

DESTRUCTION OF GAME IN INDIA

A TALE OF WOE.

"Dryad" writes to the *Indian Forester*:—"It is gratifying to see that the subject has been opened in the *Indian Forester*. Forest officers are too often looked upon by the general public as jealously guarding the game in their forests and regarding the reserved forests as their own preserves. We can discuss this question between ourselves without fear of awakening any jealousy or calling each other hard names. My experience deals entirely with Bengal and Assam. I quite agree with "Lone Tom" that licensed guns are not, as a rule, used primarily for the preservation of crops. There may be exceptions where elephants and pigs are plentiful and habitually raid the crops; but, as a rule, guns are used essentially for killing game. In the Bengal Duars a large quantity of meat of game is sold at the b-zars in the tea gardens; the game is not killed in the course of watching over the crops. In many cases licenses are issued to persons to protect crops where there is no destructive game at all. Licenses appear to have been issued without any consideration of the merits of each case, and it is a difficult matter to withdraw a license once it has been granted.

RHINOCEROS, BUFFALO GAUR.

My object in writing is not so much to indicate the manner in which ordinary game is destroyed as to expose the slaughter of special animals inhabiting the Sub-Himalayan tract of Bengal and Assam. I refer principally to the rhinoceros, buffalo, and gaur. Every year a shooting party from a neighbouring Native State, well equipped with elephants, and with permission to enter the reserved forests, is responsible for much needless slaughter. The game is driven by elephants to guns posted on the runs, and everything, regardless of size, age or trophy, ruthlessly shot. Many animals escape wounded, to suffer from fly-blown wounds or die a lingering death in some remote haunt. The effect of these annual invasions is very noticeable in the sad deterioration of the number of animals, and also in the alertness of the game, which it is now very difficult to approach on an elephant. Here is a case where the native *shikari* cannot be blamed; his weapon is worthless on these ponderous animals.

GLOBE-TROTTERS, GAME AND TREES.

In addition to the unfair manner in which these shoots are conducted, the risks incurred in admitting a large party with one or two hundred followers into the reserved forests during the most anxious part of the fire season, is another injustice. Work is unninged, the establishment has to watch over the movements of the party and followers in addition to carrying on its own work. It is not, therefore, surprising that the visits of the party almost invariably coincide with our bad fire season. My reader will ask why the matter has not been represented. Protest after protest has been made and the question referred to in annual reports, but without the slightest success. Sport must be provided for the wealthy globe-trotters and others, the forests must endure the risks, and the game be submitted to pitiless slaughter.

If any one has seen the recent publication, entitled "Wild Sports of Burma and Assam," by Colonel Pollock and W. S. Thom, he need only refer to the photograph at page 467 to confirm my statement. The picture is of the record bag made by the party referred to in the spring of 1899. The animals were not shot inside the reserved forests, at the same time the photo is typical of the butchery of animals which occurs regardless of age or sex.

LOCAL SPORTSMEN.

The local sportsman, who endeavours to maintain a good head of game and to shoot purely for sport, views the advent of the party with horror. No consideration is given to the man who spends the best years of his life in remote forests and with sport as his only amusement; everything must give way to the wealthy and titled, who, accustomed to having everything arranged for them, know little or nothing of the game they pursue and seek to destroy. It is sufficient for such persons that they can boast of bagging an animal, they are birds of passage and do not give a thought to the resident sportsman. Such is my tale of woe; will any one suggest a remedy?