

THE GUN AT HOME & ABROAD

The Big Game of Asia and North America

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THE INDIAN EMPIRE

THE PLAINS, HILLS AND JUNGLES

ALTHOUGH the big game of India have been much thinned down of late years, there are still enough left for those who know where to go and how to set about it; moreover the jungles are so dense and so vast in extent that there is no fear of the tiger, at all events, becoming extinct.

The important point to bear in mind is that the conditions under which one shoots in India are quite different from those of most other countries. A sportsman cannot select a certain district, and just hire a caravan and go where he chooses, as can be done in most parts of Africa; for in India nothing can be accomplished without the cordial co-operation of the forest officers and other officials, and without friends to assist one there is very little chance of success.

Of course in a native state, as the guest of some Maharajah, you may take part in a shoot with a number of other sportsmen, where a big bag is made and everything made easy for you; but the real joy of hunting can only be felt when shooting by yourself or with one friend, when you are at liberty to make your own arrangements or "bandobast," to use the comprehensive local word.

One of the difficulties for a visitor is the language. Although it is easy enough to hire an English-speaking servant to translate for you, it is much more satisfactory to acquire a moderate knowledge of Hindustani; for the jungle native is so shy and secretive by nature that you are much more likely to find out what is really in his mind by talking to him yourself than through an interpreter.

As regards seasons, the most deadly time to hunt for the generality of game is in the hot weather, when the jungle grass has died down and the water pools are few and far between; most game, like the tiger, cannot go far from water, but the heat is then very trying, and a tiger skin at this season cannot compare with one killed in the cold weather.

Another disadvantage of hunting at this time is that the jungle is dry and crackly, and it is very difficult to walk noiselessly when after sambur or other deer. After the rains it is much easier to track bison and such

THE INDIAN RHINOCEROS

(*RHINOCEROS UNICORNIS*)

THE great Indian rhino, the species usually pursued by sportsmen, has only one horn, and the skin is laid on, as it were, in plates, like jointed armour, with bosses on the quarters resembling rivets. There are at least two other Asiatic species, which extend from the Sunderbuns of Bengal into Burma and as far as Java and Sumatra. One of these, the *R. sumatrensis*, has two horns; it is smaller in size, but has more hair on the body. The *R. unicornis* inhabits the high grass and reed jungles of Assam and extends westward to Nepaul. The only way to hunt it is with elephants, and though one can occasionally descend and follow up the tunnels made by these huge animals through the reeds on foot, it is seldom that a shot can be got in this way.

The majority of beating elephants are terrified of a rhino, and I have seen the line reformed again and again before the gigantic game could be driven out to the guns in the open. Rhinoceros frequently attack the elephants, and on these occasions seem to use their tusches in preference to the horn, and endeavour to rip up the belly. The horn of *R. unicornis* is not very long, but it is firmly fixed on, and I have never been able to get one to peel off with the skin as one can with the African species.

The rhino is a slow breeding beast and should be well protected by the game laws. Comparatively few sportsmen get the opportunity of hunting this animal, owing to the large *bandobast* required; notwithstanding this fact, the big Indian rhinoceros might easily become extinct unless care is taken.

The natives are willing to give a considerable price for the horn, which they make into spoons or vessels used in their religious observances.



Photo by]

AN ASSAM RHINOCEROS.

[Mr P. B. Van der Byl.

PLATE XXXII.

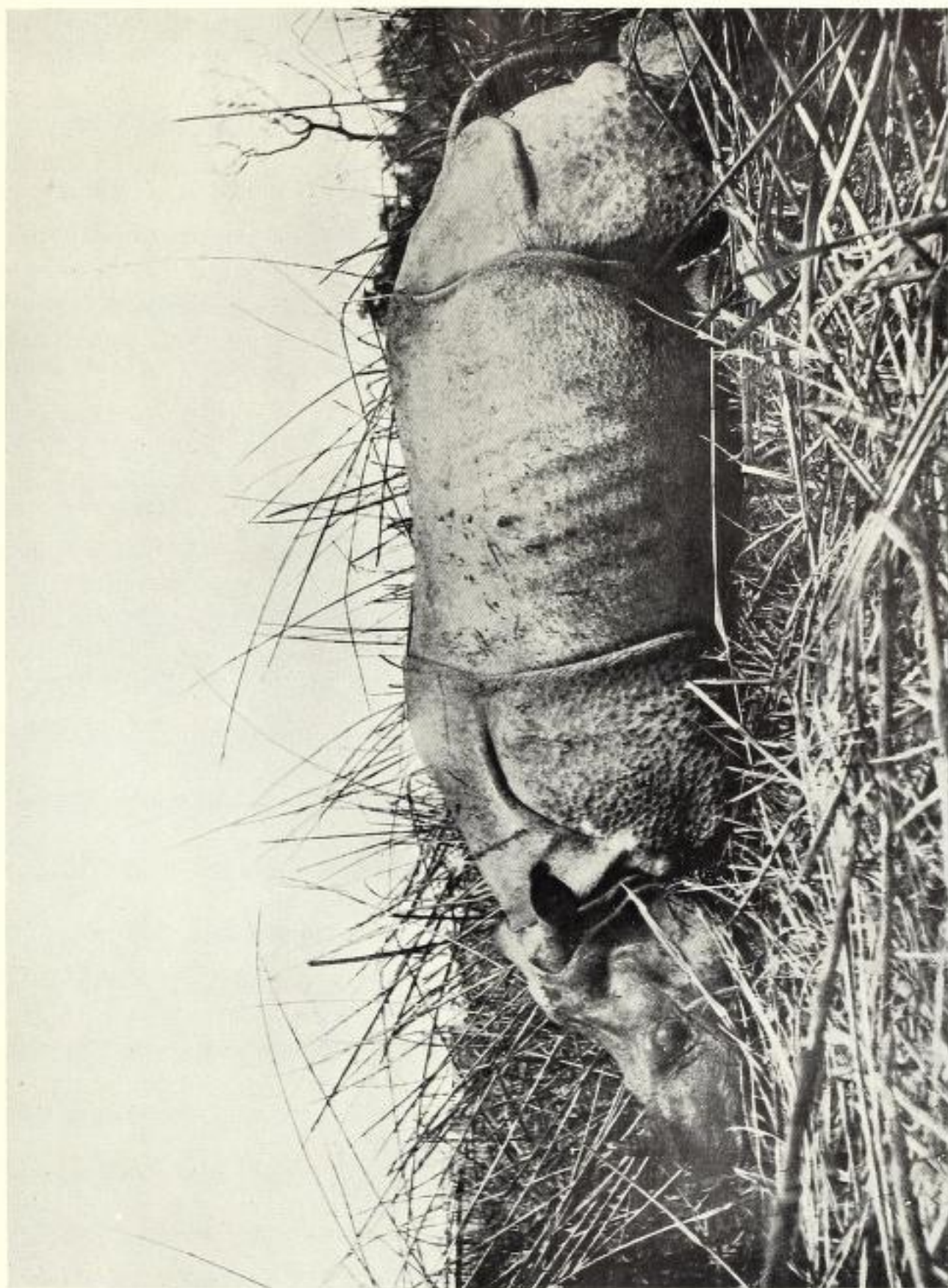


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(Mr. P. B. Van der Byl)

AN ASSAM RHINOCEROS.