

THE BISON



The Great American Buffalo

Great herds of these animals once roamed over North America between the Appalachian Mountains on the east and the Rockies on the west. The Indians depended upon their flesh for food and their hides for clothing. When the number of buffalo declined, many groups of Indians that lived on the plains found themselves without food. In 1850, about 20 million of these animals still thundered over the western plains. Huge herds often forced early railroad trains to come to a complete stop while the animals crossed the tracks.

By 1889, only 551 bison could be found alive in the United States. Then efforts started to prevent the whole species from becoming extinct. William Temple Hornaday (1854-1937), an American zoologist, did much to protect and increase the herds. Game laws and other protective measures allowed the surviving bison to live and multiply. As a result, about 10,000 bison now live in the United States. These are scattered in many herds living on fenced game preserves. A wild herd of several hundred bison lives in Yellowstone National Park. About 15,000 more roam in Canada. Most of these live in the immense Wood Buffalo Park, south of Great Slave Lake.

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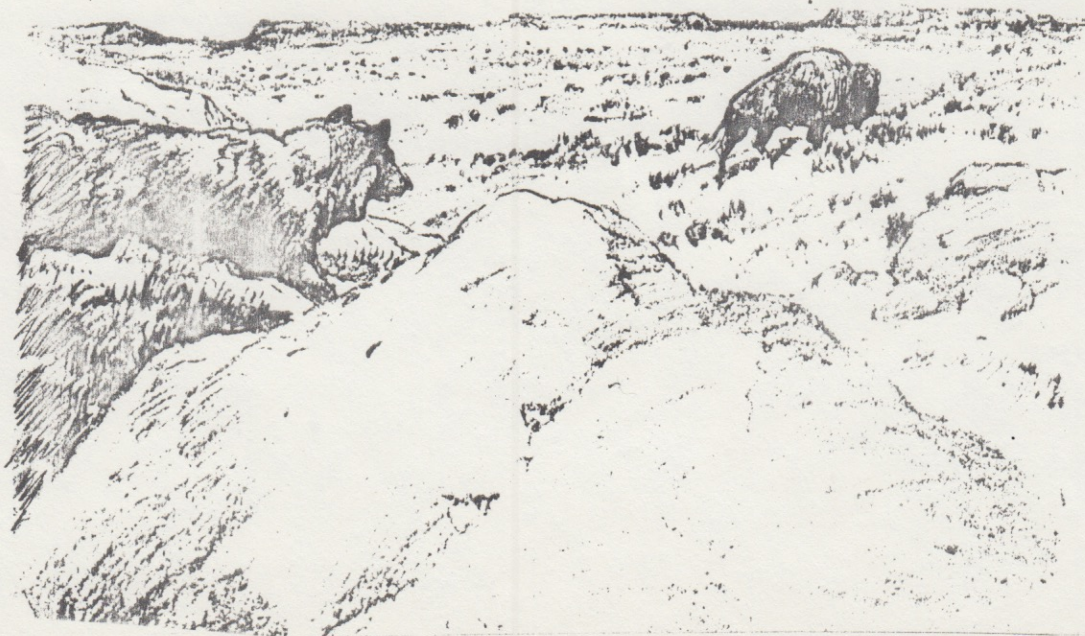
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The actual name of the American 'buffalo' is bison (genus *Bison bison*). This most American of animals has been incorrectly called 'buffalo' for so long that the misnomer has been universally accepted and the names are now interchangeable. The true buffaloes are the Asiatic varieties and the Cape buffalo of Africa, which are but distant relatives to the monarch of the American grasslands.

It is now nearly one hundred years since the massacre of the bison was at its infamous height. Since then, we have sculptured him in the bas-relief on a fivecent coin, engraved his likeness on the old ten-dollar bill, and made his portrait the centerpiece of the great seal of the United States Department of the Interior; but only a century ago his two-thousand pound carcass was worth nothing and his hide barely surpassed the value of a silver dollar.

Through the great efforts of a few American conservationists, the bison was saved from total extermination; he now lives protected by our government on preserves and refuges. He no longer fights his ancient predatory enemies, or dies from starvation, thirst, and blizzards; his seasonal migrations are restricted and but few of the laws of nature apply to the bison's current way of life and death.

So the restored bison is no longer the self-reliant old buffalo of the rolling prairies and in future times will be even less like him.



The Buffalo Hunter



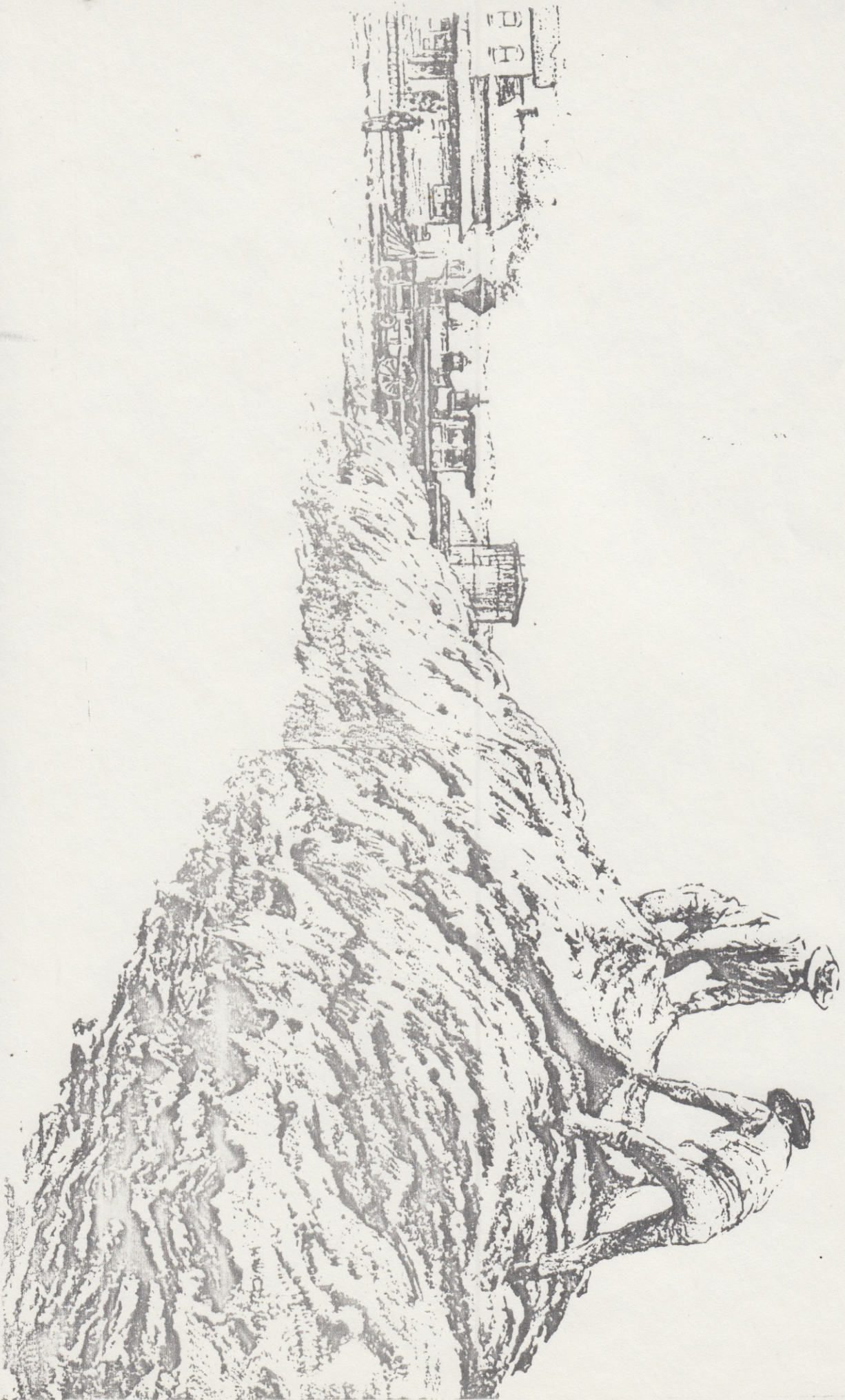
The Stretchers



The Skinners



The Hide Capitals



The Bone Gatherers



THE BUFFALO HUNTER

THE SKINNERS

THE STRETCHERS

THE HIDE CAPITALS

THE BONE GATHERERS