

The gun clubs are at times given permits in our fair Dominion to shoot shags and hawks. I protest against this permission, seeing that both hawks and cormorants are part and parcel of the whole purpose of nature, and when man interferes for selfish and commercial reasons, the balance is destroyed and untold disasters follow. Birds of all kinds, whether of the water, wood, or waste, were more plentiful in New Zealand when hawks were numerous—that is fifty or sixty years ago.

Hawks are extremely useful; they kill rats, mice, and the young of introduced stoats, weasels and ferrets, thereby helping nature to achieve its equilibrium. Shags destroy weak and diseased fish; they also keep our streams free from fungus and eat crabs, crayfish, young eels and small trout. In most of the streams that have come under my observation, where cormorants are plentiful trout are also plentiful, and are moreover bigger and in better condition.

The instinct of sympathy in the higher peoples appears to be much weaker than many of the primeval instincts—for instance, the hunting and fighting instincts. Charles Darwin says: "Sympathy beyond the bonds of man, that is humanity, to the other animals seems to be the one of the latest acquisitions. The very idea of humanity to animals, one of the noblest with which man is endowed, seems to arise from our sympathies becoming more tender, and more widely diffused, until they are extended to all sentient beings. As soon as this virtue is practised and honoured by a few it spreads, through example and instruction, to the young, and eventually becomes incorporated in public opinion."

Surely there is something nobler in life than the wounding and killing of defenceless birds and beasts. Cannot these alleged "sportsmen," anglers and shooters achieve fame in some better and nobler way? Ethically, I have always understood that man's mission in life is to eradicate suffering and pain, both from the animal and human kingdoms. Imagine a man's sole objective in life being the purpose of seeing how many beautiful living things he can destroy or maim! Some of the men and women that are part of human society are very proud of this primordial urge to slay, so much so that they have themselves photographed along with the defenceless creatures that they have destroyed, and have the pictures appear in the illustrated papers and magazines, thus proclaiming to the world their vanity and their primordial lust to kill and destroy.

It has been said that civilization is a train. It drags along with it a great many things that rightfully belong to the past—