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Motto

Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam.Wild Beasts of the Empire

If we study a map of the world, we are struck by the vastness of the British Empire. No continent, no ocean, from the polar regions to the sweltering jungles of the tropics, is without its red patch.

In the northern hemisphere the United Kingdom, Canada and India are to be seen, and in the southern hemisphere South Africa and Australia.

Now, from this world-wide character of our Empire, we expect it to be richly varied in productions, both vegetable and mineral, and so it is.

How wonderfully different too, are the "wild beasts," which are found in every part of our dominions, from the warmest jungles and forests of India, to the icy plains of northern Canada.

These differ again from the Australian and New Zealand wild beasts, which will be seen, when the animals of each of our possessions are studied.

Take first of all India. In the tropical jungles we find the magnificent Bengal tiger, the fierce leopard, wolf, panther and the wild boar, to say nothing of the huge elephants, which were formerly so much hunted, that it was feared they would soon become extinct.

In the Himalayas the animals most frequently seen are the wild goat, and the mountain sheep, while jackals and wild dogs are found all over India. Rhinoceroses may be seen in the swamps of the Brahmaputra, and huge crocodiles inhabit many of the rivers.

Now let us briefly glance at some of the wild beasts to be met with in South Africa today. For long, South Africa was the "paradise of the hunter," but as civilization and white settlement advanced, the animals retreated north.

The famous African lion is no longer to be found south of the Orange river, though he may still be met with

north of the Transvaal and in the territories beyond the Limpopo river.

Fifty years ago wild elephants abounded, but so many were shot for the sake of their ivory, that they ran the risk of being exterminated.

The leopard too, is rare in Cape Province and Natal, but is fairly numerous in the remoter parts of the Transvaal, where it preys on the baboons and antelopes.

Zebbras, buffaloes, hyenas and rhinoceroses still abound in many parts, mostly in the Zambesi valley. Antelopes are very numerous and of many kinds; the largest is the eland, and the most curious the gnu. The giraffe is the tallest of the mammals, sometimes reaching a height of eighteen feet. This animal is confined to the African continent south of the Sahara.

The dog-faced baboon roams wild in rocky and mountainous districts and jackals are common all over the country. A remarkable wild animal hunted in Cape Colony for the sake of its flesh and skin is the aardvark, which feeds on the destructive white ants so plentiful in South Africa.

Uganda is especially rich in animal life. The okapi a new animal, discovered a few years ago by Sir Harry Johnston dwells in the forests and roams about in pairs. It is somewhat like a zebra, but is really related to the giraffe.

From the above, we notice that there is a great similarity between the wild beasts of India and South Africa, but on studying those of Australia and Canada, we find a totally different class of animals.

The majority of Australian animals are of the marsupial tribe. The female of the marsupials is furnished with a peculiar pocket-like bag in which she carries her young, during the most helpless period of their infancy. To this family belong the kangaroo, the wallaby, the opossum, the koala and the wombat.

Another species of animal is the duck-billed platypus

a strange mixture of bird and beast. This peculiar animal is gradually becoming extinct.

The wolfish dingo is exceedingly destructive to sheep and is eagerly hunted by the settler. It is a reddish-brown creature and does not bark.

The wild animals of Tasmania are very similar to those of Australia, but the tiger-wolf, a striped marsupial, and the Tasmanian "devil" a smaller beast have proved difficult to hunt down. They both prowl about at night and carry off sheep and poultry.

Travelling now in our imagination, to the great "Dominion of Canada", we find that large wild animals there, have greatly diminished in numbers.

The American bison is now nearly extinct. Probably the only survivors are those preserved in the National Park near Banff. The elk too is becoming rare.

The grizzly bear hides in the Rocky Mountains, and the white bear lives in the Arctic regions. The Canadian lynx is now rare, but fierce wolves find their way across the snowy wastes.

The Hudson Bay Company's pioneers still chase and trap the valuable fur-bearing animals, beaver, black and silver fox, skunk, ermine, martin and mink.

British Guiana possesses little in the way of "big game". It is the home of the guinea-pig, and the organ grinder's monkey.

Other animals are the jaguar, puma, tapir, ant-eater and many varieties of monkeys.

owing to the hot, wet climate and tangled forests of the Malay States, wild beasts abound. The most notable are elephants and rhinoceroses. The tigers afford "big game" hunting and innumerable monkeys sport in the trees. The orang-outang or wild red-haired monkey lives in the forests of Borneo.

Many of Britain's smaller possessions are rich in wild beasts, more or less of the same character, as those

of the big countries near them, but space will not permit a description here.

A visit to the Zoological gardens in London gives one a fair idea of the variety of wild beasts, to be found in the British Empire, but one fact remains clear however

Wild beasts are decreasing in number, owing to the advance of civilization, and the hunting, shooting and trapping, that are always going on.

Britain can get a good supply of skin, hides and furs from within her own dominions, and the British sportsman need not go out of his own empire for big game shooting, hunting or pug-sticking

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