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[No. 1

## CONTENTS.

	PAGE
A Society for the Protection of Game in South India .. .. .	1
Acknowledgment .. .. .	3
A Review of the Work on Fungi in India. By Dr. H. Chaudhuri .. .. .	4
The Occurrence of Mundwinkeldruse in the South Indian Frogs. By L. S. Ramaswami, B.Sc. .. .	7
Physical Nature of the Nerve Impulse. By Prof. A. V. Hill, O.B.E., F.R.S. .. .. .	10
Letters to the Editor :	
The Multiple Testis of <i>Ichthyophis glutinosus</i> . By B. R. Seshachar .. .. .	11
Contribution to the Morphology of <i>Limnophyton obtusifolium</i> Mzq. By Brij Mohan Johri .. .	12
The Development of the Endosperm in <i>Asphodelus tenuifolius</i> Cav. By P. Maheshwari .. .	13
A Note on the Life History of <i>Hydrilla verticillata</i> Presl. By P. Maheshwari .. .. .	13
An Aestivating Gastropod from Mysore. By B. S. Bhimachar .. .. .	14
Aerial Respiration in <i>Pseudapocryptes lanceolatus</i> (Bl. & Schn.). By Sunder Lal Hora .. .	14
Light Source in Hyperfine Structure Work. By B. Venkatesachar .. .. .	15
Aplanospore-formation in <i>Vaucheria uncinata</i> Kutz. By S. L. Ghose and M. S. Randhawa .. .	15
Geology. By E. H. P. .. .. .	17
Cyst Formation in Plant Galls. By M. S. Mani .. .	18
Notes on Some Hydro-Electric Schemes in India. By Dr. Ram Prasad .. .. .	19
Diffusion of Diseases .. .. .	26
Proteins and Proteoclastic Enzymes .. .. .	27
The Calcutta School of Tropical Medicine .. .. .	28
The U. P. Academy of Sciences .. .. .	29
The Lady Tata Memorial Trust .. .. .	31
Research Notes .. .. .	32
Science News .. .. .	34
Reviews .. .. .	35

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## A Society for the Protection of Game in South India.

WE extend our enthusiastic support to the proposals for the establishment of an association for the preservation of wild life in South India. It seems to us that the adoption of measures for the protection of fish is equally imperative. With the exception of the United Provinces the other parts of India do not have a central organisation commanding sufficient prestige to impose restraints on the indiscriminate slaughter of wild animals, some of which have been brought to the verge of extinction. As an instance of the grievous loss which science has sustained through the uninstructed zeal of sportsmen, we may mention the case of the Dutch settlers in Mauritius, who taking unchivalrous advantage of the half-fledged wings and short legs of Dodo (*Didus ineptus*), succeeded within a comparatively short time in clearing the island of this extremely interesting and rare pigeon. In the interests of science and wider humanity, enlightened governments have recognised the need of imposing restrictions, by the promulgation of game laws and other protective regulations, on the excesses of sportsmen and native shikaris. Wherever there is abundance of sylvan fauna, the temptation for the free use of fire arms becomes irresistible and epidemic and in the excitement, it is not uncommon for men to forget all the commandments both divine and human. The unassisted efforts of government are not adequate to meet the exigencies of the case, and they have to be supported by private associations whose influential position in public life ought to invest them with authority for exerting control on the destructive proclivities of sportsmen and ignorant native shikaris.

From Helen of Troy down to butterflies, the wearer of beauty has always been subjected to persecution and for the gratification of human vanity or pleasurable excitement or under pretexts of protection of human life and crops, large numbers of animals are annually killed, which in minds not sportively inclined evoke feelings of kindness, sympathy and admiration. Attributes such as strength, courage and dignified independence which embellish man's character confer no immunity upon lower animals possessing them. Departure from the doctrine of *Ahimsa* and the impact of

historical influences have diminished in India reverence for animal life and in the next phase of human progress it is hoped that our concept of the sanctity of life, occurring in the Amoeba or the Archbishop of Canterbury will receive a new orientation. But the urgent need is a complete revision of the ethics of sport as pursued at present. We cannot discover heroism, much less righteousness and fairplay, in enticing animals by playing cruelly on the most fundamental and universal appetite, paralysing them with the dazzling brilliance of torchlight and shattering their shoulder blades by firing with magazine rifles from an elevated place of concealment. Compared with this the mode of hunting the offending lion practised by the African tribes has all the good qualities of sport giving, as it does, the hunted beast all reasonable chances to escape and making the hunters oppose skill, strength and daring to the fury of the animal in a battle royal. In a sport it is unmanly to evade the risk and secure the spoils in a manner other than by courage. We have to humanise sport. We should not countenance slaughter without provocation.

The principal offence for which the wild animals are hunted down is that they become dangerous to man and the cattle in his service and to the crops that he raises. Some of them destroy valuable forest produce and a few are reported to increase in population periodically endangering the safety of villages. A few more have the misfortune to possess bright plumage, soft fur, bright skins and succulent meat. Frequently, however, not for any of these provoking causes, wild animals incur the fatal displeasure of man because they provide him with recreation and excitement. To a large extent man is directly responsible for the homicidal tendencies of the more ferocious animals and for the depredations of others on cultivated lands. The former have to be outlawed. But the produce of the land is amply protected from elephants and boars, when the area is surrounded by a deep moat. The population of animals is under the operation of the inexorable physical laws of nature which maintains a balance of power among them, and reports of overpopulation are based on casual observations of herds which driven from their natural haunts by drought or flies, appear in the vicinity of villages. Human pleasure need not necessarily depend on

the painful death of lower animals but may be derived from contests offering opportunities for displaying skill, strength and endurance. Occasions might arise when the wild animals, after becoming a source of danger to man and all his belongings, refuse to be dislodged from the positions they have taken up and in such cases they have to be captured alive and added to the zoo. It seems to us that forests are to be treated as fertile recruiting grounds for periodic enrichment of the zoos, parks, museums and other public places of amusement and instruction, instead of being used as a field of infernal carnage.

The Association, when it is formed, will be confronted with a very difficult and delicate task, and without anticipating its functions, we may point out that if it is to serve the high purpose for which it is founded, its activities ought to be continuous and wide-spread. Through a great deal of propaganda work, the Association will have to acquaint the people in general and the shikari section in particular that the interests of science and the cause of deeper humanity forbid the indiscriminate slaughter of animals however ferocious, and irrespective of the amusement their death may provide. The game laws and protective regulations have to be popularised and the Association should publish periodically complete and correct accounts of the life habits and the distribution of the larger denizens of the forest and the economic uses of conserving animal life. A beginning is to be made in the rural schools where infants ought to be encouraged to tend pet animals and grown-up children should be taken out on excursions for observational studies. The habits of animals in our immediate surroundings exercise a great fascination on our mind and the sympathies early contracted restrain the development of destructive tendencies. Children in the urban areas ought to be taken out periodically to the zoos which, if stocked with a representative and rich collection of animals, must provide, under competent guidance, many a useful and intelligent lesson on animal colour, classification, bionomics, ecology and geographical distribution. Frequent visits consolidate the early sympathies formed in the elementary schools and tend to keep the heart warm for the animals. More important perhaps than all this is the education of the villagers. They should be made to realise that the safety of their cattle depends on their keeping them in a perfect phalanx on

the grazing ground and that the cattle and goats entering the reserve sections of the forests attract the tigers and panthers which, emboldened with the success of their adventure, will realise that it is easier to strike down the domestic animals than chase the deer. In trying to rescue his cattle from the clutches of their enemies, the villager succeeds in injuring them and the result of all this is to convert a forest dweller into a prowling village thief. Elephants, pigs, bisons, deer and antelopes can be successfully kept out of the cultivated grounds by a trench which, besides serving as a barrier, will help to conserve the moisture in the subsoil that is so essential for the prosperity and fertility of the lands. This is an expensive and laborious task and the slack season in agriculture will provide the necessary time, and labour may be secured on a co-operative basis. Even if it were desirable, it would be impracticable to suggest that wild animals should not be killed for their flesh, but energetic measures will have to be taken by the Association that all such activities are limited to a single definite purpose and that in no case the permission granted is abused. The administration of game laws is always fraught with difficulty and in some cases even with danger. The active co-operation of the planters and native shikaris will have to be enlisted by the Association in the enforcement of the government regulations and the powers of forest officers should be enlarged to deal with cases of violation of the rules.

It must not be forgotten that the present age delights in sensational thrills and excesses, and measures the merit of things by their advertisement. People have a more touching faith in the "sanctity of broken

records" than in the enduring value of work done in solitude and tranquillity. Hunting either for obtaining pleasure or for establishing new records must be deprecated. It will have to be resorted to only for the removal of evil. The aim of the Association should be to encourage the study of the habits of wild animals in their native haunts, their interdependence in the economy of nature, their adaptive modifications, their evolutionary history, their jealousies, affections and antipathies, their social instincts and crude forms of patriarchal government among gregarious forms and all those features of unsophisticated wild life which instruct the human mind and ennoble its sympathies.

The Association will have to treat this task as a humanitarian mission, the reward for its successful and satisfactory accomplishment is the gratification that its members have restrained the reckless waste of animal life whose closer and sympathetic study might furnish clues to an illuminating interpretation of some of the obscure and puzzling psychological and sociological problems of man. In the supreme interest of science, elephants and the South Indian ibex which possess a historical importance should receive special consideration and the Association should regard their protection as its sacred duty. We fully realise the magnitude and the importance of the task which will be assigned to the Association and we hope that its formation will not be unduly delayed. The generous support and enthusiasm which H. E. the Governor of Madras has accorded to the movement and the co-operation which the Association expects from the enlightened Governments of South Indian States offer hopes of success.

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stringency is an additional proof of the great sympathy with which they encourage the cause of Science. We are optimistic. We believe that in the near future, other Provincial Governments and Indian States will appreciate our services in an equally handsome manner.