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FUR-BEARING ANIMALS

The War and Game

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THE total death casualties of the war have been estimated by U.S. Secretary of War Baker as 9,000,000 men. The total population of the world is, I believe, something over a billion and a quarter souls, so that the world lost something like seven per cent of its population. But reproduction was going on all the time, and the world has more people to-day than when the war began.

Audubon once estimated that a single flock of passenger pigeons which he saw contained more birds than the total population of the world, yet, only a few decades later, there were no passenger pigeons. The race had been annihilated.

The comparison is interesting, for it illustrates the fact that the human being is the most hardy game animal of all. The greatest war of history not only failed to annihilate, but also failed to stop man's increase. Also it must be observed that, while humanity is increasing, game is decreasing. The ratio between man and the game he hunts is constantly assuming a more unfavourable percentage as regards the game. And the war itself, paradoxical though it may be, has, in many places and over large areas, accentuated the disparity.

Effect of War on Game Almost everywhere except in North America the food shortage has caused appalling inroads on the game supply. In England, the honorary secretary of the English Game Guild tells me it will take at least twenty years to get game back to anything like normal abundance. The great increase in vermin, with the gamekeepers off to the war, is partly responsible for this. In Russia many of the finest preserves have been ruined and game nowhere exists in its former supply. In France, the poison gases have completed the work of destruction. The Mexican bandits, in their mountain retreats, have converted magnificent game sections into unproductive wastes.

Carl A. Preley says that the war has taken a toll of from one-half to two-thirds of African game in the sections where there has been

fighting. Much of this game, he says, was wantonly slaughtered by the Boers for rifle practice. Aside from the northern portion of North America the picture is one of nearly universal gloom, but here, I am glad to say, conditions are much brighter.

Both Canada and the United States have wonderful food supplies, and, what is more important still, an exalted brand of wisdom with regard to their natural resources. In both nations, the full meaning of the value of the conservation of wild life is at least recognized. This was never more clearly demonstrated than by the passage of the treaty for the protection of migratory birds which to-day unites our two countries in brotherly bond, and which was ratified by your country during the darkest hours of the war.

**Food Value
of Game** Neither country for a moment lost its good sense. In the face of the clamour for cheap food in the form of marketed game, efficient protective laws were in no way relaxed. Both countries knew that, if the demand were granted, it would mean the annihilation of the game without any appreciable benefit, for the price of food would not have been lowered by any fraction of the medium of exchange. To-day, both countries have more game than when the war began—game which is of far greater value from the standpoint of making by the taking, men and soldiers, self-reliant and healthy individuals, than it can ever be for food alone.

I have seen it stated that, of the first contingent which Canada sent to the war, 75 per cent were sportsmen. After the proof these men gave of splendid valour and efficiency no further argument is needed in support of game protection. If such men are bred and vitalized by any sport, then it is sacrilege to endanger that sport. Thank God, the officials who have been responsible for the preservation of the game have been true to their trust.

Just one word of caution here, which must be taken at its relative value to the whole subject. The tendency to-day is toward too much restrictive law. We must not let the tail wag the dog. Conservation of game is right, but the conservation of sport is righteous.

**Restrict the
Market Hunter** Next to the advance of civilization, the chief factor that has reduced our game is the market hunter. Almost everywhere we have put an end to the commercialism of game, with the result that game is on the increase. The low-water mark in many places has been passed. We have the laws and the machinery for putting them into effect. From my viewpoint, we now need better enforcement of existing laws rather than additional restrictions, which are

only exasperation to good sportsmen. Where the law is not thoroughly enforced, you and I know that such restrictions penalize the best class only and that the others do as they please. Laws, as a general rule, should not be enacted too far in advance of public sentiment.

Close seasons are worse than useless unless they are enforced, and the vermin kept down. I say they are worse than useless, because they do not increase the game, while they do increase lawlessness and disregard for other laws. In the United States, antelope and mountain sheep have been exterminated under long closed seasons. In this instance, it is true there were closed seasons, but they should have been enforced. It would be much better to lose the game without law than to lose both the game and respect for law at the same time.

**Game Laws
not Enforced** Last Friday night, at the dinner of the Canadian Camp in New York, a member of the Legislature of a Canadian province told how generally game laws were violated in his province. North of this city, in time past, I have seen beaver skins openly trafficked in, while the beaver were nominally protected by a close season. There were plenty of beaver and the people could not see the necessity for protecting them. At Fort Yukon, Alaska, they fed dogs on white flour last winter, with moose in sight every day, but, on the headwaters of the White river, men were taking dogs to board and feeding them on mountain sheep. All you gentlemen, whether from Canada or the United States, could multiply such instances.

We know that we do not enforce our laws properly anywhere; that is nothing to be surprised at. All of us believe in the decalogue of the ten commandments and we would not repeal them, if we could; yet they are violated every day. All we can do is to obtain a better brand of enforcement. We can go ahead and stop a great deal of this violation; meanwhile, do not let your laws run ahead of public sentiment.

Do not spring your law, no matter how good, until you are prepared to put teeth in it. Better err on the side of too great liberality than err in the other way. Educate the public to see the necessity for protective legislation. The great mass of testimony proves that paper laws play into the hands of the Huns of sport. Let us, by all means, have fewer restrictions and better law enforcement.

**Effect of
Migratory Bird
Treaty** In the United States, we feel that the situation as regards the future of the wild fowl supply for the present and future is now amply safeguarded by the

Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Though of not nearly so great importance as our treaty with Canada, we hope within a reasonable time to secure similar relations with Mexico. The wild fowl supply has certainly increased tremendously in the last few years, and I say this, despite the fact that, on our side of the line, the shooting season just past was, in many parts of our country, the poorest we have had in forty years. This was due, of course, to the unusual mildness of the weather. It indicates that, under normal conditions, we will have a very fine season next year.

In general, the States are looking much more closely than ever before to maintaining their supplies of localized game. A business-like feature towards this end which is receiving much attention with us is the game census. In many states, the new hunting licenses require, in addition to the usual facts, a report of all game and fur-bearing animals and vermin taken during the previous year. The killing of vermin is encouraged. This is being supplemented by estimates of the game animals and game birds at large in the covers. It is a business proposition, this inventorying of resources, and it furnishes a business basis for new regulations. I look to see the system greatly perfected in the United States and Canada during the next few years.

Then, too, we are doing a tremendous work in the United States in propagating game, chiefly deer and pheasants, to stock depleted sections. The States, in the aggregate, are spending a good many hundreds of thousands of dollars in this way for the benefit of the sportsmen. Looking to the day when wild fur-bearing animals will be less numerous than at present, the United States Government, under the direction of Dr. Nelson's department, has established an experimental fur farm in Northern New York.

