

Mary L. Jube AKELEY, National Parks in Africa

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with the outside world by a motor road to the Upper White Nile by way of Beni and Irumu—and thence by water and rail to the Mediterranean. Another road will soon connect with Kisumu, Uganda, and thence by train to Mombasa, the port of entry to Kenya Colony on the Indian Ocean. However, avenues of easy approach to this region will by no means result in letting down the barriers into the park so far as the outside world is concerned. One of the most important points in the scientific creed of the park is that therein the primitive shall be preserved! In addition to the general policy of absolute protection, certain designated areas will be kept wholly free from human intrusion, except as an emergency may demand.

Of especial significance in connection with international effort for immediate conservation are two recent addresses delivered in London—one by Major R. W. G. Hingston before the Royal Geographical Society on March 9, 1931, the other by Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell on September 23, 1931.

Major Hingston recently returned from an African expedition which was approved by the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Joint East African Board and at the request of the Society for the Preservation of the Fauna of the Empire. After visiting Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, Tanganyika, Kenya and Uganda, he has prepared a scheme for ten British national parks for Africa. He says:

Of all the assemblages of wild animal life that of Africa is by far the most important. In the abundance and variety of its constituents, in the immense size, the unique character, and what we must call the prehistoric appearance of its examples there is nothing to compare with it in any other continent. The elephant, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, giraffe, okapi, gorilla are perhaps the most impressive manifestations of the creative force that to-day exist on the earth. Fortunately it is an expression of general feeling that the final extinction of these extraordinary creatures would be a gigantic calamity. Nevertheless it is equally true that these and many other types of the African fauna can not under existing conditions hope to survive far into the future. It is as certain as night follows day that unless vigorous and adequate precautions be taken several of the largest mammals of Africa will within the next two or three decades become totally extinct. Should that occur then assuredly we shall have abused a trust and future generations will judge us accordingly.

Every large animal of whose extinction we have any record has been eradicated by human agency. Confined ourselves to the African fauna, the great blaubok, which inhabited Cape Colony, was annihilated by the farmers in the year 1800; the quagga, which covered the plains of South Africa, was exterminated by the Boers in 1848; the typical form of Burchell's zebra, which existed in British Bechuanaland, became extinct about the year 1910. Certain other species have been so reduced that they may be said to border on extinc-

tion. Take for instance the white rhinoceros. Within the lifetime of many of us still living the white rhinoceros abounded in the African continent from the Vaal to the Zambezi. To-day it is reduced to twenty individuals in Zululand and one hundred and thirty individuals along the upper reaches of the Nile. It has been exterminated over half a continent within a space of fifty years. The gorilla, nyala, Grey's zebra are species which have shrunk to minute numbers and are on the verge of disappearance. The whole African fauna is steadily failing before the forces of destruction brought to bear against it. Great and small, everything is retreating. And the saddest aspect of this melancholy picture is that it is the largest and most extraordinary examples which are yielding most rapidly in the conflict. I doubt if any of the great pachyderms, the elephant, rhinoceros, and hippopotamus, will, if present conditions continue, survive beyond the next fifty years.

He enumerates the four forces causing the annihilation of wild life: (1) The spread of cultivation; (2) the demands of trade; (3) the activities of sportsmen; (4) the menace of disease.

Stating that the weak point of the game reserve is its insecurity and want of permanence, he continues:

The national park, in contradistinction to the Reserve, is placed by legislation on a more stable basis. It possesses a title. It is made by Act of Parliament the property of the public forever to be utilized for the sole purpose of preserving the natural subjects within it. It can not be abolished or altered in any way except by subsequent Act of Parliament. This is the most secure and rigid status that can be given to a wild-life sanctuary. It alone offers any reasonable hope that the sanctuary may last into the distant future.

There are only two institutions in Africa which at present possess that likelihood of permanency implied in the status of a national park. One is the Kruger National Park of the Transvaal, established in the year 1926. The other is the Parc National Albert of the Belgian Congo, established in the year 1925. Both of these have some reasonable prospect of surviving the economic importunities of civilization. It is the belief of all who desire the perpetuation of the fauna that national parks on this rigid basis should replace the flimsy reserves.

For the address of Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell, I quote from an extract published by the London Times of September 25, 1931. The great naturalist reviewed the dangers threatening wild life in every part of the world, and which were increasing with the improvement of transport. "In most countries," he said, "the conscience of the people and of governments is being awakened to the danger, and much is being done, by game laws, the institution of closed times and the making of reserves. Unfortunately these measures are insufficient, and, as he had urged in an address to the British Association in 1912, it is of vital importance that large areas should be set apart for all time, secured against the sportsman and settler and pro-