

Replies

THE CROCODILE (ccviii. 72, 155).—Dr. Sisam tells us that he is now satisfied that the poem cited is the one he wants. The discrepancy in respect of number of lines and rhyme-scheme turned on whether it was reckoned in short lines or in long lines with internal rhyme.

EDD.

TENNIS ANYONE? (ccvii. 349, 427; ccviii. 155).—“Anybody on for a game of tennis?”: Shaw, *Misalliance* (1910); Constable’s Standard Edition (1953) p. 129.

EDD.

RHINOCEROS HORNS (ccviii. 28).—In order to find earlier references to the magical or medical properties of rhinoceros horn surely one has also to look for the unicorn’s horn. Since the time of Megasthenes, who visited India, most accounts of the fabulous unicorn have been influenced by more or less accurate reports about the real rhinoceros, and the virtues of the reputed horn would be mentioned under either name. Sir Thomas Browne, in the amusing chapter “Of Unicorns Horn” in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, 1646, begins his critical discussion with an attempt to clarify this confusion (bk. III, ch. 23).

Great account and much profit is made of *Unicorns horn*, at least of that which beareth the name thereof; wherein notwithstanding, many I perceive suspect an Imposture, and some conceive there is no such Animal extant. Herein therefore to draw up our determinations; beside the several places of Scripture mentioning this Animal (which some may well contend to be only meant of the Rhinoceros) we are so far from denying there is any *Unicorn* at all, that we affirm there are many kinds thereof.

The problem is, “whereunto to affix this Horn in question”, and, besides five quadrupeds including the rhinoceros, Browne lists some fishes, fossils and minerals as possibilities, not omitting “the teeth of Narhwales” of which most of the alleged and very expensive horns really consisted. He also gives a few interesting locations of some well-known horns with brief descrip-

tions appended. “That famous one which is preserved at St. Dennis near Paris”, two “in the treasure of St. Mark”, one “in the Repository of the elector of Saxone” and “that of Antwerp which *Coropius Beganus* describeth”. Concerning the horn as a “poison detector”, Browne’s opponent, Alexander Ross, in *Arcana Microcosmi . . . With a refutation of Dr Browns Vulgar Errors; And the Ancient Opinions vindicated*, 1651, has this to say (b. II, ch. 3).

The means to discriminate the true Unicorn’s horn from the false are two, to wit, if it cause the liquor, into which it is put, to bubble; and secondly, if it sweat when the poison is near it, as Baccius tells us.

I have seen no specific references to aphrodisiac properties of the horn. They may, however, be complementary to the unicorn’s traditional association with virginity. Moreover, as Browne says, these “magnified medicines whose operations [are] effectual in some diseases, are presently extended unto all”. He concludes: “. . . with what security a man may rely on this remedy, the mistress of fools has already instructed some . . .”

K. J. HÖLTGEN.

Englisches Seminar,
Universität, Bonn.

DRYDEN, HOBBES, AND THE NIMBLE SPANIEL (ccvii. 381).—Mr. James E. Forrest here suggests a source in the writings of the Puritan Thomas Goodwin for a metaphor more famously employed by Hobbes in the *Leviathan* and by Dryden in his preface to *Annus Mirabilis* (1667), whereby thoughts, or the poet’s imagination, are compared to a hunting spaniel: “like a nimble spaniel, [imagination] beats over and ranges through the field of memory, till it springs the quarry it hunted after” (Dryden). Mr. Forrest even suggests that the metaphor is a characteristically Puritan one.

I do not believe this will stand. Much of what Mr. Forrest says of the “Puritan aesthetic” in the seventeenth century (as if there were such a thing), such as the growing respect for linguistic simplicity, was equally shared by Anglicans, Catholics, and royalists, and it cannot even be shown to have had Puritan origins. In any case,