

STUDENTS ABROAD

By ARNOLD RAPHAEL

ROUGHLY 80 per cent, if not more, of Nigerians in prominent positions today took degrees or diplomas in Britain or Ireland. Academic circles here can therefore take pride in their contribution to the state. The achievement is even more remarkable when one considers the sluggish growth of overseas education for colonials.

At the end of the eighteenth century there were about 50 West Africans receiving a rudimentary education in Britain. In 1930 about the same number of West Africans were attending British universities. By 1940 the total stood at 69. Then, a decade later, the deluge.

Nigeria prospered during the war and has never looked back. Local votes coupled with colonial development and welfare grants from this country enabled substantial sums to be spent for the first time on higher education overseas. And if scholarships were not available many parents could afford to send their

Nigerian law student, in 1925 to combat the colour bar in Britain and imperialism in West Africa. Nigeria House readily admits that many of its people here ought never to have come, lacking the intellectual capacity to see them through to their finals. But there is nothing to stop them coming, and there is not an institution in this country that would not put itself out to accommodate an eager overseas student. Law is the great trap: the Inns of Court require minimal qualifications for registration and virtually leave a man to his own devices.

The borderline student deserves sympathy, but nowhere near as much as the private student who has been recommended by the student advisory committees in Nigeria and is otherwise well qualified to make the grade but whose allowance from home has stopped because his guarantor has either died or can no longer support him. The immediate reaction is to work one's way through college; generally, it means working one's way out. Few Nigerians, or any one else for that matter, can successfully combine full-time jobs with serious study. What can be done then for those whose funds, through no fault of their own, have suddenly dried up? Those who apply to Nigeria House can look for some succour, but just how much there is in the "improvident fund" officials are not prepared to say, for obvious reasons. Some years ago it stood at only £500.

PROBLEM OF PLACES

The answer to this problem is more overseas scholarships and improved facilities at home for higher education. The expansion of the latter is discussed elsewhere in this supplement. But on the question of scholarships Nigeria's problem is not so much one of money as of securing places. Although universities and training and technical colleges can barely digest our own "bulge" they are nevertheless taking between 750 and 1,000 Nigerians for the coming academic year, including student-nurses, of whom there are already 1,500. Saturation point has almost been reached, and as more and more Nigerians qualify for higher education the authorities will be forced to look elsewhere than to Britain. America and Canada will certainly be taking more Nigerian students; Germany already has 300, mostly private students on technical and science courses. Others can be found in Yugoslavia, Switzerland and Holland, a few in Italy, France and the United Arab Republic.

It will fall largely on the present student generation to determine Nigeria's ultimate academic system. Their global experience will enable them to contribute to a fascinating hybrid, and it is not entirely sentiment that makes one hope that it will embody the standards and some of the traditions of the British universities, polytechnics and medical schools where so many of Nigeria's leaders were prepared for the responsibilities of independence.

MORE PEOPLE MEAN LESS WILD LIFE

By D. R. ROSEVEAR

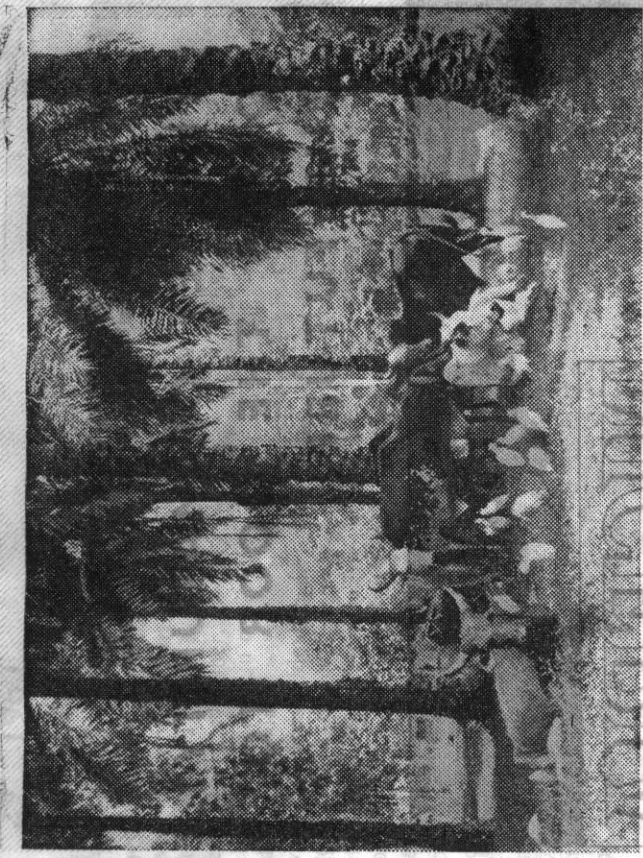
IT is difficult within short compass to write of the animals of Nigeria, for zoologically, as in other respects, it is not one country but several, and general statements are apt to be misleading. It is not a land where large herds of antelopes can be seen marching across the open plains, as they still can, for a depletion, in parts of eastern and southern Africa. The incomparably denser character of most of the vegetation prevents that. In addition, this corner of Africa, the fertile basin of the Niger, has for centuries been one of the most highly populated parts of the continent. In spite of the absence of written history, the secondary nature of most of the forest tells the story clearly. It is in this past destruction that a minor zoological "mystery" finds its probable explanation—the absence from Nigeria of both that fine large antelope the bongo and the giant forest hog, though they occur immediately to the east and west. Yet it is indeed astonishing how small and palatable antelopes manage to survive. The little Maxwell's duiker, so universally on sale as meat, is everywhere abundant where there is forest cover; and, more remarkable still, is the continued existence, in districts where the population rises to 1,000 to the square mile, of Bates's dwarf antelope, standing only 14 in. at the shoulder.

The diversity of vegetation, ranging from coastal mangrove swamps to near-desert at Lake Chad, affords food and shelter to a greater variety of creatures than is found in any other single West African territory; and what Nigeria may lack in immediate appeal to the casual visitor by the absence of large numbers of readily seen animals, it makes up in interest to the resident naturalist by its abundance in species.

ANTELOPE AND BUFFALO

Two dozen different kinds of antelope occur: quikers, hartbeests, the shaggy-coated waterbuck; the neat little reedbuck; the magnificent roan, exceeded in size only by the giant-eland, a rare visitor to the eastern frontier. The bushbuck, also called harnessed antelope from the pattern of white stripes on its coat, remains widespread and common, though its horns with their slight twist are, with those of Buffon's kob, among the commonest trophies to be seen in ju-ju house or sportsman's home. Its rarer relative, the sititunga, is preserved by the swampy nature of its home and its habit of almost totally submerging itself when alarmed. A far smaller creature of similar aquatic habit is the "little white-fleeced" water chevrotain, not a true antelope, which skulks through the dense undergrowth on stream-banks and is capable of complete disappearance beneath the water. Seldom seen, it is thought to be far rarer than in fact it is. Lastly, of the hoofed animals, small herds of buffalo, or bushcow, still roam the savannahs.

Space forbids more than a passing mention of the monkeys, the chimpanzee and even of that king of the forest, the gorilla, still eking out a diminishing existence in one small corner of the country. Interesting minor animals are the pied kingfisher, hovering with fluttering wings before his rapid dive; and probably the dapper little crocodile bird whose froth-nicking activities on



Cattle and birds take shelter from the sun. A picture taken in the Cameroon highlands.

white ants; bush-babies, and the potto, those more carnally minded there are not only the guinea fowl and bush fowl, which are common and provide both good sport and good eating, but quail, rarer relation, the Calabar potto, is for ever known as the angwantibo, the only Efik word to be current throughout Europe and America. Then there is the smallest hedgehog known and nearly 100 different kinds of rodent. Most of these are rats and mice of very varied size and colour; but they include also a dozen squirrels, and four flying squirrels that glide with outstretched limbs from tree to tree; two porcupines, the common one and the brush-tailed species that rattles its tail as it scurries along; and their near relative, the very succulent cutting-grass. Many a bold spirit prepared to venture on an exotic dish of porcupine has recoiled from roast cutting-grass, so highly prized by all country-born Nigerians, on learning that its alternative name is the cane rat.

But what of the future? The birds and the insects, the bats, the rodents and the reptiles will go on for centuries. It is the larger mammals that are in danger. Hunting, commonly regarded as the great menace, is as nothing compared with the territorial demands of a rapidly expanding population. There is less and less room for the animals. The continued existence of many is due to a much-reviled method of farming that demands a bush-fallow of from four to 10 years, and it is in these secondary forest regrowths that some of the larger creatures find that seclusion and feeling of safety they require in order to breed. As the call for food becomes louder these fallows tend to become shorter; and should the system of agriculture ever change, under the guidance of experts, to a more continuous and open use of land, as in Europe, the animals must surely go. The only solution is to allot the wild life its sanctuaries before the land situation gets any more difficult than it already is, and to keep those sanctuaries inviolate by an adequate and properly trained staff backed by active government support and sufficient funds.

THRILL OF MUSIC

And the song. The monotony of some of the midday calls is more than compensated for by the cheerful dawn chorus led by the Bulbul with his insistent "Quick, doctor, quick!" and enriched by the fine-voiced Kurrichane thrush. He who is fortunate enough to harbour in his compound the colourful white-headed robin chat, that richest and most versatile of Nigerian songsters, keenly awaits, each close of day, the thrill of his music.

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VARIETY OF BIRD LIFE

If mammalian life is plentiful, the birds are almost beyond reckoning; and though many of them are hidden and secretive, one of the joys of bird-watching in Nigeria is the great variety of the ordinary man can readily get to know. Their very names read like poetry: mannikins, waxbills, the fire-finch, the blue-throated roller; the laughing dove, vinaceous turtle-dove, the yellow-mantled whydah; the sunbirds, drongos, lily-trotter, babblers and fire-crested alethe; the lyre-tailed honey-guide, the golden-backed piculet, the seven sisters and the blue fairy flycatcher. The garden abounds with them, and a walk down a neighbouring farm path or through a patch of forest near by enlarges the field yet more; while a visit to the water's edge reveals a wealth of waders and riverine species—sand-piper, greenshank, curlew are all there; the pied kingfisher, hovering with fluttering wings before his rapid dive; and probably the dapper little crocodile bird whose froth-nicking activities on