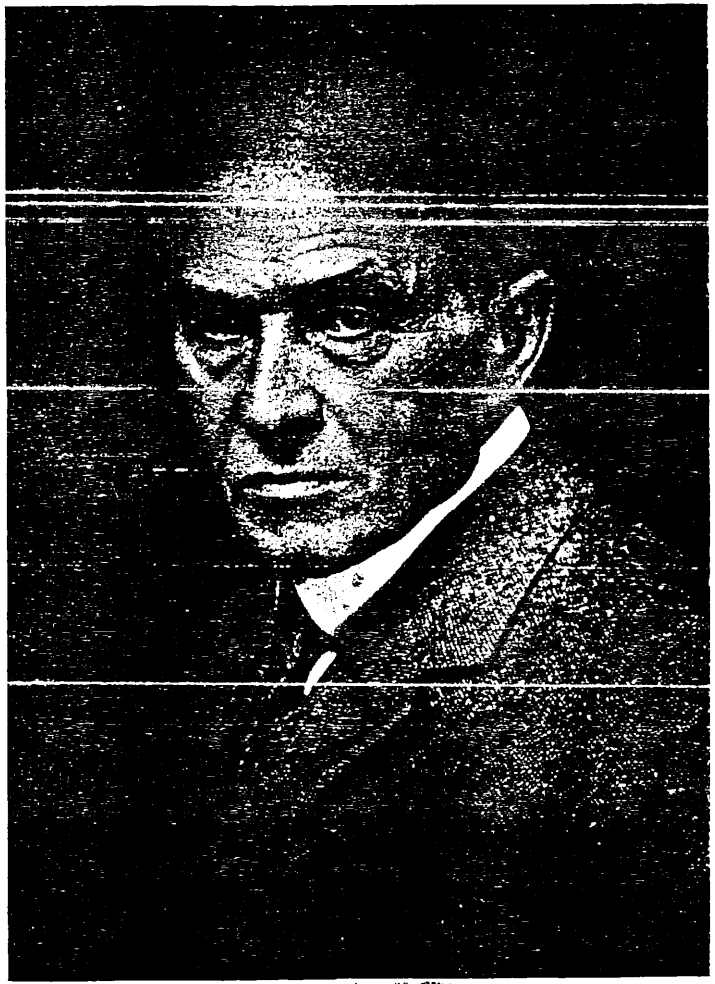

CARL AKELEY. HIS LAST PORTRAIT.

Photo. by James Henry McKinley.

CARL AKELEY'S AFRICA

THE ACCOUNT OF THE AKELEY-EASTMAN-POMEROY AFRICAN HALL EXPEDITION

By

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Foreword by

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With Illustrations and Maps

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long journey. I am sleeping in what seems to me a luxurious tent on a comfortable canopied canvas cot, and yet I have a feeling unbelievably similar to that I have experienced when lying on my blankets on a bed of boughs under a big sheltering spruce tree in my beloved Canadian Rockies. The glorious big white moon streams over me in my wide open tent and I seem to be close to the blue dome through which it slowly moves. The soft medley of early night sounds lulls me to sleep, and it is only when a hyena later on laughs hideously fifty feet from my tent that I come abruptly back into the African night. Half a mile away, the stallions in a big herd of Grevy's zebra bellow, jackals bark, a frightened spur fowl in the tree above my tent squawks, and far away by the Eusso Nyiro a lion speaks, bringing the sounds of midnight to a startling climax. Sometimes at such an hour I go out of my tent and walk a dozen yards on the veldt and stand in the cool drenching moonlight. The wind sings softly in the waving acacias. The witchery of the night is upon me; the impulse to go further and further is almost irresistible though I know that I am violating one of the canons of safety in faring forth even this little way into the night without torch or candle. I return to my tent and sleep so quickly and soundly that when morning comes I wonder if I only imagined my midnight stroll. But my slippers are thick with thorns and I know I have not dreamed.

Throughout one dark night, Carl and I lay on the ground in the shelter of a thorn blind near a water pan to listen to the murmur and the clamor of the night. First came the tiny pattering footsteps of the Grant's gazelle as they struck the hard outer edge of the water pan, and a scurry of wings from the night birds disturbed in wading the shallow pool. Then the clattering of many zebra hoofs, putting to rout the Granties. The deep harsh call of the Grevy's zebra stallion was unmistakable. A half dozen oryx joined them and drank with them as amicably as they graze together in the same pasture lands. Each is well matched in size and strength and speed and striking ability, and consequently theirs is a complete understanding. But soon all these animals made

Photo by Carl Akeley

SAMBURU WOMEN FILL THEIR CALABASHES AT THE FAST RECEDING WATER PAN WHERE GIRAFFE AND ORYX DRINK. WEAVER BIRDS BUILD THEIR NESTS IN THE ACACIA OVERHEAD.

off over the veldt and the noise of their drinking was followed by a different sound. We crawled to our two little peep holes. Filling our clothing and scratching ourselves with thorns, we peered out into the darkness. A huge leaden shadow was trampling the water hole to a ruin. Pawing, snorting, gulping, guzzling—only one beast could be guilty of such actions. His footprints next morning confirmed our identification. We had seen the bulky form of a rhino. As he rampaged about, a hyena set up his dismal yodel and the jackals ran barking into the night.

At the water pans many tragedies of the desert occur. A jackal kills a baby gazelle; a pack of hyenas pulls down a large antelope, for we have seen them sharing a freshly killed animal with no sign of lion in the neighborhood. The lion himself takes Grant's and Grevy's zebra for his nocturnal meal. Morning brings the vultures to polish off the fragments and the dainty little sand grouse fly in to quench their thirst in peace.

Unfortunately, a fortnight after our arrival at our desert camp the water pans disappeared, and our thrill in fraternizing unseen with the midnight folk was all too short. Thereafter, the animals traveled to the big river to drink. Separated from our camp only by the sand river, trails of elephant and the wide footprints of the lion told me of their passing while I slept.

But the wild folk remained in great numbers on our veldt, and for many days I watched them and came to know some of them individually when we met. When, in our day's work far afield, we continually crossed the trails of many denizens of the desert, Africa became increasingly enchanting. By far the most interesting of all this unspoiled family of the wild is the reticulated giraffe, beautiful and graceful, frequently conspicuous, voiceless, mildly childlike in the expression of his eyes. What a marvel that he, so unaggressive, has been able to survive. Here at twilight we see a superb lone bull browsing on an acacia branch seventeen feet above the ground; on the warming veldt at sunrise we surprise, not a quarter of a mile from our camp, a herd of nineteen—mothers, 'totos,' maiden aunts and young

move his camp down to us. Carl and Rockwell continued the buffalo hunt. On one occasion they made a two day trip to the junction of the Theba and Tana rivers through a region Carl had previously know as swarming with game. They encountered only one small band of buffalo and saw almost no other animals. They returned without either seeing or securing a single suitable specimen. Their long journey, jouncing in an empty lorry, over the sun-baked plain was another heartbreaking, fruitless effort made necessary only because of the rapid and ruthless slaughter of the game.

Not only has this great valley witnessed the diminishing of its buffalo herd but it has also witnessed the disappearance of practically all the other animals once so common and plentiful, such as hippo, kongoni, the gazelles, reedbuck and rhino. At intervals of ten to thirty yards all up and down the shores of the Tana are deep furrows in its clay banks, cut out in bygone years by the sharp hoofs of many hippo. To-day the hippo are scarce indeed. In 1910 in a ten mile march Carl counted more than two hundred hippo, but during more than a month in this region only seven hippo were seen by members of our expedition. In a journey of ten or fifteen miles from our camp and back again we could see only two or three kongoni, a dozen zebra or a solitary reedbuck. As we swept the plains with our binoculars longing for at least a glimpse of something wild, we constantly met disappointment. Usually the plains were as deserted as if swept by famine, or the dark herds grazing in the distance proved only native cattle wandering far from some thorn-enclosed manyatta. In the whole triangle we saw only one rhino.

The desolation wrought in this region greatly depressed my husband and made him appreciate more than ever before the absolute necessity of carrying out his plans for African Hall at once. Even in 1905, when he found on the open plains near the Tana a herd of five hundred buffalo, indifferent both to the sight and sound of man because they had had little experience with him, it had been a tremendous task for him to obtain the specimens desired by Field Museum. To have shot a half dozen buffalo then would have been easy but the selection of a scientific series to illustrate the animal's development from immaturity to maturity was quite a different matter. Under such changed conditions as we encountered, to make a collection suitable for his purpose was almost impossible.

Hoping that the nerves of the tinga-tinga herd had by this time steadied down a little and that they would soon venture out to graze at sunset or at dawn, Carl suggested that Rockwell build a *boma* high in a tree at the upper edge of the swamp. Here he and his gunboy, Molimo, spent several nights on the lookout for a proper specimen. At first nothing happened. Then one morning the movement of the cattle herons above the swamp indicated the approach of the buffalo. About nine o'clock, unaware of their observers, they moved in the direction of the tree with the sun shining brightly upon them. When thirty yards away, fifteen that had detached themselves from the rest herded together on a dry knoll that rose like a little island out of the swamp and there clustered about a great bull. One by one cows and yearlings lay down at his feet and began to chew their cuds contentedly while the old bull stood guard. The cattle-herons sitting on their backs or perching on their horns disturbed them not at all. Such a view of these great animals, usually so keenly vigilant and suspicious when man is privileged to see them, was an invaluable experience for a taxidermist who had come to Africa to observe peaceful animals before attempting to mount them in groups that must be absolutely true to nature. This scene on the edge of the swamp with the buffalo at ease on the little knoll is the model for the Buffalo Group that Rockwell is now preparing.

The specimen most desired was a bull—a large mature bull, but not an extreme or unusual animal. In such a selection, my husband had a very definite plan. He required the specimen to be above the average—fine and typically mature, but he did not wish a specimen to be so oversized or such a 'record' as not to

CHAPTER X

THE SWAN SONG OF OLD AFRICA

THE idea that Africa is the 'world's zoo' is indelibly impressed upon the general mind. How often we hear a sportsman, returning from his first trip to Equatorial Africa, announce that 'the supply of game is apparently inexhaustible.' Contrast with that view the statement of Philip Percival, who to-day knows Africa as well as any other white hunter has ever known it. "The *last bit* of old East Africa," he told us, "is the lion country of Tanganyika. And it is going fast." Without exception the few remaining men who have known Africa intimately for many years estimate that at the present rate of destruction even the exploited and much talked of lion and antelope country of Tanganyika Territory will be 'finished' within the next five years.

Without a proper basis for comparison, many things which we witness with our own eyes may deceive us. The opinion of the man whose African experience is limited to a few months spent in the game fields is of little worth, because he has no means of comparing the Africa of to-day with 'Old Africa.' To one whose experience with big game has been restricted to an acquaintance with an occasional moose, bear or deer, any giraffe will look enormous; any herd of thirty or forty antelope will seem an 'abundance of game.'

Basing his judgment upon an African experience extending over more than thirty years, my husband realized this ultimate fate of the African game. It not only saddened him but it motivated his interminable effort to bring to fruition his dream for African Hall. It strengthened his determination to work for the conservation of wild life in considerable areas in Africa through the establishment of a series of National Parks.

My own opinion on this subject naturally reflects that of my

husband and his friends of the 'Old Guard,' whose common sorrow at the passing of the old days became the subject of many a memorable conversation in our camps and in our Nairobi home. Certain it is that the wild animals of Africa are making a losing fight. Their backs are against the wall. The real problem of the student of primitive Africa, therefore, is not to defend himself against wild animals, but to see them. His real difficulty is not to make peace with 'dangerous tribes,' but rather to find them living according to their ancient customs. Economic interests have advanced so swiftly and surely upon this last stronghold of big mammals and savage peoples that the old Africa has for the most part passed into history. The modern high power rifle, the widespread and keen interest of both men and women to go to Africa to hunt big game, the fact that both white settler and native kill for meat—all these spell the rapid extermination of the wild life of Africa. Furthermore, Africa's national parks are only in their infancy. The game reserves have served certain ends of conservation, but they are not enough. All too easily they can be diminished or even abolished.

I caught my first glimpse of the game, as I suppose nine out of every ten African travelers do, when my husband and I passed through the Kenya Game Reserve enroute from Mombasa to Nairobi. While I revelled in the sight of these strange denizens of the wilderness, my husband, entering Africa for the fifth time to study and collect, was saddened by the spectacle before him. As he contrasted the Kenya Game Reserve on that morning in February, 1926, with the game fields he had known in 1895 and 1905—even in 1910—the few animals that we saw there seemed to him the last pitiful survivors of the primitive herds. And this was in protected territory!

As the day advanced and my husband talked of early days in British East, I recalled Buxton's description of his journey over the same railroad in 1899 and Roosevelt's account written ten years later. From the train windows Buxton had noticed rhinoceros, hartebeest, gazelle, zebra, ostrich, impalla, steinbuck, and

wildebeest in numbers which he had 'dreamed of but never hoped to see.' A single herd of wildebeest he estimated to contain no less than three thousand individuals. In a column four miles long they had marched along the railway tracks as if to invade the newly settled village of Nairobi. Roosevelt, on his entering journey 'through the Pleistocene,' viewed the herds from the vantage point of the cowcatcher. He describes not only the great abundance of the game, but also the half amusing, half annoying conflicts between engine and animal that were frequent in those days along the Kenya-Uganda railway. The very night he journeyed to Nairobi, giraffe in crossing the track interrupted communication by knocking down some telegraph wires and a pole.

Our own journey was uneventful. More and more, as the miles sped past, I realized that my appreciation of the moment resulted not from witnessing the spectacle of the game herds, but rather from the thought that I had been privileged to see an historic region before it was completely finished, and also from the feeling of unreality that crept over me when some animated relic of prehistoric times stalked into view.

As I have previously said, we found game in the Lukenia Hills and on the Athi Plains so rare that my husband was unable to complete his collection in that locality. He finally sent Rockwell into the remote Kidong Valley for the necessary specimens. Furthermore, in order to give our black boys meat once a week as we were bound to do, we frequently made purchases in the Nairobi meat market and bought sheep from the native Wakamba herders. To provide this weekly ration by our own guns would have meant hours of hunting the few shy antelope remaining on the plains. And yet in 1909—on Juja Farm, the estate of Sir William Northrop McMillan—Colonel Roosevelt had easily collected hippo and rhino and many varieties of antelope. Here, also, in the same year, Carl in the brief space of half an hour had collected enough antelope for an entire museum group. As quickly as he shot the specimens, his boys had carried them to him to be skinned and skeletonized. He had not even needed to leave

Photo. by Carl Akeley

WILDEBEEST GRAZE IN ONE OF THE 'GAME POCKETS' OF TANGANYIKA TERRITORY.

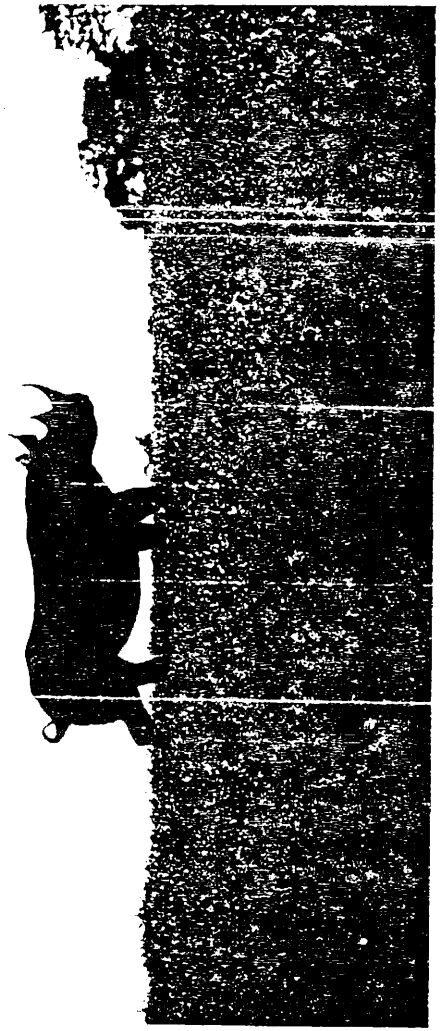

Photo. by Carl Akeley

CARL AKELEY BELIEVED THE RHINO TOO STUPID TO BE EITHER ACCURATE IN HIS OBJECTIVE, FIXED IN HIS PURPOSE, OR VINDICTIVE IN HIS INTENTIONS.

the shade of a big acacia tree. Cheetahs and leopards skulked above his camp on the rocky ridges of the Lukenia kopjes, often frightening bands of curious, chattering baboons which congregated there. On the open plains before him, large herds of hartebeest, wildebeest, impalla and zebra grazed in peace.

John T. McCutcheon, one of his companions on this 1909 expedition, on learning after his safari was disbanded that the departure of his boat would be delayed for several days, drove out in a donkey carriage for a final shooting trip. Within actual sight of the house tops of Nairobi, he gave chase to three lions, saw in all fifteen species of wild game, some of them in large numbers, and returned to town with two Thomson's gazelle.

On our way to the Northern Frontier of Kenya, a three and a half day motor journey over the foothills of Mt. Kenya to Meru and thence to the Northern Eusso Nyiro, I saw all told only five or six antelope. In this same territory twenty years ago, Colonel Roosevelt and his son, Kermit, had hunted successfully for eland, lion, cheetah, gerenuk, buffalo, and, at Meru boma, had obtained elephant and rhino.

The lion is perhaps the most misunderstood of African animals. Frequently have I been asked the question, "Are not all lions in Africa man-eating lions?" There is an increasing tendency to justify the wholesale slaughter of this regal beast by claiming that his existence imperils human safety. The casual reader of the daily press might almost suppose that combat must be waged in Kenya to determine whether man or lion shall rule there.

A Member of Parliament, who is also a member of the Joint East Africa Board, recently replied to a complaint published by a 'Disappointed Sportsman,' in the London *Times,* December 29, 1927, concerning the rate at which the African game is disappearing. In a long letter the statesman declared that the game is far too plentiful, that it ought to be destroyed, and that, according to his personal observation, the dangerous game so menaces the African native that he goes about in fear and trembling. Before the appearance of this letter the English press had got

White Fathers' Mission and killed cattle there. Yet night after night we slept in open tents without guard or defense except our guns, and with three hundred unprotected porters encamped close by, and not a single lion came near our camp. The natives acknowledged their fear of the leopards that frequently prowled around, but never did they express themselves as being afraid of the lions. This mental attitude on the part of the native must be based upon precedent—a precedent of danger from the leopard, of security where the lion is concerned.

The banks of the Tana, where in 1910 counting the ubiquitous rhino and hippo was the chief pastime of Carl's party, we found almost a complete waste. The buffalo herd inhabiting the area along the Theba had been reduced from five hundred to perhaps fifty or sixty individuals. This region between the Theba and the Tana rivers, once alive with buffalo, now tells the same story of game extermination so apparent in other parts of Africa. After Carl's disheartening trip with Rockwell to the junction of these rivers, during which he saw almost no game of any kind, he wrote to the American Museum:

"There is only a pitiful remnant of the great buffalo herds of the past and of the other game, almost nothing. This is a condition we have found everywhere we have been in Kenya Colony. I have not appreciated the absolute necessity of carrying on the African Hall, if it is ever to be done, as I now do after this painful revelation. The old conditions, the story of which we want to tell, are now gone, and in another decade the men who knew it will all be gone. The unhappy remnant of the magnificent fauna of Kenya now has its ear attuned to the rattle and bang of the motor car, which carries the alleged sportsman in his mad chase across the veldt in the hope of having the honor of killing the last of a given species."

It required several weeks of hunting along the Tana and in Western and Eastern Tanganyika before the necessary buffalo specimens were finally secured.

In short, it was only by penetrating to the isolated giraffe country beyond the Northern Eusso Nyiro, to the game pockets of Western Tanganyika, and to the Belgian Congo that we got away from the beaten highways of travel and found herds of game suggestive of primitive times.

When the African traveler purchases his game license, he is presented with a formidable compilation of conservation laws. Wherever he travels he encounters game wardens, district commissioners and rangers. But good laws and capable officials are not in themselves sufficient to insure the preservation of the game. To be truly effective they must be reënforced by enlightened public opinion, not only in Africa, but in Europe and in America as well.

Although Kenya Colony is rapidly becoming an agricultural country, it will remain vastly interesting both to the European and to the American traveler. And it is often from the thoughtless acts and ill-considered statements of the visitor or casual sportsman, uninformed as to the actual conditions, that those who would bring about the preservation of African wild life have most to fear. As I have said, African game still seems plentiful to a man who is unfamiliar with its tragic history of depletion. Out of his inexperience he misjudges the numbers of surviving animals and concludes that amidst 'abundance' he may hunt without restraint.

An American who had decided that he must make an African hunt to round out his list of social achievements once came to my husband for suggestions. Carl spent two valuable hours advising him and when he was ready to leave the studio, he said, "Very well, I shall write Mr. So-and-so," naming a well-known professional hunter in Africa, "and direct him to arrange for a safari of three months. When I reach Nairobi I shall show him the list of things I want to kill and tell him that, if he can manage it so that I can shoot my game in three weeks, I will pay the full amount for the three months' safari. What I really want is to kill these things and get out of the d—n country as soon as I can!" It is to be regretted that such men cannot be kept out of Africa.

That the disappearance of big game is due in part to ruthless slaughter is an undeniable fact. Sometimes men and women who at home display no sanguinary impulses commit atrocities in the African game fields that are incredible to one who has not witnessed them. It is indeed sickening to see a hunter's car, decorated with the heads of oryx, shot for no other reason than to obtain the horns, the carcasses left to rot or be eaten by hyenas; to see a sportsman's gun targeted on the gaudily marked torsos of statuesque little Thomson's gazelles; to come upon little monkeys, useless as trophies, discarded by the trail or a rare antelope, pierced by a dozen bullets, the victim of the killer's unsteady aim. We met in Nairobi, one 'sportsman,' who on good authority had killed twenty-eight lions and wounded twenty-nine more which, without even attempting to finish them off, he had allowed to go off in the dongas there to suffer the torments of slow death. It is also deplorable that a hunter wishing to achieve merit as a 'lion man,' should have shot more than sixty lions, and in order to obtain that number should have killed not only males but a large number of mothers and cubs—the women and children of the lion family.

Such disgusting manifestations of the killer impulse rightfully lead African game wardens and conservationists to look with suspicion upon all newcomers, perhaps even upon those who may come to Africa in the interests of science. In sharp contrast should be noted the recent African Hall expedition [1] sponsored by G. Lister Carlisle, Jr., of New York, on which both he and Mrs. Carlisle spent more than six months in the best game areas of Africa without firing even a single shot. The expedition collected only necessary specimens. A true sportsman is 'one who loves the game as though he were the father of it.' His interests are not always confined to killing and therefore do not, necessarily, run counter to those of the conservationist. Moreover, the true sportsman realizes that it is the duty of his own generation to pass unimpaired to the next the natural assets of a country; that

[1] The Carlisle-Clark Expedition for African Hall, 1928.

Photo by Carl Akeley

GRANT'S AND THOMSON'S GAZELLES FED IN UNCONCERN WITHIN A FEW YARDS OF THE AKELEYS' CAMP IN TANGANYIKA.

his son and his grandson are as much entitled to a glimpse of old Africa as he; and that the scientists of to-morrow must not be deprived of the opportunity to study the strange African species in their attempts to supply missing chapters of the earth's history. As A. Blayney Percival has said, "any animal is infinitely more interesting alive than dead." To know African animals and secure representative trophies the sportsman must be counselled by a trained hunter or gun boy. He must restrain the impulse to shoot in that exciting moment when he catches the first glimpse of an unfamiliar animal. He must be willing to hunt patiently until, as a result of observation, he is able to select a really large specimen for his bag.

The ends of conservation may further be served by ridding the minds of travelers of the fallacious notion that all large mammals are aggressive. Only once during thirteen months of hunting in the remote regions of Equatorial Africa was a shot fired by any member of our party in self-defense. A sportsman of the finest instincts will doubt his own judgment as to the abundance of the game and, accepting the opinion of the African veteran that absolute extinction threatens many species, especially the rhino, will refrain from shooting to the limit of his license. Entering Africa in such a spirit, the American can do much to reënforce the efforts of the colony's officials along the lines of game preservation. The fact that colonial revenues may be enormously increased if the game reserves are made into national parks to which tourists will be attracted in greater and greater numbers is an argument for conservation that must appeal to the most practical. Meanwhile, unless men become imbued with the true sportsman's or the conservationist's ideas, ruthless slaughter will continue to increase, and the early finish of most of Africa's big game will inevitably follow. A vanished species can never be recalled. And Africa without her wild denizens would be only a country of memories —a body without its living spirit.

From the time that England established a protectorate over East Africa in 1895, there have been those who have advocated