

BULLET AND SHOT IN INDIAN FOREST, PLAIN, AND HILL.

WITH HINTS TO BEGINNERS
IN INDIAN SHOOTING.

BY

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CHAPTER XIX.

THE RHINOCEROTIDÆ AND SUIDÆ OF INDIA

THE GREAT INDIAN RHINOCEROS

(Rhinoceros Indicus)

THIS huge animal measures, in the case of a large male, from 5 to 6 feet in height, and the single horn, which is common to both sexes, though rarely as much as 2 feet in length, seldom attains more than one half that size.

It inhabits the Terai, at the foot of the Himalayas, from Bhootan to Nepaul, and is very abundant in Assam and the Bhootan Dooars, frequenting swampy ground and dense jungles. It has a habit of depositing its dung in the same spot, of which fact the native shikarrie takes a somewhat mean advantage.

The peculiar tuberculated hide, with its huge folds and plates, irresistibly calls to mind the plated armour of bygone ages.

In the valley of Assam, where the soil is all alluvial, and stones conspicuous by their total absence, the mighty Brahmaputra river is at the present day, as in the ages that have passed, continually shifting its bed. What is this year a high sandbank clothed with dense jungle, may not im-

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probably, in the floods of next rainy season, be washed away, and the place thereof become part of the bed of the river.

Great fertility is the natural result, and in consequence a very high, dense growth of reeds and grass covers all the low-lying portions of the valley, often presenting a huge unbroken expanse over a very large area, and reaching in places a height of twenty feet or more. Then too, there are large and densely jungled churs (or islands) left in the river when the latter has fallen to its dry season level, and these often afford excellent shooting.

Assam is *par excellence* the home of the great Indian rhinoceros, and in suitable localities his large three-toed and unmistakable track will generally be found.

Owing to the nature of the jungle, and the great height and density of the huge seas of reed and grass (often matted with creepers) which cover the low-lying portions of the valley, rhinoceros can, as a rule, be hunted with any prospect of success only by sportsmen mounted upon elephants, with a number of those animals in attendance to act as beaters. Of course, a great variety of game is met with and shot while beating these vast expanses and the churs, since not only rhino but tiger, buffalo, panther, pig, and deer of several species are found therein.

The best season for sport in Assam is the cold weather—say from November 1st to January 31st—and that period is a very pleasant one there. Of course, though the nights and mornings are

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chilly, the sun is very hot by day, and a big, thick sola topee is essential as a protection to the head against its rays. The best advice which I can give to any sportsman who may desire to shoot in Assam, and who knows no one there, is to go up to the hill-station of Shillong about October, call round the station, make inquiries, visit any planters or officials in the valley below of whom he may hear as being keen upon sport (he will find the planters a fine, manly, hospitable and kindly set of men), and try to join some one of the parties which may be going out. The journey is an easy one from Calcutta, and rail and steamer will take him almost to the foot of the Cossya hills on which Shillong stands. He can go either up or down the valley by steamer, and from Dibrugarh in Upper Assam, to Sudiya on the frontier, there is a line of rail which has been constructed since I left that part of India.

Of course this method of shooting is expensive owing to the number of elephants which must be employed. The more elephants there are, the longer the line, and the wider the area which can be beaten.

I have heard of very fine bags of tigers made upon the Brahmaputra churs. A pair of 8-bore Paradox guns is the best battery for rhino.

R. Ward quotes one horn of 24, one of $19\frac{1}{8}$, one of 19, and two horns of female specimens as measuring $16\frac{1}{4}$, and 16 inches respectively. These are all very large measurements, and a

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specimen of 12 inches in length is well worth bagging.

The vernacular names for the rhinoceros are—
Hindustani—Genda, Gonda, Ganda, or Genra.
Assamese—Gor.

THE JAVAN RHINOCEROS (*Rhinoceros Sondaicus*)

This animal, though called by Jerdon “the lesser Indian rhinoceros,” is of much the same height as *Rhinoceros Indicus*. It inhabits parts of India, e.g., the Sunderbunds, Burmah, and Tipperah, and according to Sterndale, who cites Pollock as his authority, Assam. Of this species only the males are horned.

Sterndale mentions two other species of rhinoceros, viz., *Rhinoceros Lasiotis*, inhabiting Arakan and Tenasserim, and *Rhinoceros Sumatrensis*, a small, yet very long-horned species inhabiting Tenasserim, Burmah, Siam, the Malayan peninsula, and Sumatra. Both of these two, unlike *Rhinoceros Indicus* and *Rhinoceros Sondaicus* which each have but one horn, are two-horned.

Jerdon, excluding *Rhinoceros Lasiotis* altogether, mentions *Rhinoceros Sumatrensis*, which he calls “*Rhinoceros Sumatrana*,” and about which, as regards India, he only says that it “is suspected by Blyth to extend as far north as Assam.”

The vernacular names for the Javan rhinoceros are the same as for the last, with the following additions:

Burmese—Khyen-hsen.

Malayan—Badak.