

## THE WHITE RHINOCEROS

SIR,—I read in your issue of October 23rd a letter from Capt. H. C. Brocklehurst, Game Warden to the Sudan Government, referring to Sir Harry Johnston's letter to the *Times* on the white rhinoceros. Sir Harry Johnston says, in effect, that the white rhino is almost exterminated, whereas Capt. Brocklehurst says that "there is no doubt whatever that they are increasing."

It may be of interest to relate what I saw in March of this year in the French port of N'Délé, which lies about due west of the country inhabited by the white rhino. A Greek merchant produced from his store a considerable number of rhino horns for my inspection. He had bought these from native traders, and among them I was astonished to see the unmistakable horns of white rhino. Besides being much larger and heavier than the black rhino horns, they had the characteristic square base, found only, I believe, in the horns of the white rhino.

In answer to my query as to where they came from the owner supposed that they had been killed in the N'Délé country. They do not exist there now, as every rhino has been exterminated, and it is not known that they ever did so. Therefore it seemed to me that these white rhino horns must have come through native channels from the Sudan to be bought by traders and exported out through the French Congo capital, Brazzaville, on the Lower Congo.

Besides the few choice specimens shown to me there was a large heap of smaller rhino horns. The price was at that time 80fr. per kilo paid to the native. When it is considered that a large horn may weigh up to 8 or 10 kilos and that the franc has not depreciated *to the native*, it will be readily seen that the killing of a rhino is a windfall for the native hunter. So easy are they to kill, and so remunerative is the sale of their horns, that it is safe to say that they no longer exist in that great game patch lying between the Bahr Aouk and the Ubangui River. During my recent trek of some 800 miles through the most game-frequented parts of this one-time magnificent game country I never saw one single rhino track. And yet three years before my companion and I were constantly being pestered by these inquisitive and attractive animals. So numerous were they, and so bold, that we were compelled to shoot six of them merely in order to prevent our boys, who were not used to rhino, from becoming demoralised.

Capt. Brocklehurst says in his letter that "rhinoceros horns are only accepted in transit from the French and Belgian territories if accompanied by a certificate, signed by the consignor's Government, that the horn was legally acquired." But the French demand no such certificate. Rhino horn and ivory pour daily into the numerous trading stations in the French Congo, and no questions are asked.

It is a melancholy thought, but there seems to be no way of stopping the rapidly approaching extermination point in the history of the rhinoceros. Elephant are rapidly following suit. Even if the League of Nations took up the question now there is very little hope that their efforts would be in time, in the case of the rhinoceros at any rate. And yet nothing short of an international agreement could help matters.

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