

ANIMAL AFRICA. By EARL DENMAN. Robert Hale, London. 18s.

"Africa's wild fauna is like a battered and broken army awaiting annihilation or an armistice," so starts one of the many interesting chapters in Mr. Denman's comprehensive book about the past history and present state of the fauna of Africa.

As editor for three and a half years of *African Wild Life*, the journal of the Wild Life Preservation Society of South Africa, Mr. Denman seized his opportunity to study the destruction which has accompanied civilized man's entry into Africa, and his belated and partial attempts to mitigate the havoc he has caused. The fruit of this study are presented to us here. And very well presented too, for the value of this book lies in the marshalling of facts about the animals of the whole of the African continent, the reserves in which they still find succour and the shocking story of their ruthless and wasteful destruction. It is a destruction which still goes on: Mr. Denman quotes from a game ranger in describing country "once lovely, wooded and teeming with game, now nothing but desolation, trees hacked down, the game gone".

Of course within such an enormous field as this book covers, much must be omitted but when considerable space is given to the red lechwe drives in Barotseland, surely the huge herds which used to inhabit the Kafue flats and are now threatened with extermination deserve some space; and the mention in "Africa's Isolated Herds" of the white rhinoceros in Natal, without a word about the population in the northern part of equatorial Africa, is misleading. But a more serious criticism must be made when Mr. Denman writes of the gorillas of the Kayonza Forest in Uganda as having migrated from the Birunga volcanoes, and then elaborates his theme into what he himself calls "a whirl of speculation". The uninformed reader will think the gorillas' migration to be an established fact, not part of the "whirl of speculation", which it really is.

Mr. Denman attacks the keeping of animals in captivity, but in a way that makes one feel he has not really made up his mind about this difficult question. He spends many pages de-bunking the modern big game hunter, too many I think, for surely no mature mind can still regard him as a hero, though some romance clings to the "old timers" even yet.

Then he belabours Indian Army officers to death for their inroads into the fauna of Africa, which I think he exaggerates.

Certainly his description of them searching every nook and cranny of the continent for pigs to stick is ludicrous. Again how many men with real knowledge of lions would agree that although a 2 ft. 6 in. hurdle is within their capacity as jumpers, a 6 ft. hurdle is not? On the other hand I like his contention that there is no such a thing as a vicious wild animal in Africa unless man has made it so, and I thoroughly enjoyed the chapter in which he discusses the question.

Mr. Denman has, I think, tried to write too much, too quickly, but I recommend *Animal Africa* for its storehouse of facts, its fine illustrations—each animal is really alive and usually doing something—and its easy, interesting reading.

C. L. B.

WAY OF THE WILD. Introduced by C. T. ASTLEY-MABERLEY.
George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., London. £2 2s.

Perhaps four wonderful months spent in Africa is not the best background from which to review a book of photographs of African wild animals. May one not expect too much, or, too favourably reminded of marvellous days, be content with too little? Even apart from these prejudices, was it not too disarming to find in Mr. Astley-Maberley's foreword an exhortation to join the Fauna Preservation Society? I do not know; but I am sure that in commending this beautiful book, I am not being lavish with praise.

The elephants, the lions, the giraffes and the crocodiles took me straight back to Tsavo, Kagera, Wankie and the national parks of Uganda; but those who have never visited these sanctuaries will be no less enthralled. It is hard to choose among such examples of good technical photography and composition, but I admired especially some of those which went right across both pages of this very wide book—the lions with their Kilimanjaro background, the wildebeest quietly walking in the tremendous expanse of the Ngorongoro Crater, the crocodiles basking on a river islet with a great white heron as a companion. I am only sorry I cannot praise all the captions quite as highly as the photographs, a few slightly resemble tourist advertisements.

The foreword with its plea for wild life preservation is admirable.

C. L. B.