

IN THE MORNING OF TIME

monsters, hardly aware that there had been an obstacle in their path, arrived at the edge of the canal.

Here and there an old bull, leading, took alarm, trumpeted wildly, and strove to stop. But the belt of pitch was full to the brink with the packed bodies of the sambur, and did not look to be a very serious barrier to the spacious brown levels beyond it. Moreover, the panic of a long flight was upon them, and the rear ranks were thrusting them on. The trumpeting leaders were overborne in a twinkling. The ponderous feet of the front rank sank into the mass of bodies and horns and pitch, stumbled forward, belly deep, and strove to clamber out upon the solid-looking further edge. With trunks eagerly outstretched as if seeking to grip something, the huge, bat-eared heads heaved themselves up. The next moment the treacherous crust crumbled away beneath them like an egg-shell, and with screams that tore the heavens they sank into the gulfs of pitch. The next two or three ranks went on over them, trod them deeper down, heaved and surged and battled for some moments along the edge of the crumbling crust. With mad trumpeting, they were themselves swallowed up in that sluggish, implacable flood. Here and there a black trunk, twisting in agony, lingered long, awful moments above the pitch. Here and there the pallid head of a giraffe, tongue protruding and eyes bursting from their sockets, stood up rigid on its long neck and screamed hideously.