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EDITORIAL GLEANINGS.

WE were much indebted to the Secretary of the Society of Arts for advanced proofs of a lecture delivered last year before his Society by Mr. E. North Buxton, on the Preservation of Big Game in Africa. Unfortunately our space has not enabled us previously to make use of this most interesting material, and we now seize the first opportunity of publishing adequate extracts from the same:—

“Of course, man, the destroyer, has always been at his work, but his power has enormously increased, and should be tempered by mercy. If you compare the weapons of old with modern arms of precision, you will understand the ever-increasing rate at which the depletion of life goes on. What was the primitive way? I call an eye-witness of one hundred years ago:—‘By means of signals from natives posted on high, an immense concourse of men and dogs were speedily assembled near the deep and bushy ravine in which the Elephants had taken refuge. The clamour of the naked hunters, reverberated by the precipices, became tremendous. I was frequently constrained to tremble for the safety of the pursuers whilst witnessing their fearless advances towards the huge and irritated victims, seeing that their slender lance constituted the whole of their armour. To see them, in a state of perfect nudity, boldly proceeding to within reach of one of these powerful brutes, could not but give rise to the most serious apprehensions. Three out of the number were at length brought to the ground, and several others severely speared.’

“You will understand that from such a contest there were plenty of survivors. Now skip thirty years, and listen to this by way of comparison. By that time the power of the rifle had begun to be appreciated, and the favourite weapon was a two-groove rifle, and a belted spherical bullet:—‘I crawled in and came upon a kind of backwater from the main river, 150 yards long by 50 wide, with high banks, especially the one opposite me, on which sat dear old——blazing away right merrily. “What is it?” I shouted. “Look at those breasts,” he replied. Bang! “There, again.” The pool was alive with monstrous heads, and, though this was the first time I had seen the Hippopotamus in the flesh, there was no mistaking him. I opened fire at once from my side, at heads which showed for a second above water. Nothing came of it. Though the Hippopotamus were hit

every time, not one of them seemed to die. No results of the thirty or forty shots that had been fired, and yet the animals were within twenty or twenty-five yards of us. "Have you killed any, old fellow?" I shouted, and the answer came back to me, "No; but I have hit all I fired at." The evening was closing in. One Hippopotamus floated up dead on ——'s side. Next morning, however, on the surface lay fourteen huge bodies.'

"Now come to quite recent times. When in Vienna the other day, I saw, at the taxidermist's, the bag of a sportsman just returned from Somaliland. Among other things there were seventy heads of Soemering's Gazelle. What can one man want with seventy specimens? But the remarkable thing about them was that nearly the whole were females or immature males. To anyone knowing the habits of this species, which is to feed in large herds on the open plain, where they may be readily approached to within three or four hundred yards, it was perfectly evident that these had been obtained by shooting into the brown at about that distance—a very easy thing with a modern small-bore rifle, but hideously destructive and cruel.

"It is the invention of smokeless powder and small-bore bullets which marks this latest advance in destruction. Their enormous speed and penetration and absence of recoil make fun-shooting easy, even to a beginner; while the lightness and cheapness of cartridges tempt the novice to carry a number, and to fire them away at long ranges. Why, it has revolutionized war, and enabled a small and backward people to hold at bay a powerful empire. What wonder if it gives the greedy sportsman an undue advantage.

"I am here to-night to try and focus and unite the growing public sentiment in favour of the restriction of the energies of that class of sportsmen whose frenzy and ignorance have been responsible for such terrible destruction. I cannot do better, I think, than concentrate your attention for a few minutes on the marvellously rich fauna of South Africa a century ago, and compare it with the state of things at the present day.

"Here is an old calf-bound book, given to me by my grandfather fifty-four years ago, and which had lain for a similar period on the family bookshelf. I may be excused for reverting to it, as I imbibed from it the first love of the wilderness. It is a translation of the travels of M. Vaillant, a Frenchman, in 1780. He trekked out from the Cape, and thus describes what he saw in the near neighbourhood:— 'In the space of four leagues,' he says, 'we had on all sides very near us Gazelles, Bontibocks, Bubales, with numbers of Zebras, Ostriches, &c. My Dogs eagerly pursued these creatures, who mingled as they

fled, and altogether formed one vast herd, but the moment I had called off my Dogs, and they thought themselves out of danger, each different species composed a separate band, and kept at a certain distance from each other. Had it not been for my Dogs, I could have shot numbers of them from my waggons, for they were very tame, and seemed pleased to gaze on us.'

"He also notices the Blue Buck, which has now passed for ever, and immense herds of Buffaloes and Elephants, 'so amazingly numerous that we thought it inadvisable to dispute their passage—my camp, animals, and carriages would have been pulverized in a moment.' Even at that period the unnecessary slaughter of wild animals had excited attention. The Swede, Sparrman, wrote, in 1786, of 'sportsmen who merely for the pleasure of shooting are guilty of wasting the treasures of nature in a most unjustifiable manner, and thus spoil their own sport as well as that of others. For when,' he says, 'they make a hunting expedition, they seldom or ever return from the pursuit of a herd of game before they have made great havoc among them, though the carcasses are afterwards left to rot on the ground.'

"It was, however, well into the nineteenth century before the worst slaughter began. From year to year improved communications, the repute of those who had gone before, and better weapons, tempted fresh adventurers into the wilderness. Gordon Cumming was one of the pioneers. In my youth I regarded him as a hero, as did many others. I have somewhat altered my opinion. Here are specimens of his practice taken at random:—'In the evening I shot a lovely Fawn and a big Pallah. I wounded a White Rhinoceros, but did not follow it, and in returning to camp started an Ostrich off her nest. It contained twenty eggs, which I directed the Bechuanas to bring to camp. As we held up the side of the river, I killed a very fine old Black Rhinoceros, and, cutting off his horns, rode home (that is, leaving to waste meat enough to feed a village). In the course of the day I saw the fresh spoor of about twenty varieties of large game, and most of the animals themselves, namely, Elephant, Black, White, and Longhorned Rhinoceros, Hippopotamus, Camel-Leopard, Buffalo, Wildebeest, Zebra, Waterbuck, Sassayly, Koodoo, Pallah, Springbuck, Boar, Dinker, Steinbuck, Lion. Besides the game which I have noted, the following are not uncommon: Eland, Oryx, Roan, Sable, Antelope, Hartebeest, Klipspringer, and others.'

"The above list, of course, by no means exhausts the fauna of South Africa, probably at that time the richest of the world. At least forty species of great game may be found recorded. In recording the death of his fiftieth bull Elephant, he adds the words, 'not to mention

numbers lost,' as if that were something to his credit. Indeed, it would seem that the numbers lost were almost equal to those secured.

“Thirty years later most of the Cape Colony was denuded of game, but Oswell, Livingstone, and others still found vast herds beyond the Orange River. Near the Matopo River, Oswell describes: ‘Seven different kinds of animals within view, some, especially the Quaggas and Buffaloes, in large herds, Springbucks, Hartebeest, Gnus, &c., filling in the picture; together there could not have been less than three hundred.’ Of these the Quaggas, or Mountain Zebra—a most graceful animal—are completely extinct. Here is an account of another of the beasts which have perished; the Borili, or ‘sour-tempered one,’ as the Kaffirs called him—the White Rhinoceros: ‘Poor, stupid, old fellow,’ he says; ‘too quiet, as a rule, though, when thoroughly upset, reckless; he was just the very thing for young gunners to try their prentice hand on.’ You see young gunners must have something to blood themselves upon which is too clumsy to get away, just as you draw the teeth of rats when you are entering a young terrier to them.

“A much more valuable world’s asset at this time than the Rhinoceros or Hippopotamus were the Elephants. Oswell, in 1850, describes seeing, near Lake Gnami, four hundred Elephants standing drowsily in the shade of the detached clumps of mimosa trees as far as the eye could reach in a fairly open country. ‘There was nothing but Elephants. I do not mean in serried masses, but in small separate groups.’

“But the sad story of Elephant slaughter during the nineteenth century should be examined a little more in detail. Not only has a valuable and productive asset been thrown away, but the possible use of the Elephant as a friend and servant of man been sacrificed. To what purpose was this waste? The herds were abundant throughout Cape Colony at the end of the eighteenth century, when Barrow, a secretary to the Governor, records a herd of four hundred having been seen in the neighbourhood shortly before. It is probable that up to then, and perhaps for twenty years later, the Elephants suffered no great diminution except from traditional methods—pitfalls and spears—of the natives. But by 1830 they had thinned out, and the ivory-hunters had to go further afield. When the Boers crossed the Orange River they opened out a vast ivory-bearing territory, and great numbers of hunters took to Elephant hunting as a profitable profession. Who can blame them? They had to live, and a rich field lay open to the bold pioneer who feared neither savage nor wild beast. If blame must be allotted, it is to the rulers who recked not of the slaughter going on.

The heyday of the hunters lasted for fifty years. In 1836, Captain Harris found hundreds of Elephants in the Magaliesberg (close to Pretoria), where a sterner kind of hunting has lately familiarized us with those pastures. The next move took these brave wanderers to the Zambesi, and far to the west. At an ever-increasing rate the inroads on the herds continued, until what drought or pestilence or native persecution had never effected, the modern rifle has completed, and now south of the Zambesi scarcely a single herd remains. Only a few miserable hunted remnants, just as I remember in 1884 in America, the last solitary wanderers of the Bison were being shot down by cowboys, their very rarity making them ten times as valuable as a trophy. One slight exception must be mentioned. Owing to the foresight of a few individuals, a small sanctuary was established in the Kynsna Forest, near the coast in Cape Colony, which was perhaps the forerunner of all the game-reserves now existing. The pity of it is that such an experiment was not repeated in many a fair range of mountains in Mashonaland, the Orange River State, and the Transvaal. There were not wanting among the Boer farmers enlightened men who did what they could to preserve some of the disappearing species of Antelope on their own farms, as, for instance, the White-tailed Gnu. It is to be feared that the rough work which accompanied the drives of De Wet have left but a miserable remnant, even if this species is not entirely extinguished. I rejoice to know that under Lord Milner's enlightened rule several reserves have now been established in those States and in Cape Colony, so that something may be saved. It is a suggestive fact that the chief Lobengula had a reserve for Elephants, in which it was death for anyone to hunt, and another for Hippopotamus. When that chief went down it was white men who instantly devoured the whole. It is singular that this savage potentate should have had more foresight than the civilized beings who ousted him.

“ Unhappily the same story is being repeated as regards Elephants in Central Africa; notably in the upper waters of the Congo the destruction proceeds apace. The method of the Belgian is to squeeze the orange dry at the earliest possible moment. But everywhere the hand of man is against the Elephant. From their wandering habits it is to be feared these animals derive but little protection from the smaller reserves. The International Congress, which assembled in London in 1898 to consider this question, agreed upon certain recommendations to their respective Governments, but these appear to have been chiefly honoured in the breach except by ourselves.

“ Coming further north, I have known of one Englishman who destroyed thirty of the small remnant of Elephants in the British

Protectorate of Somaliland. These were all females or immature males. It is not surprising that they have now disappeared from that protectorate. They are rapidly diminishing in those regions of Abyssinia which adjoin it, and, it is to be feared, in the Soudan also. One more quotation on this part of the subject will be sufficient to account for this disappearance. This time it is a French newspaper which celebrates the prowess of a certain count. It is headed, 'Four Elephants in Four Minutes,' and, as it was accompanied by a photograph, it was easy to see they were all cows or calves.

“By way of indicating the diminution even in recent years, I have tried, from such returns as I could get access to, to arrive at the figures of the exportation of ivory from various African colonies, and selected what appeared to be most important in this respect. It will be seen that in these cases, at any rate, there is a steady decrease. From the Cape we find the value of this export in 1889 was £2495, in 1898 it was £1086. In British Central Africa the value exported diminished from £18,252 in 1895 to £543 in 1902. From Zanzibar, in 1891, ivory to the value of £544,818 was exported; seven years later it was reduced to £112,914. From the Congo Portuguese territory an export of 10,982 kilog. was soon reduced to 1600 kilog. From German East African possessions the value of exported ivory in 1892 was 2,439,000 marks; five years later it was only 1,495,000 marks. Only in the Congo Free State the supply seems to be at present maintained, but I fear by methods which will only too surely bring an end. There is reason to believe that a feverish pressure is maintained from Brussels on the officials, and by them on the unfortunate natives. Notwithstanding the international prohibition, scivelloes—that is, small tusks, valuable for billiard-balls—still come into the market.

“But I have said enough of the deplorable prodigalities of the past. It is to be hoped that this empire, whatever others may do, has sown its wild oats, and will husband its resources for the future. Under the instigation of the Foreign Office every British protectorate in Africa now has a series of ordinances for the preservation of wild animals and birds. They are mainly framed on the same model, but with some differences to suit the varying conditions. Certain specified areas are declared to be game-reserves. Licences must be taken out for a considerable payment in the case of strangers, and a much lower one for public officers or settlers. In most of them certain species of the larger game are altogether protected. Of the remaining animals, the licence specifies how many of each may be killed. As regards the commoner species, they are generally divided into two categories; of the larger and slow-breeding animals, as a rule, only two are allowed

to each sportsman, while of the commoner kinds, such as Lesser Antelopes, ten may be killed. Heavy fines are enacted for offences against these regulations. Heads, horns, and skins are not allowed to be exported. Every licence-holder is required to keep a register of the animals killed by him, and to submit this to the resident officer at the expiration of his licence, or on leaving the territory. Any Elephant's tusk weighing less than eleven pounds, if found in the sportsman's possession, and all cow-ivory, is confiscated. The use of dynamite or poison for the taking of fish is forbidden. Now these regulations are all good, and, provided they are effectually enforced, they should go far, if not to prevent the diminution of the game, at least to save the species from extermination. Of these regulations, by far the most important which can be adopted by the executive government of any territory as a practical measure for the preservation of species is the constitution of an adequate sanctuary.

“Next in importance to the establishment of game-reserves, I consider the provision which is now to be found in all sets of regulations for the provinces of Central Africa, but not, I fear, in the South African colonies, namely, the obligation upon every person taking out a licence to furnish, on its expiration, a return of the game which he has killed, specifying the number and sex of each species. This condition should be imposed upon all sportsmen without distinction, and is valuable for two reasons. One is the moral effect on the careless sportsman, who is certain to acquire some sense of responsibility when he bears in mind the necessity of setting down in black and white, for official inspection, the result of every successful shot. The other reason is that these returns may—and, I hope, will—be collected from the various colonies and protectorates under the Foreign Office and Colonial Office, and issued as a parliamentary paper. In the hands of an intelligent naturalist, it will serve as a most valuable comparison from year to year of the relative abundance or scarcity of the species. I regret to say that to my knowledge these returns are not always demanded from sportsmen. When their value is recognized, I am confident that a stricter enforcement of the rules will be general.

“Some of the officers concerned have hardly realized the importance of insisting on these returns; even one or two omissions vitiate the combined total, and naturally lead to laxity in other cases. The real sportsman should welcome this rule, while the inexperienced one ought to be taught self-restraint.

“I venture also to urge on the authorities that these returns should show how many licences have been taken out in each class, and if any proceedings have been taken against offenders, and, if so, with what

result. While on this point I wish to urge that the responsibility of instituting such proceedings should not rest with the game-officer when he is quite a junior official, but should be undertaken by the chief officer in the protectorate or province.

“The division of game into various categories—the ‘royal list’ comprising the animals of such rarity that they may not be shot at all; the larger animals and slow breeders, such as the Greater Koodoo, Rhinoceros, Elephant, and Roan Antelopes, of which only two may be killed, and the commoner Antelopes, of which a larger number is allowed—has already proved invaluable in many cases. The Government in each colony or protectorate should take into consideration from time to time the expediency of adding to this list species which have become rare, or removing others which no longer require this exceptional provision. The value of this provision is illustrated in the case of the Elands and Buffalo in British East Africa. These noble game had become very rare there four years ago. Now, owing to the special protection which they have received, they have to some extent recovered their numbers or immigrated, and considerable herds have been seen this year by sportsmen. The last measure of protection which I desire to emphasize is the prohibition of the export of skins. It must never be forgotten that it was the hide-hunters who were mainly responsible for the destruction of the Buffalo on the prairies of America.

“In conclusion, may I ask all those interested to bear in mind there are certain classes of animals in special danger, and who should be therefore specially guarded. They are:—

“(1.) Those having a very limited habitat, such as the Greater Koodoo or the White-eared Cob on the White Nile.

“(2.) Those animals which pasture on open plains, and which, owing to their conspicuous position, and to the power and range of the modern rifle, are subject to a new danger.

“(3.) The larger mammals, because they also are conspicuous and easily pursued, and especially on account of their slow breeding.”