

AN APPRECIATION

MAJOR KENNETH DE PLANTA BEATON

Ken Beaton, known to a wide circle of friends as a man of many attributes, started life in Blantyre, Nyasaland, in 1905, where his father was General Manager of the African Lakes Corporation. At the age of two he went to Scotland, and again moved with his family to Kenya in 1910. They lived on a small farm near Nairobi, where it was Ken's particular task, even at this young age, to tend cattle, horses, donkeys, dogs, cats, poultry, and a variety of young wild animals, which he also regarded as his friends. Educated first at the Government School, Nairobi, and later at Melville College, Edinburgh, he returned to Kenya at the age of 19 to be apprenticed to Major Dunbar of Sotik, on a coffee farm. Here was a life which Ken really enjoyed, for it gave him sufficient leisure to pursue his great interest in wild life, to learn the ways of the big beasts of the Chepalunga forest, and to go on many a safari. Ken's father then purchased a farm in Sotik, and imported a couple of hounds and a hunter, which enabled him to become a great enthusiast of the Sotik Hunt, and later M.F.H.

The war period saw him at once in the K.A.R., where he took part in the Abyssinian campaign and the battle of Gondar, later to be stationed in Madagascar, and finally as O.C. Troops, Zanzibar. On demobilization he found that his farm had been ruined by lack of adequate supervision, and in 1946 he joined the Kenya National Parks as warden of the Nairobi National Park. His great love and knowledge of wild animals shone through his delightful weekly articles in the "East African Standard" and enabled so many readers to know some of the denizens of the Nairobi National Park almost personally and by name. Having so successfully completed the initial development of the Nairobi National Park, particularly through its difficult stages, he was then seconded to the Uganda Government to undertake the development of the Uganda National Parks, where he later became Director and Chief Warden. With his great knowledge and resourcefulness, in a remarkably short time he brought the Queen Elizabeth National Park forward to a point where in 1954, he had the honour of entertaining Her Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, as guests of the Park.

It was indeed a tragedy that even before 1954 was out, Ken Beaton was no longer spared to fulfil further plans he had in mind for the development of the Murchison Falls Park. His many friends and all lovers of animals will always feel a certain sadness at the loss of Ken Beaton, but they will remember him as a man with a charming smile, a friendly disposition, and good company under any conditions. His work, both in Kenya and Uganda, will stand as a memorial to one who devoted so much zeal to the protection of wild animals.

M.H.C.