

DESTRUCTION OF GAME

CAN IT BE STOPPED?

There is much varied and interesting matter in the "African World Annual," from which the following are extracts from an article by Mr. F. C. Selous on the destruction of African game. Mr. Selous says:— "Time was, and that not so very long ago, when the greater portion of the African continent was one immense game-reserve. But vast areas have already been entirely depleted of wild animals, and, in view of the marvellous enterprise which is now being displayed by the leading European nations to open up and develop every section of the country and the acquisition of large quantities of breech-loading rifles and ammunition by Abyssinians, Somalis, and other native tribes, one wonders if by the end of the present century there will be any more game left in Africa than exists to-day on the comparatively small game preserves of Europe, or in the United States of America. In the latter country a great nation of European stock has spread over the land, and great cities have arisen where, less than 150 years ago, as President Roosevelt has recounted in a most interesting book, "The Winning of the West," "the shaggy-maned herds of unwieldy buffalo—the bison, as they should be called—had beaten out broad roads through the forest, and had furrowed the prairies with trails, along which they had travelled for countless generations. The round-horned elk, with spreading, massive antlers, the lordliest of the deer tribe throughout the world, abounded, and, like the buffalo, travelled in bands, not only through the woods, but also across the reaches of waving grass-land. The deer were extraordinarily numerous, and so were bears, while wolves and panthers were plentiful."

THE MARCH OF CIVILISATION.

The early Dutch settlers at the Cape found the open plains of the country filled with a profusion of antelopes of many different species, while the forests of the coast regions harboured great herds of elephants and buffaloes, and in every river and swamp hippopotami were to be seen. Further to the north Captain (afterwards Sir Cornwallis) Harris and Sir Andrew Smith have left on record most marvellous accounts of the extraordinary numbers of wild animals which they encountered about the time (1836) when the Boer vooi-trekkers first began to settle in the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal. Elephants, **rhinoceroses** (of both the black and the white species), buffaloes, and hippopotami existed at that time in prodigious numbers throughout the northern and eastern districts of the Transvaal, and from the Orange River to the Limpopo, on every plain, herds of quaggas, or Burchell's zebras, as well as immense herds of many different varieties of antelopes and troops of ostriches were always to be seen; nor was it possible for a traveller in all that vast expanse of country to pass a night in the veld out of earshot of the lion's roar. Beyond the Limpopo the vast herds of antelopes which congregated on the plains further south were not to be seen; but, still, the whole country was full of wild animals—elephants, **rhinoceroses**, hippopotami, giraffes, buffaloes, elands, zebras, sable and roan antelopes, koodoos, and many other beautiful species. To-day there is but a poor remnant of all this abounding and varied fauna left. The march of civilisation has destroyed it.

QUESTION OF PRESERVATION.

A question which must present itself to every thinking man is this, says Mr. Selous in conclusion: Can the game which still exists in all these vast territories be indefinitely preserved in its present quantities? To that I think the answer to be given is: Yes, as long as those countries remain in their present state of development, and provided, at the same time that, firstly, the natives are not allowed to possess fire-arms, and that the destruction of game by them by other means is carefully regulated and restricted; secondly, that certain areas are set aside as sanctuaries for wild animals, and that within those sanctuaries no European or native is allowed to shoot or hunt game on any pretext whatsoever, and no natives are allowed to live; thirdly, that the shooting of game by Europeans outside the prohibited areas is restricted and subject to well-thought-out game laws; fourthly that all trade in the hides or horns of wild animals is prohibited by law. By such a scheme the game may, I think, be preserved in those parts of Africa where it still exists, as long as those countries are not over-taken by civilisation. But sooner or later the game will disappear from all those parts of Africa which are capable of supporting a European population, for all the pastoral and agricultural land will be parcelled out into farms, and the game will be quickly killed off or driven into still uninhabited regions in spite of laws for its protection. This process of extermination will, I trust, be very slow, but I cannot but think that the same influences which have already denuded Europe, most of North America, and much of Asia of the greater part of their once abounding wild animal life will slowly but surely have a similar effect, though subject to check here and there for a longer or shorter time, over the whole of the African continent.