

# THE NATURALIST.

## HOLMWOOD'S RHINOCEROS.

EVER SINCE THEIR DESCRIPTION by Dr Sclater in the Zoological Society's *Proceedings* for 1893 (pp. 514-517) doubt has existed as to which species of rhinoceros two front horns obtained by the late Mr F. Holmwood from a native trader at Zanzibar really belong. To these horns, one of which is now exhibited in the large mammal gallery of the Natural History Museum, Dr Sclater gave the name of *Rhinoceros bicornis holmwoodi*; one of the main reasons for associating them with the black rather than with the white species being that the latter was at the date of his note unknown to the north of the Zambesi. In the *Royal Natural History* I suggested that they might indicate a rhinoceros more or less nearly related to *R. simus*, but in later works I accepted their describer's determination and classed them with *R. bicornis*. The question as to their real affinity has been brought to a head by Dr Trouessart in the June issue of the Zoological Society's *Proceedings*, where it is stated that the very long horns described under the names of *R. oswelli*, Gray, and *R. holmwoodi*, Sclater, ought to be referred either to the male or the female of the northern race of the white rhinoceros, for which, in the *Field* for Feb. 22, 1908, p. 319, I proposed the name *R. simus cottoni*. If this be correct, *cottoni* would become a synonym of either *oswelli* or *holmwoodi*. As to *oswelli*, the type is stated to have been obtained from the neighbourhood of Lake N'Gami, and there is accordingly little doubt that it belongs to the southern race. The question is, therefore, whether the name *R. simus cottoni* should give way to *R. simus holmwoodi*.

The two horns obtained by Mr Holmwood are characterised by their great length and slenderness (one of them measuring 41in. in length), their backward curvature, marked lateral compression, and expanded, although not distinctly squared, bases. They lack the flattened front surface of a very long female horn of the southern white rhinoceros in the British Museum, and the same feature distinguishes them from a thinner and shorter horn in the same collection, probably from South Africa, also referred to a female of that race. Dr Trouessart, in the paper cited, has figured a female of the northern white rhinoceros with a horn of apparently much the same type, drawn from a detached specimen, of which the locality is not stated, in the Paris Museum.

As already mentioned, the original horns of *holmwoodi* were obtained at Zanzibar, but Mr Holmwood was of opinion that they came from the country of "Udulia," situated at the north-eastern point of Usukuma, fifty miles south of Speke Gulf, on the southern border of Victoria Nyanza. On the other hand, the native from whom these horns were obtained suggested that the pastoral district to the west of Udulia, known to safaris as "Ulturu," was their probable place of origin. Such suggestions can, however, have but little value, especially when there is good evidence to show that horns approximating more or less closely to the *holmwoodi* type were at one time not uncommon at Zanzibar. On this point special value must be given to the testimony of such an experienced observer as the late Mr A. H. Neumann, who, on page 54 of his *Elephant Hunting in Eastern Equatorial Africa*, writes that "I have a shrewd suspicion that the range of that interesting species (Holmwood's rhinoceros) is limited to the bazaars of Zanzibar." He, in fact, regarded the types of *holmwoodi* merely as picked specimens of abnormal and remarkable horns of the ordinary black rhinoceros.

This view seems to receive support from a pair of black rhinoceros horns obtained by Dr S. L. Hinde in East Africa, which are figured on page 467 of the fifth edition of Mr Rowland Ward's *Records of Big Game*. The front horn in this case is very strongly curved backwards, and appears to be markedly compressed, while its length (47in.) considerably exceeds that of the type of *holmwoodi*. Another front horn from East Africa, entered in the same work under the heading of the black species, has a length of no less than 53½in. A smaller horn in the British Museum from East Africa, clearly belonging to the black species, is also of the *holmwoodi* type.

As regards length, and apparently also as regards form, there seems therefore to be no evidence for disassociating *holmwoodi* from the black rhinoceros. As regards undoubted front horns of the female of the northern rhinoceros, the only evidence available to me is afforded by a female killed by Major Powell Cotton, of which the horns have been shown to me by Mr Rowland Ward. In this specimen the second horn is well developed, while the front one is of the massive, squared, and flattened type characteristic of the male, although smaller and somewhat more slender. It is utterly unlike the *holmwoodi* type, and, so far as the evidence of a single example goes, tends to show that females of the northern white rhinoceros have a stouter and shorter form of front horn than their southern representatives. So far, therefore, as the evidence at present available permits of forming an opinion, there appears to be no reason for abolishing the name *R. simus cottoni* in favour of *holmwoodi*.

It may be added that Dr Trouessart is of opinion that the *holmwoodi* horns suffice to indicate the existence of the white rhinoceros in the region of the great equatorial lakes. If these horns do not belong to *simus*, this suggestion is, of course, at once invalidated. If, on the contrary, they should eventually be proved to pertain to that species, it by no means follows that the white rhinoceros inhabits the Victoria Nyanza district. Were this huge animal a native of that area we should surely have had information to this effect from some of the many sportsmen and explorers who have visited German East Africa and Uganda. It is true, indeed, as Dr Trouessart mentions, that Speke referred to the occurrence of the white rhinoceros in the Karajwe district, that is to say, in the country between Tanganyika, Kivu, and the Victoria Nyanza, while Dr J. W. Gregory in the *Great Rift Valley* thought that he had obtained evidence of the existence of the same species in the Kenia district. No actual and indisputable specimens of the northern race have, however, so far as I am aware, been obtained hitherto to the south of the Nile valley, and until such be forthcoming I shall venture to maintain an "agnostic" attitude on the subject.

R. LYDEKKER.

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**Forest Hog from the Upper Congo.**—In the *Publicazioni* of the Royal Institute of Higher Studies of Florence for 1909, Dr E. Balducci has just described an enormous forest hog from the