

MAN-MADE EDENS

Condensed from article by H. G. Maurice in the Journal of the Society for the Preservation of the Fauna of the Empire.

AESTHETIC and scientific considerations are very important, for they affect the spiritual life of man. But there is another weighty consideration of a practical order. It is that to destroy a species is to go against Nature, and when man goes against Nature experience shows that he will probably make a mess of things and Nature will take her revenge.

Man is, admittedly, the cleverest of all the animals, but in the scheme of Nature he is only one of the animals, and is as much subject to Nature's laws as the rest of them. He can destroy life, but cannot re-create it. That is one general and fundamental reason for not destroying a species if you can help it.

But it is no use suggesting that Nature should be preserved unless we are prepared to say how it should be done. You have to vary your technique according to circumstances. The main point is that neither commerce nor sport, nor that soulless process we call "development," should be prosecuted up to the point of exterminating a species. And so we come to the conclusion: let there be sanctuaries.

There are many forms of sanctuaries. Here and there it may be necessary to form a sanctuary for a particular threatened species—the Gorilla, the Okapi, the Bongo, or the Musk-Ox, or for a special bird or group of birds. But the best form of sanctuary is the National Park, an area dedicated by statute to the preservation, not of this or that animal, but of a community of animals, in fact, of Nature—which means Nature militant, Nature maintaining its balance through the law of tooth and claw.

But remember that the law of tooth and claw is an honourable law. Man is the only animal that kills for the lust of killing. A full fed Lion or Tiger is nobody's enemy; a bird can preen itself with impunity on the coils of a snake with a full stomach. Man the cultivator or stock-raiser must, of course, protect his crops and his stock against raiding herbivorous or carnivorous animals, as the case may be. But broadly speaking, if you have enough wild herbivores, the carnivores will leave man's cattle alone; and if you have enough carnivores, the

herbivores will not be driven by weight of numbers to seek pasture outside the sanctuary. Outside the sanctuary there must be control, and there is one herbivore that the carnivores cannot tackle. That is the Elephant, and Elephants are bad neighbours to cultivators. Outside the sanctuary we do not dispute man's title to take a toll of trophies from the animals he protects if he wants to, just as William the Conqueror hunted the Deer whom, we are told, he loved as his children. But let it stop there, or, better still, substitute the camera for the rifle.

A first lead in the direction of National Parks was given by the United States of America by the creation of the famous Yellowstone Park. The British Empire has not been far behind. In Canada there is the Wood Buffalo Park, which covers 17,300 square miles. It is the largest sanctuary in the American Continent, and among other things it has given the North American Bison security against extermination. In most parts of the Empire fauna preservation is practised to some degree. But the pace must be quickened if we are to save some of the animals which are near to extermination.

The most notable example of a real Nature sanctuary in the Empire is the Kruger National Park, which was constituted a Nature reserve by President Kruger, and later developed as a true National Park by the Union Government, aided by the genius of Colonel Stephenson-Hamilton.

Two striking lessons have been taught by the Kruger National Park. The first is that animals unmolested lose their fear of man, and so they can easily be studied in natural conditions. For instance, you can see there herds of Antelope and Buffalo and Giraffes unafraid of man; and Lions, those good-natured but temperamental creatures, yawning at the passer-by, or perhaps—if God is very good—such a scene as Colonel Stephenson-Hamilton describes, where a young Lion brought one of his rangers out of bed by steadily beating with his paw the gong used for summoning the native boys, while five other Lions sat on their haunches close by, an approving audience! The second lesson we have learnt is that more and more people are prepared to