

THE SENTIMENTALIST.

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One frequently sees the Nature lover or "sentimentalist" scored for his lack of grasp of a situation that is often tersely described as "Game versus Vermin," or some other aspect of conservation. Since the opinions expressed often show a lack of appreciation of the standpoint of the non-hunting lover of wild life that is quite as profound as the ignorance that is ascribed to him, his viewpoint may be emphasized.

The "sentimentalist," as he is termed, often in derision, may have as broad a background of experience as his critic. Sometimes he is a sportsman who has seen, with the passing of the years, the gradual depletion of our wild life, and who has laid aside the gun. He may be one who has never hunted, but derives ample enjoyment from observation of wild life, without killing. Sometimes he has other points of view. In any case his attitude should, in fairness, be accorded that degree of respect that accompanies sincerity of purpose not actuated by hope of gain.

Especially during the past thirty years have we seen the wild life of our continent ravaged in the name of sport, and the commercialism that depends on it. In this destructive alliance there has grown up a theory that the rights of the sportsman are paramount, and that he is justified in destroying any species that interferes with one that has been designated as game. This attitude seems to betoken a degree of selfishness, and an assumption of ownership, that will not stand the test. Has he who has never taken up the gun abandoned title to his share of grouse, or quail, or hawk, or owl? Is not his enjoyment as worthy of recognition as that of the man who finds enjoyment in killing? By what process of reasoning is the non-killer asked to relinquish his share? Surely he has a right to claim joint interest in wild creatures, and to assume some responsibility for their protection.

Settlement has seriously interfered with many of our larger species; no one believes that the bison could maintain its millions on our western plains. But settlement, and natural enemies, and diseases, have all been much overworked in accounting for the recent rapid decline in our game species. The disinterested student, reviewing the history of our game during the past few decades—an ever-dwindling supply pursued by a constantly increasing army of hunters—believes, unless a truer type of conservation is adopted, that the virtual disappearance of those marvellous creations that in his own memory peopled abundantly the woods and fields and marshes of our continent is inevitable. If in his pleas for less killing he may seem to tread on the toes of