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ROMANCE OF THE BUFFALO.

HOW THIS NOBLE BEAST WAS
SAVED FROM EXTINCTION.

The reported discovery in Central Africa of a prehistoric monster has naturally called attention to the whole subject of the survival of the larger mammals. If the Brontosaurus is actually not extinct, its preservation is due to the fact that man has not hitherto invaded its ancient haunts. But in most cases the survival of the larger beasts has been achieved by the direct intervention of far-seeing man.

The case of the American bison ("buffalo" is really misnomer) is a striking example of this benevolent interposition. Twenty years ago the bison was given very short shrift. So much so, indeed, that less than a decade since the animal in its wild state was said to be practically extinct.

But for the action of the Canadian Government that statement would probably now be correct. Happily, measures taken shortly before those words were printed have ensured to the buffalo perpetuation of his species under the most favourable conditions in the territory of the Dominion.

No tourist in Canada should omit a visit to Wainwright in the province of Alberta. There he will find an extensive and beautiful park in whose peaceful pastures he may study at his ease the appearance and the habits of the largest existing herd of American buffaloes. The extent of this National Buffalo Park, as it is called, may be gauged from the fact that the steel-woven wire fence which encloses it measures 75 miles in length, and cost \$15,000. Within these walls the visitor will see mile after mile of rolling prairie, covered with a luxuriant native grass, and diversified with clumps of poplars and charming miniature lakes. Here and there are sand dunes which provide those "wallows" which delight the heart of the buffalo; and a number of streams connect the lakes, and issue at one corner of the park into the Battle River. The bison is not the sole denizen of this beautiful preserve; moose, elk and deer roam unmolested within its precincts; and in summer and autumn the lakes are clamorous with the cries of thousands of wild geese and ducks.

Constant efforts are being made by the Dominion Government to increase the natural charm of the Buffalo Park, and beautiful boulevards and shady drives have been constructed near the lakes and the river. No restrictions are placed on visitors to the park, save that dogs and firearms are forbidden. The buffaloes have become so accustomed to the presence of visitors that one may approach within a few yards of them, if one is on foot or in a vehicle. But an inherited instinct of self-preservation sends the beasts off at a gallop at the sight of a man on horseback. Altogether the herd numbers between 1,200 and 1,500, and the sight of these great, shaggy monsters quietly browsing on the slopes is a picture that lives long in the memory of all who have visited the National Park.

The acquisition of this vast herd of buffaloes forms one of the most fascinating episodes in recent Canadian history. About twelve years ago it came to the knowledge of Mr Howard Douglas, Dominion Commissioner of Parks, that one Michael Pablo, a Mexican half-breed living in Montana, possessed the only large herd of wild buffaloes on the American Continent, numbering about 900 head. For years the beasts had ranged the mountainous region of Western Montana, undisturbed by man. With the authority of the Canadian Government, Mr Douglas opened negotiations with Pablo for the purchase of the whole herd, and the bargain was clinched at the price, it is said, of £50 per head, this sum to include delivery at railroad. As soon as the news leaked out, the American papers were furious at the prospective transfer of the herd across the frontier, and loudly called upon the United States to rescind the transaction. But matters had gone too far, and the contract was kept.

The reluctance of the American public to allow the departure of the herd was a trifle to the resentment displayed by the buffaloes at their enforced emigration. To conclude the deal was an affair of a few hours; to deliver the goods proved a much more lengthy business. The bison were scattered over a hundred square miles of difficult country in small herds of about fifty each. Pablo's first task was to collect these small bodies into one large herd, and then drive the whole lot into a corral at the railroad. With the aid of forty skilled cowboys, the first aim was partially achieved, and after considerable trouble about four hundred and fifty buffaloes were safely entrained and dispatched to Alberta.

The utmost pains had been expended by Mr Douglas and his colleagues on the preparations for transporting the precious cargo. Stock cars, i.e., cattle trucks—

with individual stalls and openings in the roof through which water and food could be supplied en route, were employed; and in the Grand Trunk Pacific yards at Wainwright an ingenious unloading chute was specially constructed. So admirable were the arrangements that practically no losses occurred in transit.

The corralling of the first half of the herd was child's play compared with the problem now presented to Pablo and his assistants. Naturally, the buffaloes which had escaped the first drive were the most active and cunning beasts. Warned by the disappearance of their fellows they led their would-be captors an exhausting and often dangerous dance. As a picture the scene must have been extraordinarily thrilling. A score of cowboys rounding up hundreds of these quaint, shaggy monsters in rocky ravines and down steep mountain-sides; at one time eagerly pursuing; at the next closely chased by the infuriated beasts. Even when after incredible efforts a bunch of them had been driven as far as the rails of the corral, the exhausted state of the horses prevented the cowboys from making the final charge necessary to force the buffaloes through the entrances; and time after time all but a few tired cows and calves would break back to the open country.

At the end of several weeks of incredible but futile exertions, the cowboys were ready to abandon the job in despair; Canada's prospect of securing the remainder of the buffaloes seemed remote indeed. At the critical moment a dashing figure appeared on the scene. This was Charles Allard, son of the man who had originally founded the herd. A superb horseman, absolutely careless of danger, handsome in appearance, with an irresistible devil-may-care swagger, young Allard was the idol of the cow-punchers. He had little difficulty in collecting a band of riders after his own stamp, and once again the bison knew what it was to be hustled. A carefully organised supply of remounts at strategic points, and sound generalship in the disposition of his men, gradually enabled Allard to overcome the difficulties which had baffled the Mexican, and two hundred and ten bison were added to the herd at Wainwright. By degrees the rest were brought in until October, 1910, eight hundred and fifty beasts had been safely emigrated from Montana.

An incident in Allard's early career will show what manner of man this prince of cow-punchers proved himself. Before the herd was acquired by the Canadian Government one of the largest and fiercest bulls had been sold as a specimen, but had defied all efforts to secure him. Young Allard volunteered for the job, and, single-handed, armed only with a bamboo fishing-rod rode out on his quest. Encountering his adversary, the lad -eat him over the head with the rod. Infuriated at the insult, the beast gave chase. With the utmost coolness, Allard kept himself just out of the buffalo's reach, drawing him towards the corral, and repeating the blows with his pole whenever the bull showed signs of relinquishing the chase, until at length he was safe within the fences—an exploit of which the most famous matador in Spain might be proud.

Subsequently, about fifty more buffaloes were secured from other places in the Dominion and the States, bringing up the total in the National Park to 900. As the natural rate of increase is about 125 per annum, there is now no likelihood that the Bison, which once in countless numbers ranged the vast prairies of North America, will ever become extinct.

THE POPULAR SINGER.

No triumph is so easy, so undeserved, and so devastatingly vulgar as that of the popular singer. She has many assets, but only one gift. But of that one gift—a powerful and musical voice she is insanely vain; her vanity breeds self-assurance, and from that self-assurance arise a thousand petty affectations and insincurities; her brainless little head swells to inordinate size, and she tours through the English provinces and the American States convinced, a la Mary Pickford, that she is one of the greatest ones of the earth. Whereas, of course, she is nothing but a laryngeal curiosity. For Nature blunders sadly in the bestowal of her gifts—to the empty-headed she gives, perhaps as compensation, a marvellous voice, whilst the keen-witted and the imaginative have to go empty away. As Mr Ernest Newman said when writing of Hugo Wolf, the goods mean well, but their technique is weak. When by some divine accident, a fine voice is allied with a robust and sensitive brain, we get a great singer; but great singers are as rare as great poets or as honest politicians. Moreover, they cannot hope to compete with those whom the public worships. When Madame Aïda Acte comes to town she gives pleasure to hundreds, but when Dame Nellie Melba sings Tosti's "Good-Bye," with a sob in her throat, vast multitudes lie prone and weep.

RETURNED SOLDIERS.

REFUSE AFFILIATION
TO EMPIRE ALLIANCE.

The executive of the Returned Soldiers' League of Australia, decided not to grant affiliation to the King and Empire Alliance.

The secretary of the alliance (Major-General Rosenthal), who is also a member of the league executive, brought forward the proposal, having given notice of motion at the previous meeting.

The publicity officer of the league (Mr C. Davis) said that the resolution was the outcome of a discussion on a letter received from the King and Empire Alliance, accompanied by a memo. from Sir Sir Charles Rosenthal, asking that a notice of motion to this effect be placed on the agenda paper for congress. The letter was accompanied by a list of associations in Queensland with which the King and Empire Alliance was affiliated. It was pointed out that the Queensland association was formed 18 months ago, and was not a parent body of the association of which Sir Charles Rosenthal was hon. secretary. It was further stated that from the league standpoint there was no necessity for the existence of such an organisation in Australia, which had already proved its loyalty to King and Empire.

Another point raised was that the list of affiliated associations in Queensland should not influence the committee, seeing that those associations are not associations with kindred aims and objects to the league, whereas many were sectarian, such as the Protestant Federation. It was further remarked that although nearly every employers' association was included in the list, not one labour or unionist organisation was mentioned.

As the bulk of the league's members were working men, and did not concern themselves with the religion of their comrades—so long as they're white—the King and Empire Alliance was not of a sufficiently democratic nature to appeal to the members.

It was also pointed out that the only body that had the right to claim the title of "King and Empire Alliance" was the body of men who had fought for King and Empire, which body embraced men of every religious creed, every political belief and calling.

Allusion was also made to the fact that the Council of the King and Empire Alliance did not contain that number or proportion of returned soldiers that would inspire confidence in the league, and that if the Empire or Australia were to require men to defend King and Empire one need not go outside the league to obtain all the willing men needed.

Accordingly the executive declined to place the matter of affiliation on the agenda paper for the forthcoming conference of sub-branch delegates.

TRUCKS MADE OF CONCRETE.

The beginning of practical plans for the manufacture of reinforced concrete freight cars dates from 1909, when a patent for such a car was granted to Joseph B. Strauss, of Chicago. On account of the war, construction of a trial car was delayed; and it was but recently that the first car, of the gondola type, was completed by a Chicago company and tested under service conditions. Not only in the material used, but in its design and the details of construction, it represents an interesting departure from usual methods. The basic feature of the design, the "Scientific American" explains, is a steel skeleton body forming the outer boundary of the car, and mounted upon a steel underframe. The concrete walls and floor are contained within this frame, and, together with the frame and floor reinforcement, are connected to and interlocked with the underframe. The steel frame forms the finishing and protective edges, thus entirely shielding the concrete, and also serving as a complete system of stress-bearing members. In the construction of the test car the "cement gun" was used. The forms were placed on the outside of the car, and the cement was shot against them from within. The outside of the car, that is the surface against the forms, was given a smooth finish, but the interior was left much as it came from the gun. Tests of the completed car, both empty and loaded, demonstrated its practicability for rough service. In the test without load it withstood extremely rough handling in switching, and came through without injury. Subsequently the car was loaded with 55 tons (10 per cent. overload) of sand and turned over to a switching crew for service handling. It withstood this test also without injury. Other merits are claimed for the concrete car. It will not need painting, and will practically eliminate maintenance charges. Its life will be much longer than that of the wooden car.

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