

A STATE NATURAL PARK.

FRED J. BREEZE.

Primeval Indiana has passed away. The great forest-covered plains are now bare, and divided into cultivated fields. The wild animals, like the bison, bear and deer, have gone with the forests; while numerous species of birds and other small animals have also disappeared. Our streams have lost their purity and wild beauty; some have been fouled with sewage, while others have been dredged and straightened into artificial drainage channels. Thousands of marshes and hundreds of lakes have been drained, and cultivation of the soil has destroyed thousands of the smaller forms of plant life.

Not all of these changes are desirable, neither are they all necessary, yet the destruction of natural features will continue; and it seems that the time is not far away when Indiana will be nothing but a vast expanse of farms and cities, and man, having humanized everything, will be surrounded by a surfeit of artificial features, the only fauna and flora being the domestic animals and plants.

Some intelligent work ought to be done to stop the useless destruction of the wild forms of nature. Many natural conditions still existing ought to be preserved, and others now gone but still redeemable ought to be restored before it is too late. Every farm has some little corner of ground which is not tillable and this should be given over to nature. Here, trees, shrubs and flowers may grow in freedom, and birds and small ground animals find safe retreat. Every county should have a small reserve or natural park. Such an area could well serve as a small forest reservation, as well as a place where a rich plant and animal life could safely exist.

But to maintain an area in which natural or primitive conditions could exist on a sufficiently large scale we need a natural park under the control of the State. It should be several square miles in area, and should be in the northern part of the State, so that it might include a lake within its limits. Its size and shape should make it possible not only to have a lake, but a stream basin drained by the lake. Into this park should be placed the wild animals that formerly lived in this State. Here animals

and plants could live under perfectly natural conditions. The park could serve for many scientific purposes. In it the Department of Fisheries and Game could carry on experiments in fish and game culture. After a few years it would be the best possible place for a Biological Station. It would also be just the place for the field meetings of the Academy of Science. It is not necessary at this time to go into details concerning its character, management, and purposes, but only to suggest a few of these things.

Such a reserve would be a little part of the "Indiana of Nature" preserved for the pleasure and profit of the people for all time to come. If the members of the Academy become convinced of its value and will co-operate to educate public opinion toward this end, a State Natural Park can be secured within the next decade.