

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—not only vestigial instincts, but also vestigial customs, beliefs and institutions. The gladiatorial contests of ancient Rome, the bear-baiting of four centu-

ries ago, the cock-fighting of fifty years ago, have passed away on account of the growth of human sympathy. In America, and in many countries, pigeon and live bird trap shooting stands condemned, and Continental bull-fighting is decaying. Let us hope the shooting of birds and the taking of our big game fish, for the sole purpose of giving pleasure, will shortly give way to a public humanitarian spirit that will condemn any practice or sport that entails suffering to the lower animals. In the words of Howard Moore, "It is of vast advantage to us to be able to recognise these vestigial features in order that we may more skilfully disentangle ourselves from them, and, at the same time, definitely turn our backs on them in our efforts to advance to a better world."

AMERICAN EXAMPLES. HAWK MOUNTAIN AND SHAG GORGE

THE battle for wild life has reached a much more elaborate stage in the United States than in New Zealand. Here, the sleeping giant, Public Opinion, stirs uneasily in his sleep. In America he is up and doing.

In America the conservationists and bird-lovers and plant-lovers and friends of wild life fight over a wide front with many regiments (that is, with many societies) and control large and growing funds. In New Zealand there are just a few live societies and not much money—but the battle is the same.

In America they have the American Nature Association, the Wildflower Preservation Society, the American Forestry Association, the National Association of Audobon Societies, and the Emergency Conservation Committee, to mention only a few. The last mentioned, the E.C.M., set a classic example with regard to protecting birds of prey—an example which should give New Zealand shag-destroyers and hawk-destroyers ground for second thoughts.

The story is told in "Natural History" by Donald Culross Peattie, who writes that "the belief that all birds of prey are pests has been utterly disproved; most are actually beneficial to rodent control." According to this writer: "At Hawk Mountain, in Pennsylvania, local rifle gangs tried to clean the sky of lofty-flying falcons, eagles, and ravens as they skimmed above the rocky peak on their yearly migration.

Out of its slim funds, the Emergency Conservation Committee bought Hawk Mountain

and declared it the first sanctuary ever set up for birds of prey."

When will New Zealand reach the stage at which there will be an "Emergency Conservation" body with the cash and courage to buy up the forested river-gorges where, in mountainous surroundings, shags have their rookeries, their nests in the tall tree-tops, shot at by all and sundry, for the sake of an Acclimatisation Society's eighteenpence? Not till Public Opinion, the uneasy giant who stirs in his sleep, shall arise and put on his whole armour.

In America they have tapped the great reservoir of feminine enthusiasm. Women's clubs are not mere tea-drinkers, and they hear the call of the wild. For instance, "Paradise Key, in Florida, was the most beautiful everglade island in the country, the outpost of some of the rarest of tropical plants. The various proposals for disposing of it included turning it into an experimental station, a cornfield, a site for a bungalow town, grounds for a palace hotel, a sportsman's club. Instead, the Women's Clubs of Florida bought it and presented it to the State, to be left as God made it"

It will be a new step in New Zealand's culture, when women generally become bird-conscious and nature-conscious to the point of doing something about it.

And Acclimatisation Societies will be one step nearer grace when they realise that predatory species are not one of nature's blunders.