times ten feet from nose to root of tail; the said appendage is puny and rather short, not reaching a yard. The horn in this species is not very long, seldom reaching more than a foot; it is found in both sexes, as in most Rhinoceroses. When newly born, the Rhinoceros is about as

large as a Pig; it has no horn at birth, but otherwise is a very perfect miniature of its parents. It grows rapidly—at first, at any rate—but is a long-lived animal, believed to live for a hundred years.

The Rhinoceros is a much more active creature than would be supposed from its ponderous build; it has a rapid if heavy trot, and can even gallop. In the ordinary way, however, it is not very energetic; it easily finds food and shelter in the great grass-jungles it frequents, and it much enjoys wallowing in the mud, like so many tropical animals. Its range in India has greatly diminished in historical times; in the time of the Emperor Baber, in the sixteenth century, it extended to Peshawur, and it used comparatively recently to be found along the base of the Himalayas. Its last stronghold is in the plains of Assam, and it is to be hoped that the Indian Government will be able to secure its protection there indefinitely. It is a harmless animal, rarely attacking man even when provoked, and, though it is greatly feared by Elephants, these beasts are so nervous in disposition that their dread of any animal must not be taken as proof that it is a natural enemy, as the Rhinoceros has been credited with being.

There is also a certain amount of positive utility in the Rhinoceros, from the fact that its flesh is considered good food even by Europeans, while its heavy skin can be turned to a variety of uses when cured. It thrives well in captivity, and lives for many years, but, like all Rhinoceroses, is scarce in the animal trade, and very expensive accordingly. During all the time I was in Calcutta—seven years—our dealers were trying to get hold of a live Rhinoceros of any sort, but not a single specimen came to hand.

THE SONDAIC RHINOCEROS

(*Rhinoceros sondaicus*)

THIS is the only other kind of Rhinoceros with one horn; like the last, it is found in India, but has a much wider range altogether, extending from Eastern Bengal through Burma and the isles to Borneo. Though as tall as the other species, it is not so heavy, and has a smaller head; moreover, the skin, although falling in folds, as

in the great Indian species, differs slightly in the arrangement of these creases—the fold in front of the shoulder runs right across from side to side of the neck, like that behind the shoulder and over the hips. In the Sondaic Rhinoceros, also, the skin is not tubercled, and the nose-horn is confined to the males—at any rate as a rule.

This species usually frequents hilly districts, though it also occurs in the marshy alluvial soil of the Sunderbunds. It frequents tree rather than grass jungle, and is said to be more harmless than the great Indian Rhinoceros. It has once been exhibited in the London Zoological Gardens.

THE ASIATIC TWO-HORNED RHINOCEROS

(Rhinoceros sumatrensis)

THE Hairy Rhinoceros, as this species might well be called, for its body is thinly covered with hair and its ears fringed therewith, is the smallest of all known kinds, not reaching five feet at the shoulder, and being sometimes less than four. Its skin shows fewer folds than those of the large Asiatic kinds, and only the fold behind the shoulder crosses the back.

In addition to the horn on the nose, there is another over the eyes; the front one grows to a considerable length, well over two feet. This species much resembles the last in range and habits, being a forest animal, found from Assam to Borneo. It has been exhibited in the Zoological Gardens of London and Calcutta, and young ones have been born in the latter place, while in the London Docks a young one was produced aboard ship by a female which had just been imported from Singapore.

THE COMMON AFRICAN RHINOCEROS

(Rhinoceros bicornis)

THE "Black Rhinoceros," as this species is often rather absurdly called—for it is grey, like Rhinoceroses generally—is the commonest

species now living, ranging all over Africa from Abyssinia to the Cape. It is about as big as the great Indian Rhinoceros, and, like it, has a pointed prehensile upper-lip, but a smooth skin without creases; it is also provided with two horns, the front one, on the nose, sometimes exceeding a yard in length, while that over the eyes is seldom much more than half the length of its fellow; but the proportions vary greatly.

This Rhinoceros is for the most part a bush-haunter, and lives almost entirely by browsing, eating twigs, leaves, and fruit. Opinions differ as to its character, but the general opinion is that it is an irritable, vicious animal, being unusually inclined to attack men unprovoked, and thus very different in disposition from most of the family. Indeed, some years ago, the expedition of Mr. A. Chanler and Lieutenant von Höhnel into East Africa was broken up through the repeated attacks of these animals, who ultimately disabled the latter gentleman. Although so common in the wild state, this animal is rarely captured, and only two have been exhibited in the London Zoological Gardens.

THE GREAT AFRICAN RHINOCEROS

(*Rhinoceros simus*)

THE Square-mouthed Rhinoceros of South Africa, so called from its upper lip not terminating in a prehensile point, is also sometimes called "White"—a term as absurd as "Black" for the other, and for the same reason, the animal being also grey. It is the largest land animal after the Elephants, a big male standing six and a half feet at the shoulder, and being about twelve feet long. Like the common kind, it is smooth-skinned, and has two horns, which vary much in length, the front one sometimes exceeding four feet in length. The Square-mouthed Rhinoceros lives in the open, and is a grass-feeder, and generally harmless in disposition. It has never been brought to Europe alive, and is now, by the persecution of hunters, reduced to about a dozen individuals—if even these still exist—in South Africa, though now also found to inhabit Central Equatorial Africa.