The Great Parade of Wild Animals Going to Join the Extinct Brontosaur

HOW short-sighted and improvident in the ruthless slaughter of giant fish, birds and wild animals is man!

For months scientists have been busy at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, carefully fitting together and mounting the bones of a wonderful zoological link connecting the present with the prehistoric past.

He is known as the brontosaurus, a giant lizard that roamed the earth probably ages before man put in appearance. Great rejoicing in scientific circles followed the discovery of this skeleton in Wyoming.

And yet, not many years will have elapsed before the bones of animals and birds now familiar to men will be sought almost if not quite as eagerly as curiosities for museums. A steady procession is on the way to join the brontosaurus in extinction. Already some of them have gone.

No longer is seen the beautiful quagga, only a few years ago so plentiful in Transvaal. Gone, too, is the bison from America's western plains; the romantic sea cow, from which the legend of the mermaid came, from the waters of Alaska and Florida; the Southern sea lion of Lower California; the great auk of North America and Great Britain; the apteryx, that curious wingless bird of New Zealand; the once swarming Labrador duck. And all within the memory of men even now alive.

Rapidly disappearing, too, are the musk ox of the North, the sea otter, sea elephant, walrus, California vulture, the great Galapagos tortoise, the graceful giraffe, the fur seal. Within a few years there will be no African elephants or Australian kangaroos roaming their native wilds.

And some of these animals are scarcely less curious in form and habits than the giant brontosaurus over whose skeleton scientists now rejoice.

WHEN the sturdy Boers first trekked into the wilds of Transvaal less than a century ago they found thousands of a strange and beautiful animal grazing upon its plains.

It was not a wild ass, nor yet a zebra, but partook of the characteristics and conformation of both. The Boers thought it a species of wild horse.

From the peculiar braying noise it made they named it the quagga, and quagga it has been ever since, or was until 1865, when the last of a once numerous family disappeared from the Orange River section and Cape Colony. The last specimen known to be alive died in the London Zoological Gardens in 1872.

Beautifully marked was the quagga, although not so elaborately as the zebra. Narrow black stripes on a chestnut ground adorned its head, neck and forequarters. The hindquarters were devoid of stripes.

Although tractable and easily broken to harness when tamed, the quagga was, naturally, the boldest and fiercest of the whole horse tribe, easily and fearlessly beating off attacks of wild dogs and hyenas, and even preying animals of greater size.

SLAUGHTERED BY POT-HUNTERS

For this reason, the Boers never failed to pasture a number of quagga with their herds of cattle, which were seldom molested so long as these courageous animals were on guard.

While the Dutch settlers did not like the flesh of the quagga, they fed their Hottentot laborers with it.

So richly colored was the animal, and so great did the demand for its leather become, that pothunters took to slaughtering it for the hides. And that was the last of the quagga. Not a single specimen remains.

Following close upon the heels of the quagga is the stately and beautiful giraffe, now almost a memory. From most of his former haunts in Africa he has already disappeared, although the whereabouts of two or three herds far in the interior are said to be known to several hunters.

So rare has the giraffe become that a good specimen readily brings $10,000 from a showman.

Africa, too, will before long see the last of her elephants, although his smaller brother of India, being able and willing to work, will doubtless long survive.

It is within the memory of man when elephants might be had in almost any section of Africa. So plentiful was he, and so great his appetite, that frequently he destroyed almost entire forests in a night. Being useful, however, only as a producer of wonderful tusks, he has already been driven from his haunts in the far south, and has taken refuge, all that remain of him, in the centre of the continent. Soon, too, he will be driven from there to join his ancestor, the mammoth, and become only a creature of the hazy past.

When England began the development of Australia not so long ago, that land abounded in kangaroos. Now scarcely a kangaroo is to be found there outside of a zoo. It is true that a few wild members of that species exist in the more inaccessible districts, but as the plow and the mining camps advance, even these are being killed off. Within the lifetime of persons now upon the earth, the last wild kangaroo in Australia will no doubt be gone.

Probably the shortest fight against man's commercial aggressiveness was made by the sea cow, a curious marine animal, found principally in Alaskan waters, although it was sometimes seen in the Atlantic. It was from the sea cow that the legend of the mermaid had its origin.

When Bering was returning from a voyage of exploration in 1741, he found large numbers of sea cows on the Commander group of islands off Alaska, and especially upon the island that now bears his name.

No such creature had ever been seen before, and accounts of its discovery aroused world-wide interest. The sea cow was from ten to twenty feet long and somewhat resembled the walrus, but without the latter's tusks.

It had no teeth, horny plates covering the palate and the opposing surface of the lower jaw. From this fact it is supposed it fed entirely upon soft sea weed. Stupid, sluggish, almost helpless from the fact that it had no hind limbs, and was unable to dive, it fell an easy prey to man. The Indians ate its flesh; white men slaughtered it for its hide. In 1768, twenty-seven years after its discovery, the sea cow had disappeared from Northern waters.

Remains of this animal have been found at the mouths of rivers in Florida and other Southern States. Naturalists believe that a few specimens are still living in the fastnesses of the Amazon and Orinoco rivers, although they are not sure.

Seen usually at the mouths of rivers, basking upon rocks or the shore, with its sleek coat glistening in the sun, ancient navigators, viewing it at a distance, invested it with romantic invention as being partly human, and so the legend of the mermaid was evolved.

A cousin of the sea cow is the dugong, which even now is hunted on the Barrier Reef of Australia and in Philippine Island waters. It, however, survives only in those two localities, and even there is very rare.

Almost extinct, too, is the sea elephant, or elephant seal, now the largest of known animals. At one time the sea elephant was so plentiful that he almost covered entire islands in the southern Pacific. Upon Heard's Island, 200 miles south of Desolation Island, off Patagonia, one may see even now miles of land covered with its bones.

It was plentiful, too, in Patagonia, but has been exterminated there.

PASSING OF THE BISON

From twenty-four to thirty feet long, and sometimes eighteen feet in circumference, the sea elephant resembles an enormous seal, with a big and peculiar-looking proboscis, from which it derived its name.

Found in fresh-water lakes and swamps, as well as the sea, this animal has been relentlessly slaughtered, an adult male furnishing as much as seventy gallons of clear, scentless oil.

Like seals, sea elephants are polygamous, each bull lording it over a number of wives. As long as the head of the family remains unhurt, the females cluster around him. For that reason hunters always attack the females first and readily kill them one by one, reserving the master until the last.

As late as 1882 the great American bison roamed the Western plains in countless throngs. With the young grass in the spring he appeared, traveling steadily from the South, on, on to Canada. So plentiful and so stupid was he that passengers on trains shot him from car windows. Hunters killed him by the thousand for his hide and bones alone. Whites and Indians alike believed that his species would last forever. But already, alas! he is gone. The story is too well known to tell again.

The lesson learned from the extermination of the bison now is being repeated with his cousin of the North. Once the musk ox roamed the world. He was found in France, Germany, Russia, England, Siberia, Greenland and far south in North America.

Now he survives only in Greenland and in Arctic America. From all other lands he is gone.

Until a few years ago northern Canada thronged with musk oxen. About two-thirds the size of a bison, he somewhat resembles that animal. His powerful body is covered by long, straight, coarse, dark-brown hair. Hair even covers the bottoms of his hoofs, so that he may not slip on icy rocks.

As the Western hunter coveted the bison's hide and bones, so the Hudson Bay Company took to coveting the hide of the musk ox. In the winter it hunted him with trained dogs; in the summer, it surrounded him and drove him into lakes and slaughtered him, unresisting, there. In 1891 the Hudson Bay Company's harvest of musk oxen skins was reduced from many thousands to 1358 skins. For these it received $30 each.

SEA OTTERS ALMOST GONE

Now, gradually hunted by man, dragged down by wolves, the few musk oxen that remain are retreating above the Arctic Circle, to live there on lichens and on moss.

It is said that two herds of musk oxen are yet to be found in Greenland; they were seen there two years ago. About the same time, however, a band of wolves appeared, and it is doubtful if many of them survive.

In 1888 the perfect skin of a full-grown sea otter could be had for $100; now good specimens bring as much as $1125 each. This tells the tale of the passing of that animal.

There is no rest, nor does there seem any refuge for the sea otter. Netted in the sea, clubbed or shot to death on shore, its chosen haunts made untenable, it has become a marine Ishmael against whom every man's hand is set.

Not so many years ago sea otter were to be found in great numbers on the northern Pacific and Alaskan waters, both on the American and Siberian sides. On the North American coast, it was seen as far south as California; Kamschatka was its principal habitat on the other side.

Shorter and thicker than the ordinary land otter, the sea otter is possessed of a broad muzzle, though of scarcely any neck. Its feet are webbed and lengthened and expanded, and so are employed almost exclusively as paddles. Covering a skin fitted as loosely over the body as a pillowcase fits a pillow, the fur is a rich dark brown, unrivaled in its softness.

Instead of being a fish-eater like its land brother, the sea otter grinds up sea urchins, clams and mussels and gulps them down, shells and all.

It was while upon shore in search of such food and a place to sleep that thousands of them were slaughtered. Now it has taken to slumbering in floating sea weed and feeding in water thirty fathoms deep.

During the decade between 1873 and 1883, from 2500 to 4000 sea otters were captured every year around Alaska alone. In 1896 the captures had dwindled to 724, and now scarcely any are to be found.

Going to join the brontosaurus, too, is the once numerous tribe of the walrus, with its long ivory tusks and scarred and wrinkled face.

Formerly plentiful along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of North America, and especially in Pacific waters, the rush of this animal toward extinction has been rapid. In three years—1880 to 1883—the value of a walrus tusk rose from $1 to $4.50

Now the ones in California waters are protected by law, and a small but contented colony may be seen just within the Golden Gate.

White hunters kill the walrus principally for its tusks, which yield an ivory that, although inferior to elephant ivory in many ways, retains its whiteness considerably longer. To the Eskimo the animal is a moving storehouse of treasure. They sell the ivory, eat the flesh, use the blubber for lights and fuel, and clothe themselves with the skin. But even in the Arctic the walrus is being hunted into oblivion.

Time was, and not so long ago at that, when vessels returning from the South Pacific created more than a little curiosity by exhibiting the enormous shell of the Galapagos tortoise, if not a living specimen of that giant reptile.

In fact, the Galapagos Islands, off the coast of Ecuador, would scarcely be known were it not for their tortoises. So plentiful were they that droves numbering from 2000 to 3000 apiece frequently were seen, each member weighing from 700 to 800 pounds, but when it was found that market could be had for the oil they contained, they were slaughtered right and left. In 1875 Captain Cookson, calling at the islands, found seven men there making a systematic business of killing tortoise. They gathered as much as 3000 gallons of oil a year. As the average yield is one gallon per tortoise, the extent of the slaughter can be appreciated. Hundreds of the young reptiles, too, were killed by dogs.

And yet the Galapagos tortoise has proved the salvation of many a mariner. Upon long voyages, whalers were wont to refill their water casks upon the islands that dot the cruising grounds.

Frequently the Galapagos Islands were visited for this purpose. Upon one occasion some thirsty sailors could find no water except in the stomach of a tortoise. Since that time seamen have frequently replenished their ships' supply of water from the stomachs of tortoises. No wonder the species is about extinct.

Four other species of giant tortoise are now also about gone. They lived in the Marcarene group of islands, in Mauritius and in Roderiguez Islands, in the Indian Ocean.

But the beasts that live on land and sea are not alone in going to join the brontosaurus as a creature of the past. Birds are going also.

Within the past fifty years has the great auk disappeared. The last of their kind were a stately male and female on one of the Orkney Islands. They were known as the king and queen of the auks.

Even brevet royalty did not render these lonely descendants of a once-prosperous line immune. They were hunted repeatedly, but, like the others of their species, were so agile and swift in the water that they eluded their fate for years.

Finally a well-directed shot brought down the queen, but the bereaved king lived several weeks longer. At one time he was chased upon the sea for several hours, but swam faster than six men could row a boat. Now his mounted body stands beside that of his queen in the British Museum.

MANY MISSING BIRDS

This was in 1844. The last of the great auks in America had disappeared four years before.

Upon this side the Atlantic the habitat of the great auk was Labrador, although it is thought the birds at one time lived as far south as Florida. Skeletons have also been found in Iceland and Scotland.

Resembling a penguin, the great auk always stood majestically erect, and was nearly three feet tall. Its eggs were popular as food. Only two eggs are now known to be in America. One of these is in the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia.

Among the strangest of all birds in appearance and habits was the apteryx of New Zealand. Called the "wingless" bird because it had scarcely a trace of wings, it depended upon fleetness of foot for safety. During the day it usually lay concealed.

In appearance the apteryx was like a wingless woodcock of giant size, standing nearly a foot high. Its long bill was used to fish worms from their hiding place.

Its curiously shaped flat feathers terminated at the ends and edges in a sort of hair, and the skins were in great demand by native chiefs for state mantles. Persons of inferior rank were not permitted to wear them. Cats and dogs were largely responsible for the extermination of this bird.

Gone, too, is the Labrador duck. This black and white bird, which was about the size of an ordinary duck, could be seen in great numbers along the Labrador coast down to the early fifties. Then it suddenly disappeared, and no one appears to have fathomed the secret of its extinction. The last specimen was taken in 1878.

Another bird that is nearing its end is the California vulture, which disputes with the condor the distinction of being the largest and strongest winged inhabitant of America.

More plainly attired than the condor, this brownish-black bird formerly ranged over almost the entire Pacific slope from British Columbia to southern California. So powerful is the California vulture that four of them have been known to lift and carry away the body of a small bear. As many as one hundred and fifty have been seen about the carcass of an antelope.

The scavenger propensity of this vulture led to its undoing, as it was killed in large numbers by poison, which cattle ranch owners set about to destroy wolves and coyotes. Only a few now remain in southern California.

And how long will it be before the grizzly bear, the mountain lion and the mountain sheep are only memories?

MOSTLY ABOUT PERSONS OF NOTE

The sovereign who reigns over the smallest monarchy in the world is the King of the Cocos, a group of islands near Sumatra. These islands were discovered about 300 years ago by the captain of the Keeling, but were comparatively little known until 1825, when Mr. Ross, an Englishman, visited them, was struck by their beauty, and took up his abode there. It is his grandson, M. George Reiss, who now holds sway over the Cocos.

* * * * *

On the apex of the Prince of Wales' crown, which he wears on special occasions, is a curious feather, or rather a tuft of periwak feathers, the top of which is adorned with a gold thread. This feather is said to be worth $50,000, and has the distinction of being the only one of its kind in the world. It took twenty years to procure it, and it caused the death of more than a dozen hunters. The reason the pursuit of the periwak is so dangerous is because it inhabits the jungles and other haunts of tigers.

* * * * *

Rev. Mr. Mattison, who died recently, was curate of Patterdale, England, nearly sixty years. For many years of that time his income was only $60, and never exceeded $90 a year, and yet he died, at the age of 96, worth $5000. He married, lived comfortably and had four children; he buried his mother; he married his father and buried his father; he christened his wife and published his own banns of marriage in the church; he christened and married all his own children, and he educated his son until he was fit for college.

* * * * *

Paris has the monopoly of the manufacture of the visiting cards of nearly all the sovereigns of Europe. M. Loubet uses several tens of thousands of cards in a year, but the cards that King Edward distributes in the same time must be reckoned by hundreds of thousands. After the British sovereign, who is said to hold the record in this connection, comes the Emperor of Russia. The German Emperor and the Emperor of Austria are more economical. The visiting card of the Emperor Francis Joseph contains a list of no fewer than twenty titles.

* * * * *

Hiram Maxim was once asked how he came to think of the idea of the automatic gun that made him wealthy and his name famous. "The idea was kicked into me," he replied. "Soon after the end of the Civil War I was induced to fire one of the old-fashioned Springfield rifles. There was tremendous energy in the recoil, and my shoulder was so sore afterward that I set about finding some way to utilize the superfluous power." The British Government ordered the first gun, stipulating that it should weigh not more than 100 pounds, and that it should fire 400 rounds in one minute, and 600 rounds in two minutes. Mr. Maxim furnished an engine of death weighing forty pounds, and capable of firing 600 cartridges within one minute, or 2000 within three minutes.

* * * * *

The story of the Czar's betrothal is quite interesting. Although the great question had been planned and thought out for the royal couple by their respective parents, they were both determined to have a say in the matter. That they were in love with each other every one knew, and between themselves a mutual understanding had been arrived at in the summer house of York Cottage; but, as Czarevitch, the future Czar had to make the formal and old-fashioned offer of his hand. "The Emperor, my father," he said, addressing the blushing bride-to-be, "has commanded me to make you the offer of my hand and heart." "My grandmother, the Queen," replied the present Czarina, "has commanded me to accept the offer of your hand"—she broke into a rippling laugh—"and your heart I take of my own free will."