

# A HUNTER-NATURALIST IN EUROPE AND AFRICA<sup>1</sup>

EDITORIAL BY THEODORE ROOSEVELT

**A**S any literature develops, there necessarily comes the differentiation and specialization which mark development. Just as poetry, religion, and history were originally all one so far as literature was concerned, so the comparatively late literary development which treats of wild nature has tended of recent

years to specialize along a score of different lines. The hunting book proper goes back at least to Xenophon, and was continued from classic times through the Middle Ages—witness Gaston de Foix and the Duke of York—receiving its greatest development within the last century. Scientific zoölogy started, in very rudimentary shape, with Aristotle and Pliny; unfortunately, these great men were succeeded for between fifteen hundred and two thousand years by pupils with that utterly worthless type of mind which makes the owner content only to copy the teacher in servile fashion instead of extending and developing the teacher's

<sup>1</sup> Unexplored Spain. By Abel Chapman and Walter J. Buck. Edward Arnold, London.

Wild Spain. By Abel Chapman and Walter J. Buck. Gurney & Jackson, London.

Wild Norway. By Abel Chapman. Edward Arnold, London.

On Safari. By Abel Chapman. Edward Arnold, London.

Art of Wildfowling. By Abel Chapman. Horace Cox, London.

Bird Life of the Borders. By Abel Chapman. Gurney & Jackson, London.

work. It has only been within the last two or three centuries that we have gradually developed great faunal naturalists. The nature book proper, which treats with power and charm of outdoor life and of the smaller wild things, from the standpoint, not of the mere hunter or mere zoölogist, but of the man of letters and learning who is in love with nature, may be said to have begun with Gilbert White, a century and a quarter ago, and it has received its highest expression in John Burroughs—I sympathize too much with Lowell's view of Thoreau to put the latter in the direct line of descent between the two.

Specialization is a good thing, but it may readily be carried too far; and after it has reached a certain point it is well to try to develop again, and on a larger scale, the man who has a special side, but who possesses broader instincts also, and who is able to combine the peculiar aptitudes of the specialist with the larger power that belongs to the man with a broad grasp of the general subject. Half a century or so ago it looked as if we would develop hunters who knew nothing whatever of anything except hunting, zoölogists who knew life only from museum specimens, and outdoor lovers of nature who were not competent to make additions to scientific truth, nor yet to deal with and describe nature in its wilder and more imposing forms, animate and inanimate. Nowadays, however, we are tending to develop much higher types of all of these; and also a type which includes them all. The man who is to do the best work as a zoölogist must be an out-of-doors man of the fields as well as a man of the laboratory, book-shelf, and microscope. The big-game hunter cannot possibly be of much use from a serious standpoint unless he is a keen naturalist. The outdoor man who writes, the nature writer proper, should not only be a keen observer and a man of genuine literary capacity, absolutely trustworthy and able to tell with interest and charm what he has seen, but ought also to have the power to utilize, and to add to, what science can teach; and he ought to be able not only to describe what goes on in our gardens, fields, and woods, but also to tell of the great epic tragedy of life which is unfolded in the stark

wilderness. Finally, while each man will still tend to put most emphasis on his work in some one of these three special lines, the really great writer and observer ought to combine something of all of them; and the writer on big game, in particular, falls far short of the proper standard unless he is also a good field naturalist and lover of nature, who has the power to see what is of most interest and then to put before our eyes in vivid shape what he has himself thus seen.

Mr. Abel Chapman's books are good from every standpoint I have mentioned. He is a sportsman who knows how to observe and how to tell what he sees; he is a big-game hunter of renown; and on every hunt he watches with keen interest all the small life of the wilderness. He can both write and draw. There is not one of his books, whether dealing with the land or water fowl of Northumberland, with wild Norway and wilder Spain, or with the giant fauna of equatorial Africa, which a man who cares for outdoor natural history, or for small-game shooting, or for big-game hunting, can afford to be without. The volumes on Spain by Messrs. Chapman and Buck have an especial charm because the authors penetrated into out-of-way corners of one of the oldest and least-known portions of Europe, a land that in its past and present, in its greatness and in its weakness, offers one of the most puzzling of all possible problems to the student. In Spain they did original zoölogical work of high value. They gave us our first adequate knowledge of the Spanish ibex; and they point out that this beast of the high peaks sometimes dwells in thick scrub on low mountains—just as I have found white goats on certain ranges living all the year round on mountains timbered to their tops. They first revealed the truth about the nesting habits of the flamingo. Their account of the big bustard is of extreme interest. In the haunts of the flamingo, the wide, marshy marismas, they found wild—or rather feral—camels; and it is an extraordinary thing that these camels should have become marsh beasts. The observations on the birds of prey and water-fowl are of especial value.

Not since Lloyd has as good a book appeared about the Scandinavian Penin-

sula as Chapman's "Wild Norway," and Lloyd was by no means as competent to tell us about the smaller forms of life, which are of such interest to the naturalist. The Northumberland book, excellent from every standpoint, shows how much room there is for the best kind of work of this nature near home. Mr. Chapman's books on Spain derive part of their interest from the fact that he went where practically no one else had gone. But he wrote about Northumberland simply as Jefferies could and did write about Devon, and Colquhoun and St. John about the Highlands of Scotland. There is ample room for just such a book about Alaska, for instance—which, by the way, Mr. Sheldon could write if he would; there is real need for such a book on American big game, and on the smaller wild creatures to be found in the haunts of American big game; a book for which Mr. Shiras has such ample material in photographs and notes as would enable him to make a literally priceless contribution to our nature writings, if he would only take the time and trouble to do what I really think is his plain duty. Maine, Pennsylvania, Texas, Arizona, Washington—there is hardly a State about which it would not be possible to produce a book as interesting as that of Mr. Chapman about Northumberland, if only there were produced in each case the man combining, as Mr. Chapman combines, the abilities of sportsman, naturalist, and writer.

Mr. Chapman's "On Safari"—a capital title—must be numbered among the best books that have been written about African big game, and this although Mr. Chapman has not had one-tenth or one-hundredth part of the experience that many of the great African hunters have had. A few of these great African hunters—Gordon Cumming, Cornwallis Harris, Samuel Baker, Stigand, Arthur Neuman, and, above all others, Selous—have given us much that we wish to know concerning the huge or beautiful or formidable creatures of the plains, the forests, and the mountains. But the average big-game hunter writes a book about as interesting as a Baedeker, and nothing like as useful. I doubt if there is a less attractive type of literary output than an annotated

game bag, or record of slaughter, from which we are able to gather nothing of value as to the lives of the animals themselves, and very little even from the dreary account of the author's murderous prowess. Some of the books by the best men err in exasperating fashion owing to a morbid kind of modesty which makes the writer too self-conscious to tell frankly and fully what he himself has done. This is sometimes spoken of as a good trait, but it is not a good trait. It is not as repellent as conceit or vulgarity, separate or combined, or as that painful trait, the desire to be "funny;" but it is a very bad trait, nevertheless. If a hunter thinks he ought not to tell what he himself has done, then he had much better not write a book at all. There is scant use in his joining the inarticulate mob which Carlyle praised with such verbose insincerity and untruthfulness. If the hunter does write, and is a keen observer, he should remember that, if he is worth listening to at all, his listeners will be particularly interested in hearing of any noteworthy experience that has happened to him personally. Having just re-read Captain Stigand's otherwise admirable book, I am writing with a keen sense of personal injury, because, while from allusions in the book I gather that Captain Stigand was once tossed by a rhinoceros and once mauled by a lion, I am wholly unable to get any full and satisfactory information as to these thrilling incidents, and accordingly I feel just as I would feel if the last chapters had been omitted from "Guy Mannering," and Meg Merri- lies barely mentioned. I wish a good hunting book to be as interesting as a good novel! I have read Patterson's "Man-eaters of Tsavo" again and again, just because the lions *were* man-eaters, and because Patterson killed them, and because (with evident accuracy and truthfulness) he gives all the details of his failures and of his ultimate success. I read the book, among other reasons, because it is interesting—just as "Nicholas Nickleby," and "The Murders of the Rue Morgue," and Macaulay's "Essays," and Parkman's "Montcalm and Wolfe" are interesting. Of course a hunting book must be absolutely true, just as much so as a history; the quality of interest cannot

supply the lack of accuracy; but unless the book has interest it is a poor book.

Mr. Chapman in "On Safari" puts before our eyes a vivid picture of the great game of East Africa, such as hardly any other writer, except the German Schilling, paints for us; and when we follow his hunts we do it with thorough sympathy and understanding, because, without useless detail, he yet tells us everything essential that happened, so that we can see it all with our eyes. We know just how the rhinoceros looked and how he acted; we see the hartebeest overcome by pride in his position as he leads the files of wildebeest down to the water; we know how the hunter himself feels on the march, in his different camps, and when he is breakfasting at dawn while his tent is being struck. Moreover, with pen and pencil Mr. Chapman brings before us pictures of many of the striking birds which are a delight to the eyes of the African hunter who loves nature. Mr. Chapman is a thorough sportsman. He is free from that besetting desire to make record bags<sup>1</sup> which is, to my mind, one of the most curious and unpleasant, and indeed unhealthy, developments of the otherwise excellent English sportsmanship; and what he preaches about the preservation of game and wild things could be preached with even more advantage in our own country than in his.

There are two or three specific points made by Mr. Chapman which are directly applicable to our needs over here. He speaks with proper condemnation, not only of what we would call the "game hog," but of the mere collector, the man who is not a naturalist at all, and who collects rare species as a professional stamp-collector would collect stamps, for sale, heedless of the fact that he may be doing irreparable harm. Game heads and antlers which represent merely the owner's money make that owner look absurd; trophies, save in rare cases when they are gifts, should be proofs of the owner's prowess. Here in America a dozen birds have vanished or their numbers have been so thinned out that they are on the point of vanishing. The passenger pigeon, parouquet, whooping crane, Eastern prairie

<sup>1</sup> But when among Spanish wild fowl Mr. Chapman could have afforded to be more moderate.

hen, trumpeter swan, Labrador duck, and ivory-billed woodpecker are among them; and the butchery of terns and herons for "fun," or for woman's head-gear, has been atrocious—I can use no other word. It would, of course, be as great an absurdity to stop all killing of game birds as to stop all killing of barnyard fowls; but it is no less an absurdity to kill beyond the point where they can reproduce themselves. Birds that are useless for the table and not harmful to the farm should always be preserved; and the more beautiful they are, the more carefully they should be preserved. They look a great deal better in the swamps and on the beaches and among the trees than they do on hats. There are certain species in certain localities which it is still necessary to collect; but no really rare bird ought to be shot save in altogether exceptional circumstances and for public museums, and the common birds (which of course should also be placed in public museums) are entirely out of place in private collections; and this applies as much to their eggs and nests as to their skins. The proper way to study these birds is to study them as Mabel Osgood Wright studies them; and we should all endeavor to preserve them in our own gardens and fields and woods, just as she has succeeded in preserving them.

Again, I cordially agree with what Mr. Chapman says about photography. He fully appreciates its great importance in the study of nature. The photographs of big game by Schilling, Dugmore, Kearton, Delamere; the photographs of wild birds by Kearton, Job, Findley, Frank T. Chapman, and many others, represent an immense addition to our knowledge. But it is a mistake to suppose that photographs can ever supply the place of good letterpress or of good pictures—pictures like those in Millais's "Breath from the Veldt." It is only under exceptional circumstances that photographs can be treated as in themselves an end; normally they are only a means to an end. As Mr. Chapman says, pictures of out-of-door life must be both accurate and artistic—qualities which were formerly held to be mutually exclusive.

Mr. Chapman appeals to those of us who are not past-masters in all branches

of the difficult art of the wilderness hunter, because he takes pride in just the same modest feats in which we also take pride. For instance, Captain Stigand, who is a very exceptionally skillful hunter and hardy wilderness wanderer, expresses the utmost contempt for people who take any pride in killing game on the open plains; whereas to men of humbler powers it is comforting to their self-respect to find that that good hunter and fine naturalist ex-Governor Jackson, of British East Africa, devotes much space to the description and praise of precisely this open plains shooting.

Finally, Mr. Chapman's observations on natural history should be held up as an example to those writers who make observations only with the deliberate purpose of twisting them into the support of some theory. Mr. Chapman applies the doctrine of concealing coloration much more widely than I do, and I differ with him as regards some of the examples he gives in this matter, just as I differ with him as to certain of his observations on African big game—as, for instance, his belief that African game rarely lies down when resting, and his belief in the excessively dangerous character of the rhinoceros. But honest differences of opinion, honest differences in seeing and interpreting facts, are helps and not hindrances to getting at the truth.

Such differences of opinions, and conflicts in recorded facts, there must be, and it is right that there should be. What is essential is that they should be based on a desire actually to see facts and truthfully to record them. A thousand fantastic laboratory experiments about concealing coloration are not worth a single observation based on intelligent experience in the field, truthfully recorded and interpreted. The following remark by Mr. Chapman, in connection with shooting the great bustard, applies universally among the hunted as well as the hunters: "Immobility is tenfold more important than color. A pure white object that is quiescent is overlooked, where a clod of turf that *moves* attracts instant attention." So, in speaking of grouse and wild fowl, he acutely distin-

guishes between the period when they have dull-colored plumage patterns and seek and profit by concealment, and the period when they are in their full vigor, have advertising coloration patterns, and make no effort to hide. (I condense.) "During the second half of October a marked change will be observed in the habits of the moorland game and wild fowl. The grouse sit boldly conspicuous on the open ground. The mallard drakes, having acquired their glossy green heads and chestnut breasts, show up boldly on the open waters instead of skulking in reeds or sedge. All the strong wild birds, in fact, having attained their full feather and beauty, now assume the full measure of confidence—not to say defiance—that marks their winter habit. They no longer seek a delusive security in concealment. Early in the season such tactics were intelligible enough with immature poults, or with ragged old birds still in full molt. But with increasing strength their former devices are cast aside; they now sit bare and conspicuous on hillside, knowe, or lough, confident in their own keen instincts and powers of wing and eye to keep themselves beyond the reach of danger." All of which is commended to the prayerful consideration of the well-meaning but slightly absurd faddists who believe that the male mallards and wood ducks when in full winter or spring plumage are "concealingly colored." Many wading birds are concealingly colored at certain seasons, and at other seasons have a highly advertising coloration—the male often assuming such a coloration at the very time that it is most dangerous for him.

There is no more fascinating study than that of bird migration; and Mr. Chapman touches on the subject again and again, and he brings up one of the most difficult puzzles connected with the subject when he describes how, in many species of water birds, the young come down from their Arctic birthplaces in advance of their parents, and yet, although unguided, and never having been near the places before, appear in the exact haunts that their forebears have frequented for countless generations.