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THE EXTERMINATION OF GREAT GAME IN SOUTH AFRICA.

THE introduction of firearms—and especially of breech-loading firearms—and the rapid opening up of one great hunting-ground after another, have wrought within these last sixty years such incredible havoc, that great game are now rapidly approaching a period of extinction. Men begin to wonder what their descendants of the next century will have left them in the way of sport, and in which direction the adventure-seeking Briton shall direct his superabundant energies.

It is quite certain that even the remoter corners of the world cannot much longer support the incessant waste of animal life, and it may be not unprofitable here to consider briefly the sad tale of a vanishing fauna, and the ways and means by which—if it is not already too late—something may be done to preserve the rarer and nobler creatures still left to the wilderness.

North America has been almost destroyed as a game country; the bison has gone, the wapiti, the moose, the cariboo, and the bear are going fast. Of South Africa, a country more prodigally endowed by nature than any other part of the world, the same miserable tale has to be told. Only in portions of the virgin veldt of Mashonaland, the regions of the Pungwe River, and the least easily accessible deserts of North Bechuanaland and the Kalahari, are there to be found fair representatives of that astounding fauna, which not long since gave unspeakable charm to plain and mountain, karroo, and kloof, from the Southern shores of the Cape Colony right away to the far Zambesi. And even in those distant and difficult wilds their numbers are daily and hourly diminishing, so that apparently in a few more years the great game of all Southern Africa will be but a memory.

In India the same war of extermination has been, and is incessantly, waged, and with the same results. The Indian lion, the great mailed rhinoceros, the gaur, buffalo, sambur, bear, even the tiger itself, and many other species of great game are vanishing rapidly. In other countries the same process is going busily forward, at the hands of white and native hunters, with apparently the same inevitable ending—complete extermination.

Not until the European began to move abroad, and firearms came into use, was there any sensible decline among the mammalia of America, Africa, or even India. In the days of matchlocks, and even of flint guns and smooth bores, the destruction proceeded, of course, much more slowly than at present. But with the introduc-

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tion of percussion-caps a great change came quickly in the annual bill of slaughter. Improvements in rifling and precision rapidly followed, and finally came the modern breech-loader to complete the work of destruction. It is now—unless some effectual method of preservation can be quickly introduced—absolutely certain that the complete extermination of the great game of Africa, America, and Asia, is merely a question of years. And in Southern Africa, especially, this period of extinction is very close at hand. The quagga (*Equus Quagga*) has vanished; the white rhinoceros has been all but shot to extinction; the giraffe, the elephant, the black rhinoceros, the hippopotamus, Burchell's zebra, and most of the great antelopes are fast disappearing.

It is a melancholy tale, this of the extermination of South African game, which for the last eighteen years, since I first knew the country, I have followed with the closest interest. In the course of my inquiries I have had occasion to compare the accounts of the fauna of South Africa, when the Dutch first landed there in the seventeenth century, with the fauna of the present day. Perhaps a sketch of the various periods of decadence may be not unprofitable.

When the early Dutch settlers landed at the Cape in 1652, and under their first governor, stout Jan Van Riebeek, took possession of the soil, they found the country one vast and teeming natural preserve of great game. Down to the very shores of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean there wandered a countless multitude of the noblest and rarest species with which a prodigal nature ever blessed the earth. The elephant, rhinoceros, and buffalo roamed everywhere; the hippopotamus bathed his unwieldly form in every stream and river; the lion, leopard, and cheetah pursued their prey unchecked; the eland, koodoo, gnu, hartebeest, and a number of other fine antelopes grazed in astonishing plenty. The mountain zebras paced the sierras of the Cape peninsula and every other range of the colony in strong troops; the quagga (now, alas! extinct) thronged the karroo plains. In every corner of that vast land, upon flat and upland, in deep and lonely kloof, and over boundless plain, there wandered, free and undisturbed as they had wandered through countless ages of the past, an unexampled array of wild animals.

The early Dutch settlers scarcely knew what to do with this profusion of game. The elands and koodoos broke into their gardens and vineyards, the elephants and rhinoceroses made hay with their crops; the lions besieged them in their fort, and dogged Governor Van Riebeek in his garden. There is a pathetic yet ludicrous entry in the old records of the Cape commanders, bearing date the 23rd January, 1653. "This night," says the chronicle, "it appeared as if the lions would take the fort by storm."

Long after that time lions were plentiful on the site of the present

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Cape Town. In 1694 a number of cows were killed by them close to the fort.

As the Dutch slowly pushed their way into the interior they found the vast plains crowded with countless herds of game. Springboks, blesboks, and bonteboks pied the spreading veldt in hundreds of thousands. The grotesque white-tailed gnus charged and capered about the karroos, in company with their constant allies, the quaggas and ostriches, in immense troops. The stately eland—an antelope surpassing the ox in bulk and stature—the noble gemsbok, the original, as many men think, of the fabled unicorn; the marvellously fleet hartebeest, ran in unexampled plenty. You may know to this hour as you journey through Cape Colony how and where the great game roved. Day after day as you travel you pass places bearing the names of the gallant game pursued and slain in such plenty by the old-time Boers. Elandsberg, Rhenoster (rhinoceros) Kop, Oliphant's (elephant's) River, Quagga Fontein, Gemsbok, Laagte, Leeuw (lion) Spruit; these and a host of similar names, bestowed by the Dutch in every nook and corner of the land, demonstrate the wonderful abundance of the game in those glorious days. The very names suffice to rouse the imagination and stir the blood of the passing Englishman.

The Boers very gradually and very slowly drove the game before them. The early settlers were quite certainly not all natural-born hunters; yet they had stout hearts and strong arms, and with their primitive firearms they managed somehow, with infinite trouble and difficulty, to drive back the game. Some of them, the farmers, and the bolder and wilder spirits, developed into elephant hunters, and brought many a tusk of ivory into the Cape market. These people clad themselves mainly with the skins of antelopes, dressed to a suitable texture. They must have been hardy souls; what with lions, elephants, rhinoceros, buffalo, and other dangerous game, and the occasional attacks of Bushmen with poisoned arrows, these early frontiersmen must have had a keen struggle for existence. Unthinking men run down the Boer of South Africa. Not every European race, I take it, could have conquered the natural difficulties of a country as did these people, and have emerged so little spoiled by two hundred and fifty years of such an existence.

It is a sad reflection that the descendants of these pioneers became at a later period mere mercenary skin hunters, slaying the game for the paltry value of the hides, and quickly denuding vast territories of almost every head of the larger mammalia.

In 1796, when the British first took possession of the Cape, the Colonial limits of the Dutch were still very restricted. Mr. Barrow, Secretary to Earl Macartney, the first English Governor (afterwards widely known as Sir John Barrow, Secretary to the Admiralty), in

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an admirable book of travels,[1] gives a very complete picture of those days. Elephants, lions, buffaloes, rhinoceros, and hippopotami, were still plentiful in the eastern and central portions of the Colony; the antelopes thronged the plains, apparently as thickly as ever, and the zebra and quagga were abundant. The curious blaauwbok —an animal nearly akin to the roan antelope—which seems to have had in the Cape Colony a very restricted habitat, and was only found in the division of Swellendam, had, it is true, just disappeared; and the pied bontebok, although still swarming upon the northern plains, had been greatly thinned in the same district, Swellendam; but, with the exception of these two instances, the game was as plentiful as ever at no great distance from Cape Town.

In 1812 Dr. Burchell, the naturalist, made his well known expedition beyond the limits of Cape Colony, crossing the Orange River and entering Bechuanaland. This period marks an epoch in the history of the South African fauna. Burchell discovered several new and remarkable species beyond the Orange River. The white rhinoceros and Burchell's zebra still bear his name; and through Burchell and his excellent book of travels, some idea of the wonderful richness of the interior began to filter into the minds of Englishmen. Giraffes, brindled gnu, and other animals not ranging south of the Orange River were shown to be extraordinarily abundant.

In 1835 a great expedition under Dr., afterwards Sir, Andrew Smith, was sent out by the British Government for the purposes of zoological discovery. Smith did his work well, and added greatly to our knowledge of the fauna and avi-fauna of the interior. Some idea of the wealth of animal life in South Bechuanaland at that time may be gathered from his descriptions. In one day alone he counted (and he was a man thoroughly to be relied upon), not far from his waggons, between one hundred and one hundred and fifty rhinoceroses. On another day one hundred giraffes were seen almost at the same time. Other game was found in a like abundance; the waterbuck, the pallah, the tsesseby, and other animals, first became known about this time. The immense giraffe still to be seen in the Natural History Museum, and other specimens there, bear testimony to the cares and labours of this zoologist. It is high time, however, that a pair of representative giraffe skins and skeletons were secured by the Museum. Smith's example, although of great stature, is wretchedly set up, and is now old and in bad condition. Closely following upon Smith's expedition came that of Captain Cornwallis Harris, an officer of the Indian army, afterwards knighted for services on a mission to Abyssinia. Harris was a good naturalist and a most enthusiastic sportsman. To these quali-

(1) *Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa in the Years* 1797 *and* 1798. By John Barrow. London, 1801.

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ties he added the gifts of drawing fairly in water colour, and of writing very graphic descriptions of sport and travel. He wandered in 1836, through much of the Bechuana country, through a great part of the present Transvaal (then held by Moselikatse and his Matabele warriors), the Orange Free State, then an unknown desert, and, of course, Cape Colony. Cornwallis Harris had practically a virgin veldt to exploit. He and his shooting friend performed prodigies of slaughter among elephants, rhinoceroses (white and black), hippopotami, lions, Burchell's zebras, quaggas, and some twenty-six species of antelopes, including elands, gemsbok, koodoo, roan antelope, sable antelope (which Harris himself discovered and named), water buck and others. Harris found elephants in the present Transvaal country (where not a single elephant now remains) in immense numbers. Rhinoceroses were as common as pigs in a farmyard, and were a perfect nuisance to the gunner. Here is a single instance: "On our way from the waggons to a hill not half a mile distant, we counted," says Harris in his book of travels, "no less than twenty-two of the white species of rhinoceros, and were compelled in self defence to slaughter four." Burchell's zebras and quaggas, brindled and white-tailed gnu, were found "in immense herds," elands and hartebeest in "vast herds"; springbok in "countless herds"; blesbok "in immense herds." Other examples were almost equally abundant. Cornwallis Harris subsequently published two books, *Wild Sports of Southern Africa* and *Portraits of the Game and Wild Animals of Southern Africa*. Both books were well illustrated in colours from the authors' water-colour drawings. The latter, a huge folio, is a magnificent work, and, although the drawing is perhaps a trifle amateurish, will stand as a lasting record of the wonderful mammalia of South Africa, long after every head of game has been exterminated.

Harris's books quickly attracted the notice of many English sportsmen. Oswell, Vardon, Murray, and Gordon Cumming, four of the greatest hunters of the middle of the century, all fascinated by his glowing descriptions, found their way to these happy hunting grounds in the early forties, and the extermination of great game began in earnest. Traders were meanwhile pushing up country, and the sale of firearms to natives—which has since proved one of the most fruitful sources of destruction—set in. From the time of Harris's memorable expedition, the downfall of the game of the far interior has proceeded with dreadful rapidity.

Meanwhile the emigrant Boers, discontented with British rule, had quitted Cape Colony, and were slowly thrusting their way north. In the country now called the Orange Free State, then tenanted only by a few bushmen and vagrant tribespeople, they found a very paradise of game. Many of them settled there, and began the

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work of extermination. Others, towards 1837, crossed the Vaal and, after several bloody encounters, drove Moselikatse (father of the late Lobengula) and his Matabele hordes north of the Limpopo. These vast regions of the Transvaal and Orange Free State, which were practically taken possession of by the Boers by the year 1840, may be said to have been countries virgin to the hunter. Cornwallis Harris and his hunter-comrade Richardson were practically the only white men who had ever pursued game there before the Dutch appeared. If we except the old Cape Colony, Griqualand West, and South Bechuanaland, no other regions in the world could vie with these new countries in wealth of animal life. And especially elands, hartebeest, bontebok, blesbok, quagga and Burchell zebra, brindled and white-tailed gnu, and the innumerable springbok contributed to render the face of the land literally black with game.

Between 1840 and 1875 it is certain that many millions of these animals must have been destroyed in the Transvaal and Orange Free State. So lately as 1860 a drive of game was got up for the Duke of Edinburgh—then Prince Alfred—in the Orange Free State. It was computed that some 25,000 herd of game were enclosed by natives and driven in. Thousands—some say 6,000—were shot, and several natives were trampled to death by the charge of a terrified herd of Burchell's zebras. To-day you may wander far afield over those very plains without seeing even a solitary head of game. Only a few springboks, blesboks, and one troop of black wildebeest (white-tailed gnu), preserved by Dutch farmers, remain in those once crowded wilds. Of the Transvaal, the same dismal story has to be told.

Soon after 1850 the Boers of these pastoral republics awoke to the fact that the skins of these myriads of game were marketable commodities. For years they were hard at it working out their mine; but the end came at last, and since 1880 there has been little animal life left in these territories. The Boers became perfect adepts at skin-hunting, putting in just sufficient powder to drive the missile home, and carefully cutting out their bullets for use on future occasions. So lately as 1876, when I first wandered in Cape Colony, I well remember the waggons coming down from the Free State and Transvaal, loaded up with nothing but the skins of blesbok, wildebeest, and springbok. This same miserable system of skin-hunting has been, unfortunately, and still is pursued in all native states of South Africa where any game remains. In those days, too, the sight of waggons from the far interior, loaded full with ivory, was not uncommon. I remember them well. In 1875 the export of ivory through the Cape Colony alone was worth £60,402. In 1885 it had sunk to £2,150! A pitiful contrast indeed!

The quantities of game shot by the early successors of Cornwallis

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Harris north of the Orange River were prodigious. In one season Oswell and Vardon slew between them eighty-nine rhinoceroses—to take one item of animal life alone! C. J. Anderson, in the fifties, shot some sixty of these immense and slow-breeding creatures in a few months in South-West Africa. Gordon Cumming probably could boast the greatest bag of any of these Nimrods. He shot through South Africa from 1843 to 1850, and his butcher's bill must have been immense.

But, it is to be remembered, besides the great hunters, whose books have recorded for us this plethora of sport, there were always silently at work in the wilds those unknown gunners, who are content to slay without troubling the world with statistics—Englishmen, Boers, Griqua half-breeds, Hottentots, Bechuanas, and other native hunters; all these were, and still are, busy. And to the weapons of these obscurer sportsmen, the great bulk of the game of South Africa has, of course, fallen. To-day and to-morrow, their work of destruction still goes forward. Nothing, it seems, can check it. How are you to patrol or preserve those silent, illimitable deserts, hundreds of miles even from a native town, where the game still lingers, and the black hunter—often armed nowadays with a good Martini-Henry breechloader—is at work? At the same time you can hardly blame the black hunter for slaying the game of his country. It is a natural result of contact with the white man, and of the introduction of firearms.

Gordon Cumming began his hunting in 1843 in the northern part of Cape Colony. At that time the game still swarmed over the parched karroo plains. Quagga, wildebeest, hartebeest and springbok fell in numbers to his rifle. In the deserts south of the Orange River—now sheep and goat walks in the Hope Town Division of the Colony—he enjoyed magnificent sport with the gemsbok (*Oryx Capensis*) which then abounded there. In those days the "trek-bokken," or migration of springboks, was common in the north of Cape Colony. Gordon Cumming witnessed one of these migrations. "I beheld the plains," he tells us, "and even the hill sides which stretched away on every side of me, thickly covered, not with herds, but with one vast mass of springboks; as far as the eye could strain the landscape was alive with them, until they softened down into a dim red mass of living creatures." This "trek-bokken" Cumming estimated at some hundreds of thousands. On speaking to an old Boer about it, he remarked that "it was very fair 'trek-bokken'; but," he added, "you this morning beheld only one flat covered with springboks. I give you my word that I have ridden a long day's journey over a succession of flats covered with them as far as I could see, and as thick as sheep in a fold." I have myself heard much the same account from old farmers, English and Dutch, of the Cape Colony.

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In these astonishing migrations, the springboks, travelling from the immense and arid deserts in the north-west of the colony, devoured every glade and leaf of vegetation before them. The frontier Boers often lost their entire crops, and even their flocks and herds were sometimes swept away before the myriads of antelopes and lost. It is on record that a lion has been seen encompassed by a mass of trekking springboks quite unable to escape, a pretty situation, truly, for the king of beasts!

It is a pleasure to record that the springbok, one of the most elegant and graceful of all the antelopes, still survives in some plenty in Cape Colony. I found it some few years since on the Great Karroo in large numbers. My friend Mr. J. G. Millais had some excellent sport among springbok in the neighbourhood of Beaufort West only last year, and has brought home some most interesting studies of these charming antelopes. In Bushmanland, to the north-west of the Colony, the "Trek-bokken," on a greatly reduced scale, still continues, and the wandering Trek Boers in that region shoot large numbers of this game. As the Cape Colony becomes slowly settled up, however, and runs are fenced in, the springbok will probably become semi-domesticated or disappear like the rest of the game.

In the dry uninhabited regions of Bushmanland, the springbok will doubtless survive to adorn the veldt for a good many years to come.

Gordon Cumming gradually pushed his way north of the Orange River, enjoying the most extraordinary sport, and shooting incredible quantities of game. He shot all his elephants in the Bakwèna and Bamangwato country, never needing to go further north than Letloche, not very far from Shoshong, Khama's old town. There are old men yet alive among the Bakwèna and Bamangwato (among the latter is the chief Khama himself) who hunted with Cumming in those days, and remember his exploits perfectly well. Khama himself has proved an apt pupil, and no better or braver native sportsman has ever gone into the hunting veldt.

It was the fashion at one time to decry this great hunter's feats as purely apocryphal. This is an entire mistake. That Cumming did actually slay the immense numbers and varieties of great game mentioned in his book is vouched for by Livingstone himself in his *Missionary Travels in South Africa*. Livingstone was in the country when Oswell, Vardon, Gordon Cumming, and other hunters, were performing their feats, and had a good deal to say in their favour.

Following Gordon Cumming, and bitten by the wonderful records of his sport, came Baldwin, another mighty hunter, who shot from Zululand to the Zambesi from the years 1852 to 1860. Mr. Baldwin

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is, I believe, still alive and hearty, and able to enjoy sport in Cheshire and elsewhere.

In the middle fifties Baldwin shot chiefly in Zululand and Amatongaland, where, among all kinds of heavy game, he had immense sport. These countries, together with the adjacent Swaziland, are now quite denuded of great game. At a later period he shot in the far interior, visiting Lake Ngami and the Victoria Falls. A fine horseman and shot, possessing wonderful nerve, William Charles Baldwin established a reputation in South Africa second to none of the great Nimrods who preceded him.[1] Many and many a big bull elephant, many a fine tusk of ivory, fell to his rifle. His game toll, too, must have been a very heavy one.

The last of the great hunters is Mr. F. C. Selous, and, of all the pursuers of big game, Selous has been upon the whole the most sparing, and the least wasteful. In his early years, it is true, he pursued elephants for their ivory, as a means of livelihood, and a matter of business; and by dint of immense courage, energy, and endurance, slew undoubtedly great numbers of the tusk-bearing pachyderms. But, apart from this, Selous has always been one of the most merciful of hunters, killing only for the sake of procuring specimens or to supply food for his followers.

Just as Cumming and Oswell were attracted to the great hunting grounds by the fascinating records of Cornwallis Harris, and as Baldwin and others in their turn followed eagerly in the wake of Gordon Cumming, so Selous seems to have gravitated to South Africa from a perusal of the deeds of foregone heroes, especially of Cumming and Baldwin.

But Selous found things already greatly changed. By the year 1871, when he first landed, much of middle Bechuanaland and the Transvaal had ceased to be shooting ground. To get among the elephants, the lad—as he then was—had to penetrate to Matabeleland, gain permission of Lobengula, and then pass into Mashonaland.

In Mashonaland, along the Zambesi, in the Mababe veldt (Ngamiland), and in the Chobe River country, Selous for many years had his fill of sport and excitement. But the elephants vanished rapidly, and became more and more hard to procure, and for some years before the opening up of Mashonaland (in which he has played so great a part), the last and best of the African hunters—as one may well call him—shot specimens for museums and turned his attention to exploration. Whatever damage he may have done in early years among the elephants, the magnificent specimens of great game sent home by Selous to the Natural History and other museums, amply acquit him of the charge of mere wasteful slaughter.

(1) See *South African Hunting from Natal to the Zambesi.* By W. C. Baldwin. Bentley, 1864.

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From this charge it is impossible to absolve many of the great hunters. Gordon Cumming and many others were undoubtedly wasteful in their methods; they shot far too often for the mere pleasure of slaying, and wasted enormous numbers of rare, singular, and beautiful game. One can, perhaps, hardly blame them; the profusion of animal life was so great, the temptation so overpowering. No one, who has not been in the presence of great game, mounted and armed, can understand how difficult it is to stay one's hand at such a time.

On the other hand, there are many things to be said in extenuation of the great British hunters, whose exploits in South Africa have for the last fifty years been alternately the themes of admiration and regret. They were magnificent pioneers, none better ever represented England; and they have contributed perhaps more than any other cause to the opening up of the interior. The frontier Boer of the middle of this century called all the country north of the Orange River "ons veldt," "our country," and declared that no other white men should enter it. But the missionaries, the traders, and above all the hunters, have been too much for them.

Of late years the gold-seekers have, too, been pressing northward, and, thanks chiefly to these pioneers, the hunters, the traders, and the gold-diggers, Central South Africa is at the present day an English and not a Dutch dependency.

The wonderful courage and energy of the early hunters contributed also, in a very great degree, to the respect and admiration in which the Englishman has been held by the black man. In nearly every instance these early explorers were men of perfect truth, honesty, and fairness, from whom the natives early formed an excellent impression of the English character. Since the invasion of the interior in recent years by a swarm of mixed nationalities, the estimate of the white man has been a good deal depreciated; yet it may be said with some satisfaction that in nearly every instance the word of the Englishman is still accepted as his bond—good always for money or its equivalent—among the native races throughout Southern Africa. For this excellent character in the South African *Hinterland*—for the attributes of chivalrous courage, honesty, and fair dealing—again, I repeat, we have to thank mainly the race of English hunters. If they destroyed the game, they built up for their successors a magnificent reputation.

I have said that for many years I have taken a deep interest in the history of the game of South Africa. Some years since, in wandering through Cape Colony, I took a good deal of trouble to ascertain the distribution and numbers of the fauna still remaining. I found, of course, that terrible devastation had taken place. Most of the nobler beasts had vanished. The crowds of game that roamed the

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veldt in Gordon Cumming's time were gone, or nearly gone. The quagga had become quite extinct; the eland and the blesbok had disappeared; the lion and the last rhinoceros had given up the ghost in the fifties; the gemsbok and hartebeest only found shelter in scant numbers in the desert fringing the Orange River. Almost the last hippopotamus of the Cape rivers was killed in 1874. A few of these behemoths are, however, still to be found in the lower waters of the Orange. The elephant and the buffalo, thanks to timely measures of the Cape Government in years gone by, had strangely enough been preserved from extinction. It is refreshing to be able to record that troops of these animals still range freely in the Knysna Forest, the Addo Bush, and one or two other densely jungled localities on the southern borders of Cape Colony. But, although these animals still roam the old Colony within sight of the Indian Ocean, it is a melancholy fact that you may now travel for a thousand miles and more up country without finding a single specimen. The koodoo, one of the most magnificent of all the antelopes, thanks to the efforts of a few English farmers in the eastern province, still exists. The leopard defies extermination, so far, and haunts the Cape mountains in nearly every district. The mountain zebra (*equus zebra*) lingers on a few ranges of the colony, along the Drakensberg, and as far east as the Lebombo Mountains in Swaziland. I have watched with the keenest delight a troop preserved on the farms of friends of mine in the eastern province, no great way from Port Elizabeth, where they were, of course, never shot at. The curious bontebok (*Alcelaphus pygargus*), numbered of old in the Orange Free State and Cape Colony by hundreds of thousands, is at the present moment represented by one single troop, long preserved on the estate of a Dutch gentleman, Mr. Van der Byl, near Cape Agulhas. These are the last of their race. The white-tailed gnu is almost as near extinction, although thirty years ago inordinately plentiful. The fecund springbok is still fairly abundant on the karroos, and especially upon the north-west plains near the Orange River. Some of the smaller antelopes, such as the rhebok, bushbok, steinbok, duyker, klipspringer, oribi, and blaauwbok still remain here and there in fair numbers.[1] The animals here enumerated form the poor remnant of the once innumerable Cape fauna; and, but for the timely measures of protection passed by the Cape Government, and the private exertions of some of the colonists, most of these animals would by this time assuredly have disappeared from the country south of the Orange River. In Natal very much the same state of things prevails, and beyond Natal, in Zulu-

(1) These notes are necessarily compressed. For further particulars of the game of the Cape I must refer the reader to *Kloof and Karroo: Sport, Legend, and Natural History in Cape Colony*. Longman's, 1889.

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land, Amatongaland, and Swaziland, the big game have practically vanished.

In 1890—91 I travelled through the whole of Bechuanaland, part of the Transvaal, much of the Kalahari and Ngamiland. Here I found the conditions of the great game even more deplorable in many ways than in Cape Colony.

Guns are now plentiful in every part of the interior, and native gunners—next to the Boer skin-hunters, the most reckless of all destroyers of animal life—are incessantly at work. Nearly the whole of British Bechuanaland and the Protectorate, as far as Khama's country, has now been denuded of heavy game. Here and there in the former territory a few troops of hartebeests still eke out a shuddering existence. But all the remainder of that wonderful collection of animal life depicted by Cornwallis Harris has vanished. The plains were tenantless, save for the small buck (steinbok and duyker). On the Maritsani River, where Harris had found himself involved in bewildering crowds of every kind of rare game, only a troop or two of hartebeest were left. On the Molopo—Gordon Cumming's "darling little Molopo"—where that great hunter, clad in his Highland kilt, and with bare arms and legs and vast red beard, had pursued the lion, buffalo, and other game, there remained but a reed buck or two. English sportsmen at Mafeking and Vryburg were now hunting with foxhounds the jackal and the duyker, where their predecessors had not long before pursued all kinds of noble beasts of chase, from the giraffe downwards.

To the westward, on entering the South Kalahari, I found gemsbok, hartebeest, koodoo, wildebeest, and a lion or two still maintaining a precarious sanctuary. Even here, however, the assaults of native hunters cannot be long resisted. The springbok and blesbok had been clean swept away from South Bechuanaland, leaving the great grass plains far more devoid of life even than in the Cape Colony. Not until we had passed Khama's town of Palachwe, and entered the waterless tracts of the North Kalahari, did we see any quantity of game. In the North Kalahari, and along the southern bank of the Botletli River, Ngamiland, we found and procured specimens of giraffe, Burchell's zebra, eland, brindled gnu (blue wildebeest), lechwe waterbuck, springbok, and some of the smaller antelopes. Tsesseby and pallah are becoming very scarce; of roan antelope we only found spoor once or twice. The elephant had disappeared, save for one small troop we heard of south of Lake Ngami. This troop has since been destroyed by the Batauana hunters round the lake. The rhinoceroses, black and white, and the buffalo had disappeared. The lion is still plentiful along the Botletli River, but owing to the number of native guns, it is not often seen, and we only found spoor occasionally round our waggons. The hippopotamus

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still survives, albeit in diminishing numbers, in Lake Ngami and the Botletli. How plentiful elephants must have been thirty years ago one could see by the deep paths leading to the water left by these animals. When one remembers that within two years of the discovery of Lake Ngami in 1849, by Livingstone, Oswell, and Murray, nine hundred elephants were slaughtered round the lake, one can appreciate the terrrible nature of their extermination ever since. It is not many years since, in the Okavango country, beyond Lake Ngami, some Boer hunters (the Van Zyls and others) drove a herd of a hundred and four elephants into a marsh, where they became helplessly embogged, and slew every member of the troop before setting of the sun.

We found giraffes plentiful in 1890 in the dry waterless acacia forests of the North Kalahari country, some twenty miles south of the southern bank of the Botletli, and were fortunate in being able to procure fine specimens. When one reflects, however, how constantly, even in these difficult and secluded regions, native hunters are at work, one cannot resist the conclusion that this wonderful quadruped cannot last many years south of the Zambesi. Round the adjacent country of Lake Ngami, in the two seasons following our expedition, no less than three hundred giraffes were slain by native hunters, solely for the value of their hides, from which sandals and colonial whips (sjamboks) are now chiefly made. Nothing can withstand such extermination. We found in this region, also, wild ostriches, gemsboks, hartebeests, and koodoos in some plenty. Amongst all these fine creatures, however, the same incessant destruction is going on.

In my recent book, *Gun and Camera in Southern Africa*, I have dealt fully with the present distribution of the fauna of all these regions.

Turning to the eastward, in Mashonaland the same mania for slaughter is rapidly exterminating the great game. Hunters, diggers, prospectors, passing travellers, natives, all are hard at work. Since the advent of the pioneers in 1890 the fauna of that almost virgin veldt has been terribly decimated.

Eastward of Mashonaland, again, along the Pungwe River and in other regions, which four or five years since were to be found abounding in game, the same devastation is going on.

In short, it may be said that, notwithstanding proclamations and attempted game laws, in these remoter portions of the South African interior the great game is disappearing day by day and hour by hour, and apparently will soon be little more than a mere reminiscence.

It is true that stringent game laws have for some time been proclaimed in Bechuanaland, the Protectorate, the Chartered Company's territories, the Transvaal, Orange Free State, and even Mozambique. The moderate measure of success attending the

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efforts of preservation in Cape Colony may be cited as proof of what may be done in other countries. But even in the long settled districts of Cape Colony, where writs run and native gunners are controlled, preservation has been found to be no easy matter. Even there game laws are constantly evaded by Trek Boers and others; and at the present time it is impossible to say whether the remnant of the game will be able to be retained permanently in the districts south of the Orange River.

In the vast countries of the interior, where the veldt is wider, and the population much more scattered than in Cape Colony, preservation is almost a matter of impossibility. How are you to restrain men a hundred miles from a single policeman or representative of justice? How are you to prevent the careless prospector and digger in those remote solitudes, when a great buck stands temptingly within gunshot?[1] How are you to check the native gunner, creeping about the dense bush, always on the look-out for a pot shot? The thing is, I fear, an impossibility. I know that in Bechuanaland the game laws are constantly broken by Dutch, natives, and colonial settlers, and that the game still disappears.

Quite recently a project has been set on foot among some prominent sportsmen and naturalists, which, if successfully carried out, may help in some degree to preserve many of the rarer species of the African mammalia—especially the larger antelopes—in some districts of the interior.

The idea, which is at present inchoate, is to secure if possible a grant of a tract of land—some 100,000 acres—in Mashonaland or the adjacent territories, fence it in, and form a park in which small herds of game may be enclosed. It would not be difficult to procure the young of many kinds of African game and rear them in such a park, and drafts could be sold off from time to time, to supply the collections of European and other countries. Whether the help of the Chartered Company or of the British Government in South Africa can be enlisted for such an object, which is a matter of vital importance; whether the scheme, if brought to a head, can be made self-supporting, which is also an important consideration; these are questions hardly within the scope of this article.

But that any undertaking, having for its object the rescue and preservation of the disappearing fauna of South Africa, will have in this country the sympathy of all true lovers of nature and animal life, is, I think, a fact beyond the scope of argument.

H. A. BRYDEN.

(1) Under recent regulations of the British South Africa Company, travellers and prospectors killing game for their own consumption ten miles beyond a township are exempt from penalties. Occupiers of land may also kill game upon their own holdings. Here is a fruitful source of extermination.

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