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DECIDUOUS FOREST MAN AND THE GRASSLAND FAUNA

By Professor V. E. SHELFORD
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I. Introduction

The droughts and dust storms of recent years have
called attention to the grasslands of central United
States and Canada. Much has been written regarding
the Great Plains on the subjects of (a) too extensive
use of the plow, (b) overgrazing, (c) erosion. Remed-
dies have been suggested, such as seeding with foreign
and domestic grasses, special agricultural methods
and the planting of shelter belts. There remains one
factor in the disasters of the great plains that has not
been evaluated or even adequately brought to attention,
that is the sum total of original native animals of the
grassland biotic community.

The grassland originally presented a fine array of
grasses tall and luxuriant at the eastern edge and
relatively short and hardy at the western. It origi-
nally presented an excellent group of animals living
in a state of dynamic balance. But to the new human
arrivals, the immense herds of bison merely meant free
meat and free hides. As to the use of grassland ani-
mal for fur and hide seekers, noteworthy records are
in the journals of Lewis and Clark (1804-05,
Thwaites) and of John C. Luttig (1812-13). Lewis
and Clark crossed the entire grassland area. The
first grassland animals, notably the bison, were seen in
southeastern South Dakota. The bison fitted the cli-
mate and grassland so well that its population (total,
75,000,000; Great Plains, 50,000,000) exceeded the

1 Invitation paper read by title before the eighth American
Scientific Congress, Section of History and Geo-
graphy.

2 R. G. Thwaites, "The Original Journals of the Lewis
and Clark Expedition, 1804-1806." Vols. 1–3. New
York, 1905.

3 J. C. Luttig, "Journal of a Fur-trading Expedition
of the Upper Missouri, 1812-13." Edited by Stella M.
Science 100 (2590), 135-156.