

“OUR VANISHING WILD LIFE,” BY DR. WILLIAM  
TEMPLE HORNADAY.

BY HON. JOHN F. LACEY.

Dr. Hornaday has recently published a very important work on “Our Vanishing Wild Life.”

Dr. Hornaday, though born in Indiana, spent his early life in Iowa and is fully identified with the history of his adopted State. He is today one of the world’s foremost naturalists, and his latest work comes with authority from a man of his research and experience.

In 1886 he conducted an expedition to investigate the extermination of the buffalo, and his report of that journey is one of the saddest chapters in the history of the wild life of the world. The buffalo was the greatest of the surviving mammals of the new world and existed in such numbers that had they been properly conserved upon the plains there would have been no “high cost of meat” problem for the present generation. In ages they had become adapted to the surroundings of the arid plains. Had the Government asserted title to these herds of millions and regulated their use and slaughter they would have remained a great and permanent asset in the nation’s wealth. The complete extinction of the species was narrowly averted and, perhaps, there are today 2,500 to 3,000 successors to those mighty herds. They are scattered in small herds in different parts of the country, under suitable protection, and the complete extinction of the species has been prevented.

Through the awakening of the public conscience by the published report of Dr. Hornaday much of the legislation in behalf of wild life has been accomplished.

It was the good fortune of the writer to have been enabled to secure the enactment of the first national law to protect the remaining wild life in the United States, under which a large



W. D. Hornaday.

number of preserves and breeding grounds for birds and mammals have been set apart upon the public domain. There are now sixty-one of these bird reservations under the "Lacey Act" and the last addition to the list is the entire chain of the Aleutian Islands set aside as bird refuges, reindeer breeding grounds and fisheries.

In all this good work Dr. Hornaday's influence has been most effectual. He is now director of the New York Zoological Park, where his intimate knowledge of the habits and needs of the animals and birds under his charge has enabled him to make his prisoners feel at home instead of chafing in their confinement. One of the rarest of the choice exhibits of that wonderful collection is a small herd of musk oxen which may be seen grazing contentedly in the park.

Dr. Hornaday has done much original constructive work in the way of wild life protection. To do things it is highly essential to know things, and he is a most thorough and painstaking naturalist. No man can make a great success in any undertaking unless he is in love with his work.

His greatest work, no doubt, is the designing and development of the Zoological Park among the rocks of the Bronx region. It is just to the promoters of this great institution to quote what Dr. Hornaday himself says of them:

The original impulse and effort for the creation of the New York Zoological Society came from Madison Grant, then a sportsman and student of nature and by profession a lawyer; and very early in its career the new organization secured the active support of Prof. Henry Fairfield Osborn. It is impossible to overstate the influence of those two men on the Society's undertaking, and their devotion to the task, year in and year out. Without them, New York would have at this time no Zoological Park!

On the other hand the secretary of the New York Zoological Society, Mr. Madison Grant, thoroughly appreciates the worth and work of the director. Mr. Grant says in one of the bulletins of the park:

A portion of this second year of the Society's existence had been devoted by Mr. Hornaday to a thorough study of the Zoological Gardens of Europe, the results of which were embodied in

a report to the committee. Mr. Hornaday also prepared the general ground plan of the Zoological Park, out of which has developed, during the last ten years, the existing scheme of the Park. Modifications have been made in small matters, but on the whole the substantial manner in which Mr. Hornaday's original design has been found to meet actual conditions has proved his foresight in its preparation.

A brief synopsis of the life, travels and literary work of Dr. Hornaday is as follows:

Born Plainfield, Indiana, December 1, 1854, son of William and Martha (Varner) Hornaday; educated Oskaloosa College, 1871 and 1872; Iowa State College, class of '76; Ward's Natural Science Establishment, Rochester, New York; Sc. D., University of Pittsburg, 1906; married at Battle Creek, Michigan, September 11, 1879, to Josephine E. Chamberlain, and has one daughter, Mrs. Helen Hornaday Fielding. Travels (zoological): Cuba and Florida, 1875; South America, West Indies, 1876; Egypt, India, 1876-77; Ceylon, Malay Peninsula, Borneo, 1878; China and Japan, 1879; Smithsonian Expedition for Buffalo, Montana, 1886; hunt in Wyoming, 1889; exploration in Canadian Rockies, 1905; exploration in Arizona and Mexico, 1907. Director New York Zoological Park since 1896. Author: "Two Years in the Jungle," 1885; "American Natural History," 1904; "Taxidermy and Zoological Collecting," 1894; "Camp-Fires in the Canadian Rockies," 1906; "Camp-Fires on Desert and Lava," 1908; "Our Vanishing Wild Life," 1913 (all Scribners); also, "The Man Who Became a Savage," 1895. Independent in politics. Protestant. Fellow New York Academy Sciences and New York Zoological Society; honorary member Philadelphia Zoological Society, Shikar Club, London, and Society for the Preservation of the Fauna of the British Empire; corresponding member Zoological Society of London; ex-president Camp-Fire Club and American Bison Society. Recreation: Big-game hunting. Address: New York Zoological Park, 183d Street and Southern Boulevard, New York City.

Among the practical results of his work are:

The Montana National Bison Herd is an accomplished fact. Fifty-one fine animals now occupy in perpetuity a magnificent

range of twenty-eight square miles, all owned by the United States Government. This was his original proposition.

The Wichita National Bison Herd is also an accomplished fact. Twenty-three fine animals occupy a range of fourteen square miles, all owned by the Government. This, too, was his original proposition.

Goat Mountain Park in British Columbia is established. A splendid sanctuary of 450 square miles, stocked with mountain goats, sheep, elk, deer and bear, exists on the Elk and Bull Rivers, East Kootenay, as a game preserve. This was Dr. Hornaday's original suggestion.

A New York Bison Herd would today be in existence but for the veto of Gov. Charles E. Hughes.

A Fur-Seal Salvage Law, the Fur-Seal Treaty, and five-year close season law are on the statute books, all as he demanded in 1909.

The Snow Creek Game Preserve, Montana, is an accomplished fact. This was his original idea.

The "Bayne Law," in New York, prohibiting sale of all native wild game in that State, was passed as his original suggestion. Massachusetts has copied this same law, and California is trying to do so.

Among the subjects to which he has devoted recent conservation work are: prevention of marketing wild game; prevention of spring and late winter shooting; prohibition of the killing of insectivorous and song birds for food or millinery purposes; the increase of the number of bird and game preserves; the prohibition of the use of extra deadly automatic and pump guns in hunting, giving the wild creatures some chance for their lives; the securing of perpetual closed seasons for all such species of wild life as are threatened with total extinction. This is a goodly program.

The statement is made in his recent book, "Our Vanishing Wild Life," that of all the countless millions of wild pigeons that once clouded our skies and thronged our forests there is today only one living specimen, and that poor creature is in captivity in Milwaukee. Only one left to emphasize the extermination of this beautiful American bird!

Dr. Hornaday's book ought to be in all the public school libraries. The little boys and girls should be taught what has been lost to them, so that they may treasure the precious remains of the wealth of the past. They should "hear the call of the wild remnant."

This book is both timely and convincing. No one can read it without regret for our national recklessness and disregard of our blessings. It is a heart-breaking story.

It is hard to make people realize that the invention of deadly weapons imposes self-restraint upon the people who possess such almost limitless powers of destruction. The rifle in the hand of the professional killer of game, together with the offer of fifty cents for each skin, covered our western plains with the dead carcasses of buffalo by thousands.

Cars were arranged with many decks to hold the live pigeons and the busy nets swept them from the earth for the markets in a few years.

The hunter puts his dogs in the baggage car, takes a Pullman and in a night's run has gone five hundred miles into the hunting regions where, with the finest and deadliest of weapons, he works great havoc among the few remaining birds. Soon they disappear and the hunter buys his ticket for more distant grounds. Such limitless power to kill makes rigorous legal restraint absolutely necessary. The flying machine and speedy motorboat will further add to man's power to kill.

Few men can withhold when the opportunity comes to slay. Not only must the laws be rigorous, but they must be enforced without fear or favor.

Dr. Hornaday has been a mighty hunter himself and realizes the enjoyment the sportsman feels in this great pastime. Fortunately such men as George Shiras 3d have been teaching a new method of hunting with the camera. The camera captures but does not kill, and all the keen delight of the hunter is enjoyed when searching for the wild creatures in their natural resorts.

Mr. Shiras by flashlight photographed an albino porcupine one season and placed the picture in his album, instead of the stuffed skin of the dead animal upon his study walls or in a museum. The next year he captured the same albino again with his camera and again left the harmless creature to enjoy life in its native woods. "Any fool can kill a bird; but it takes a genius to photograph one and get a good photograph," says Dr. Hornaday.

I remember Dr. Hornaday when as a boy he came from the farm in Marion county to study at old Oskaloosa College. His subsequent career has gratified the friends of his Iowa boyhood, who prophesied a bright future. His present book is not merely the work of the few months spent in putting his thoughts upon paper; it is the record and fruits of a life work in studying God's wild creatures in their native haunts. It is a note of warning and alarm. The nation should heed it.

God in His slow processes spent millions of years creating the passenger pigeon and the bison. A single generation has seen them swept away. The high cultivation of a large part of our country makes it impossible for much of the old wild life to remain. But the birds can still be saved. They are rapid breeders and but give them a chance and they will remain with us.

Since this book came from the press the McLean Law protecting migratory birds has been enacted by Congress. Many states had forbidden spring shooting. Many states had vainly protected the robin and other of man's gentlest and best friends. These birds spent the spring and summer in our dooryards and nested in our shade trees only to go south there to be treated as "game birds" and to be slaughtered by the thousands. The pest of the boll weevil awakened the consciences of many of the cotton growing states, leading to local legislation for the protection of the birds which destroyed their enemies of the cotton fields.

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