

FUR, in *Commerce*, is a general term, comprising the skins of different kinds of wild animals, that are found in high northern latitudes, particularly those forming part of the American continent; such as the beaver, bear, moose-deer, marten, mink, woolverin, wolf, &c. &c. &c. When these skins are in an unimproved state, as they come from the hands of the Indian hunters, they properly class under the denomination of *peltry*; but when they have had the inner side converted into leather, by an aluminous process, they then assume the appellation of furs; and the art of thus manufacturing them is called *furriery*.

FURS, or *Furrs*, is a term, in its confined sense, applied to the skins of different hairy quadrupeds, when they have undergone an aluminous process, by which the inside integuments are converted into a kind of coriaceous substance. In this view *furs* differ from *peltries*, which are the same skins in the state they are taken from the animals, and simply dried, or in a stricter meaning of the word, the latter only comprises skins covered with short hair, as the deer, elk, buffaloe, &c., principally manufactured into leather. But in a general sense, the term fur includes all kinds of skins which are used in furriery, *viz.* bear, beaver, mink, marten, otter, fox, ermine, sable, squirrel, cat, hare, rabbit, &c. Respecting the relative estimation of the various kinds

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much appears to depend upon the several uses to which they are generally applied; and their intrinsic value upon the climate, whence they are brought, the age or health of the animals, and the season of the year when caught and killed. It has been frequently remarked by natural historians, that the colder the country, the larger and warmer is the fur of each animal; it being wisely provided in the economy of nature, that the clothing of the inhabitant should be adapted to the rigours of his situation. Thus the fox and wolf, which in temperate climates have but comparatively short hair, in the frozen regions near the pole are covered with a fine long and thick fur. The beaver and the ermine, which are found in the greatest plenty in high northern latitudes, are remarkable for the warmth and delicacy of their furs. It is not an easy task to account for this remarkable warmth of furs in northern quadrupeds. Some have supposed it originates in spare and scanty diet, with the difficulty of obtaining food, to which animals in such climates are subjected. Others, with more probability, have ascribed it to the severity of the cold, contracting the pores of the skin, so that the hair consequently takes the shape or size of the orifice through which it grows; as wires are made smaller and longer by being drawn through narrower apertures. From whatever cause it may arise, such is the fact; and farther, all the animals of the arctic climates may be said to have their winter and summer garments, except very far to the north, where the cold is so continually intense, that, according to Crantz, no change of colour is perceivable either in the fox or bear. Hence it is, that the furs of high northern latitudes are better in quality than those of more temperate climes; the produce of Siberia superior to those of Russia; and the imports from Canada preferable to those from the United States. This fact also accounts for the difference of value in similar articles brought from the same country; for during winter the furs of most animals improve both in quality and colour. Indeed some kinds, as those of the *isatis* or cross fox, unless killed at that season, are in no estimation.

Of the least valuable among the kinds of furs, those of the rabbit and hare may be classed, although they are more generally known from the circumstance of their forming a considerable article in the hat manufacture; for which purpose vast quantities are imported from those countries bordering on the polar regions, where they are found as white as the snow they traverse, and in such plenty, that they are sold on the spot, or rather bartered for the value of five shillings per hundred. It is not easy to ascertain the exact time when furs were first used in the hat trade. The stipulations for the preservation of rabbits in different treaties respecting Calais, signed between the English and French, previously to the year 1440, have induced some writers to suppose the improvement was adopted about the beginning of the fifteenth century. But even in the time of Elizabeth the wearing of hats was restricted by act of parliament to the upper classes in society; the middling and lower being confined, under forfeiture of a penalty, to the use of knit caps. This act, however, was soon after repealed, and the use of felt hats, and others manufactured from fur, came into general wear. In 1638, king Charles having incorporated the makers of these hats and caps into a privileged company, he affixed regulations for the trade, prohibited the importation of beaver hats, and restricted the hatters to the use of that article, allowing the admixture of other substances, only in hats and caps, called *demi-castors*, intended for importation. From this period may be dated the increase in the value of the beaver fur, which now supplies that manufacture with its most valuable commodity. Of beavers, the

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skins of the middle-aged or the young, called cub-beaver, is the most valuable, the wool being the finest, most glossy, and susceptible of the most permanent dye.

Fox skins furnish a considerable variety of furs. In the cold countries animals of this species are of all colours, white, grey, blue, iron-grey, silver-grey, variegated and black. Of these, the last is the most valuable, and the first the least. The hair of the white fox is very liable to fall off; the blue are sought for with avidity, owing to their scarcity; and the black fetch a high price, from their justly acknowledged beauty. The generality of this kind of skins, like those of the wolf and bear, are manufactured into muffs, tippets, cloaks, and other defensive articles of winter dress.

The different species of animals which constitute the weasel genus furnish many of the finest and most generally esteemed furs. The fur of the wild-cat is soft and warm, but from an offensive smell, which it tenaciously retains, the value falls below that of others of a very inferior kind. The marten affords a skin of various colours, but the part of it held in the highest estimation is that browner than the rest, extending along the spine. The skin of the sable is highly coveted, which is in colour a brownish black, and the darker the more desirable it becomes. The fur of this animal is finer, softer, and more glossy than that of any other quadruped, except its equally estimable congener the ermine, which is the most valuable of any hitherto known. In summer the ermine is brown, and called the stoat. It is in winter only that this little animal has its fur of the proper colour and consistence. At the approach of the inclement season the hair, from being coarse and short, lengthens and grows finer, while numerous smaller hairs rise up between the longer, thicken the coat, and give it all the warmth and softness which is so much admired in the furs of northern animals, and sets so high a price upon their skins. The snowy whiteness which the ermine's fur assumes at that time of the year confers on it also an additional value.

Many other animals afford furs of various qualities, which, according to their uses, differ as to the degree of estimation in which they are held; as the wolverin, raccoon, musquash, genet, and sloth, the fur of which last possesses such a beautiful lustre as to give it the preference to that of all other animals, except the ermine, sable, and Siberian fox. Another fur-bearing animal of the American continent, and lately discovered, must not pass unnoticed, because it is likely, at no distant period, greatly to enhance the importance of the trade in articles of this description, the sea-otter. This inhabitant of the New World furnishes a complete rival to any in the Old; its fur being, in the opinion of experienced judges, the finest and most desirable for many purposes of any yet produced in all parts of the globe. Captain Clarke, who succeeded captain Cook, collected a quantity in the vicinity of Nootka Sound, and carried them to China, where they sold as high as one hundred dollars per skin. The account of this induced other adventurers to open a trade to Canton; but the Chinese emperor, jealous of European communication, quickly prohibited this branch of commerce. The Columbia, Missouri, and other rivers, which rising in the north-west parts of America, fall into the great Pacific ocean, are known to abound with sea-otters; and these will probably soon furnish a new source of profitable speculation.

FUR Trade. The use of furs and peltry is nearly coeval with the history of man. From the primeval pair having been clad in vestments of skins, the custom of adopting such a kind of dress was obviously deduced, and the multiplication, and subsequent dispersion of mankind, for peopling the

earth, would extend and perpetuate the usage during the first stages of civilization.

"—————Cum frigida parvas
Præberet spelunca domos, ignemque Laremque,
Et pecus & dominos communi clauderet umbra:
Silvestrem montana torum cum sterneret uxor
Frondebibus, & culmo vicinarumque ferarum
Pellibus."

Juvenal Sat. l. vi.

Accordingly, historians and poets describe people in the ruder ages of the world, when hunting and fighting appear to have been their principal employment, as usually clothed in this manner: and the custom would prevail till art had taught the superior advantages of wool, and invention afforded her assistance in its multifarious fabrication. Thus Virgil, when he describes Æneas about to take his departure from Troy, represents him as having his outer vest formed of a lion's skin.

"Hæc fatus, lateros humeros subjectaque colla
Veste super fulvique interior pelle leonis."

Æneid, lib. ii.

In book the fifth, he depicts Acestes as formidably clad in the skin of a Libyan bear.

In the various islands and countries lately brought to our knowledge by numerous voyages of discovery, and where the arts appear in a state of infancy, the usage of wearing furs and skins is still prevalent among the natives; from the northern point of Kamtschatka to the most southerly islands in the Pacific ocean, from the seats of the Nathana and Quarrelling Indians to the great wall which separates China from the Siberian deserts. As tribes multiplied, cultivation increased, and consequently woods diminished, the haunts of undomesticated animals would become more distant from the habitations of man; hunting and killing them would thus become more toilsome, which must necessarily enhance the value of skins, and what originally were considered as cheap and common necessaries, would at length be classed among the more valuable and costly commodities. In the sacred book of Exodus, among the offerings made towards erecting the tabernacle for Jehovah, are enumerated purple, scarlet, and fine linen, with goat-skins, red skins of rams, and badger skins. The sacred book of Numbers, which contains precepts for purification, provides that every thing made of skins, and all goods manufactured from goats' hair, were in a particular manner to be purged; because they were calculated to retain longer the principles of contagion. From which passages it appears, that skins were not only used for furnishing some portions of dress; but were also considered of great value long subsequent to the time when the arts of weaving and dyeing were discovered.

At what period, or among what people, furs became an article of luxury, is a subject on which little can be collected for elucidation. They do not appear to have constituted any part of dress worn by the patrician orders in the enlightened nations of Greece and Rome. Their use was probably confined to the northern parts of Asia and Europe; and the custom afterwards might have been extended to the middle and southern parts of the latter continent, by those immense hordes, which descended and deluged the Roman empire like a flood, the Goths and Vandals.

The history of various nations tends to shew that furs were anciently used to ornament the robes of princes, grandees, and persons delegated with high authority. Vestiges of their use in these respects are still visible in England, in the state robes of the king, the nobility, judges, and other persons

sons of distinction, and in the public dresses of the chief magistrates, and officers in municipal corporate bodies. Their use is distinctly traceable in the bordering, impaling, quartering, and divers forms belonging to emblazonry in armorial bearings; where vair and ermiae still hold a conspicuous rank. All which demonstrate the prevalence of the custom of furred garments in ages far remote from the present.

Of the fur trade at an early period, little has been recorded, though it certainly must have formed a considerable branch of commerce. There existed several reasons why little has been detailed on this subject, as to the nature, extent, or mode in which the merchandize in furs and peltry was conducted. Previously to the discovery of the New World by Columbus, the furs, in general demand for Europe, were procured from the north and north-eastern parts of the Russian empire. The discovery and annexation of the extensive territory of Siberia in the sixteenth century added greatly to the wealth and power of Russia, by the numerous fisheries, iron works, and particularly by the extensive field it opened for the trade in furs. But previously to the direct communication with that empire by the Russian company, formed under the auspices of the celebrated Sebastian Cabot, and the discovery of the port of Archangel by captain Richard Chandler, the fur trade in the north-east had been carried on through the ports of Livonia, lately possessed by the Teutonic knights of St. Mary of Jerusalem, a republic, of which the Hanseatic towns not long ago were the only remaining part; the Russians, anterior to that period, not possessing any sea-ports or shipping on the shores of the Baltic. Thus the articles, which constituted this department of commerce, found their way to a market by the interior of the north of Europe. In consequence of this circuitous conveyance, the despotic nature of the Russian monarchs, and the narrow policy adopted by that government, it was scarcely known for a long period from what particular places, or by what mode of intercourse the furs and skins were procured. But the Livonian war having greatly injured the trade, the czar was induced to accede to the request of the English merchants for permission to trade directly to the Russian coast.

The discovery and colonization of America, particularly the northern parts of it, bordering on the gulf of St. Lawrence and Hudson's bay, gave a new turn to mercantile speculations in furs and peltry.

Hudson's bay was discovered by sir Thomas Burton, and further surveyed in quest of a north-west passage during the reign of Charles the First, by captain Luke Fox. Afterwards prince Rupert, and several noble associates, having sent out captain Newland, on an exploratory voyage to the bay, and finding by the narrative of his proceedings that an advantageous commerce might be carried on with that part of the American continent, they determined to form an united company for the purpose of opening a new source of trade and wealth. In this pursuit they were encouraged by the return and successful adventure of captain Gillam, who about the same period had been dispatched on a trading voyage by some merchants of Bristol. An application to the crown obtained for the association a charter for the exclusive right to attempt the discovery of a north-west passage, to proceed in that direction on mining investigations, and to open with the natives of the Terra Incognita a trade in furs. By this charter, dated May 2, 1670, they were incorporated under the title of the governor and company of adventurers of England, trading to Hudson's bay, with the sole and exclusive privilege of navigating in all seas, bays, straits, creeks, lakes, rivers, sounds, &c. that lie within the entrance of the straits, commonly called "Hudson's

straits." This charter was a very ample one, and for a time had a most disastrously exclusive effect upon the trade in furs. But such charters, happily for commerce, were greatly abridged of their extensive privileges, by one of those eminent bulwarks of English liberty, which have at several important epochs distinguished the constitution of Britain. By a statute, enacted in the first year of king William and queen Mary, entitled "An act for declaring the rights and liberties of the subject, and settling the succession of the crown," the privileges of the company, like every other not sanctioned by an act of the legislature, were disannulled, and though they still pretend to possess prohibitory powers, every British subject has an equal right to participate in the trade to that quarter. Their first factory, fort, or establishment on Nelson river, was formed in the year 1682, and a Mr. John Bridgar was made governor. Soon after they set up others in different parts of the bay; but the French, who were jealous of the interference with the Indians, in the vicinity of their Canadian settlements, seized upon the forts, and dispossessed the settlers. On application to the French court respecting this outrage, it was deemed a piratical act, and the king of France, as an indemnity, gave the company the French fort and factory on the river Hayes. Although the French in Canada did not at first pretend to a property in the countries about Hudson's bay, yet in a few years after the company was established, so early as 1674, their jealousy of the English enterprize was very manifest. They became exceedingly troublesome to the outposts, and erected a fort within eight days journey of the settlement on prince Rupert's river. They also endeavoured, by underselling us in their barter with the Indians, to ruin our trade and interest with those savages, which they were enabled effectually to do by their contiguity; the nearest parts of Canada not being distant more than 150 miles from the above mentioned factory at fort Nelson.

From this period, till the year 1714, the company's people were frequently annoyed and harassed by their litigious and ambitious neighbours; till, by the treaty of Utrecht, lines of demarcation were drawn between the two countries, and definitive articles agreed upon relative to the trade. After this they extended their concerns, and erected new settlements. In 1730 they possessed five, *viz.* on Albany river, Hayes's island, Rupert's river, Port Nelson, and New Severn. The country about Hudson's bay is very inhospitable and unfriendly to vegetable productions; for even in the southern part, in the latitude of 51 degrees, it is excessively cold nine months in the year. In so wretched a country, therefore, there can be no plantations, properly so called, nor any towns and villages. The resident traders therefore must be supplied with bread, beef, pork, flour, peas, and other necessaries from England, or some parts of America. With the poor savages of the country, commerce can be conducted by no other means than *barter*; and the beaver is made the medium, or *agio*, of exchange. Thus, for instance, the company for one beaver's skin, at one period, gave half a pound of gunpowder, four pound weight of lead shot, two hatchets, half a pound of glass-beads, one pound weight of tobacco, eight small, or six large knives, one large and two small powder horns. For 12 good winter-beaver skins, a gun of the best sort; for eight do. the smallest sized gun; for six do. a good laced coat; for five do. a plain red coat; for four do. a woman's coat; and so proportionably for kettles, looking-glasses, combs, &c. Arthur Dobbes, esq. who published, in 1743, an account of Hudson's bay, furnishes this ratio of exchange between the company's agents and the Indians. A beaver skin, he says, as the medium of circulation, is the established price of the

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undermentioned articles, *viz.* a pound weight of brass ket-
tles, one and a half pound of gunpowder; five pounds of
lead shot, six pounds of Brazil tobacco; one yard of bays,
two combs; two yards of gartering, one pair of breeches,
one pistol, or two hatchets. Other kinds of goods procured
from the savages are doubtless valued in a similar manner,
although he has not detailed the respective proportions. In
the catalogue of British manufactures given in lieu of them,
he enumerates the following; "glafs-beads, black-lead, sugar,
thread, vermilion, brandy, broad cloth, blankets, duffels,
flannel, awl-blades, buttons, fish-hooks, fire-steels, files, guns,
flints, yarn, mittens, handkerchiefs, hats, hawk-bells, knives,
ice-chiffels, looking-glasses, needles, net-lines, rings, runlets,
sword-blades, spoons, shirts, shoes, stockings, sashes, worsted,
thimbles, tobacco-boxes, tongs, trunks, wine, &c. &c."

This year, 1730, the company imported 11,040 coat and
parchment beaver skins; 4404 do. cubs; 3330 damaged
and stage-parchment; 990 do. cubs; 1648 martens, 3130
damaged do.; 380 otter skins; 890 cat skins; 260 fox
skins; 540 woolverins; 400 black bear skins; 190 wolves
skins; and 30 wood-shocks. In 1737, the company ex-
ported to the value of 412*l.* 18*s.* 2*d.* The year following,
3879*l.* The same author gives the following statement of
one of the company's sales in the year 1740, *viz.* "17,780
beaver skins, and 49,600 skins of all kinds, 2360 pound
weight of bed feathers, 160 of castoreum, 610 whale fins,
and 120 gallons of whale oil." He further observes, "that
as there are two sales every year, and the company reserves
three-fifths of their beaver skins for their second sale, but no
other skins; then the second sale must have had 26,670
beaver skins, and both the sales must have furnished 44,450
beaver skins." He has also given the company's entire
sale for the year 1743, with the prices affixed, *viz.*

	<i>£.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
26,750 Beaver skins, sold for	9780	4	0
12,370 Martens skins, do.	4242	7	0
2,360 Damaged do. do.	442	10	0
590 Otter skins, do.	413	0	0
850 Cat skins, do.	413	0	0
260 Damaged do. do.	52	0	0
320 Foxes	200	0	0
600 Woolverins	205	0	0
170 Do. damaged	27	12	0
320 Black bears	368	0	0
1580 Wolves	1580	0	0
270 Do. damaged and flags	123	15	0
40 Woodshock skins	22	6	0
10 Mink skins	1	10	0
5 Raccoon skins	0	16	0
120 Squirrel skins	2	0	0
	17,874	0	0

The following articles he adds without enumerating their
prices, *viz.* 130 elk skins, 440 deer skins, 3170 pound of
bed-feathers, and 220 pound in a tick, 140 castoreum, 470
whale-fins, 23 casks of whale oil, and 8 pound of wefagui-
paka.

	<i>£.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
And in their March sale, 40,125 beavers, worth	14,670	0	0
Unvalued goods, about	400	0	0
Total amount of the trade in 1743	33,396	0	0

A literary controversy, between Mr. Dobbes and Capt.
Middleton, concerning the passage through Hudson's bay
westward to China, and the nature of the company's trade
with the savages, has brought to light more particulars for
the illustration of this subject, than either the company
would have been inclined, or the public could have expected
them to communicate. Upon the allegations, in these and
other pamphlets, respecting a north-west passage to the sea
of Japan, that the Hudson's bay company had not hitherto
encouraged any attempts for the discovery of such a passage,
and that a more extensive and beneficial commerce might be
carried on with the countries bordering on the bay, if the
trade were laid open; the house of commons appointed a
committee to inquire into the truth of such statements.
By the papers and books produced on that occasion, it ap-
pears the original fund of the company was 10,500*l.* This,
in the year 1690, was trebled, making 31,500*l.*; which was
again trebled in 1720, amounting to 94,500*l.*; and by a
partial payment of 10*l.* per cent. on a new scheme of en-
largement, the capital was augmented to 103,500*l.* Mr.
Robson, who had some years been surveyor for the com-
pany, and on this occasion seemed rather a disgusted evidence
against them, informs us the company's four small factories
contained only 130 servants, and two small houses, with
eight men in each; the value of their annual exports
was about 4000*l.*; and that in time of peace they employed
three ships of 150 to 200 tons burthen, with two or three
small sloops, constantly stationed in the bay. The company,
he observed, have always been extremely averse either to
make discoveries, or permit others to attempt such under-
takings, apprehensive, whenever the improvable value of the
colony and trade should be known, government might be in-
clined to take the one under its own protection, and to lay
open the other to the nation at large. They, therefore, have con-
tented themselves with dividing among only a hundred persons
a large profit upon a small capital. This profit, according
to his statement from the documents laid before the parliament,
is enormous. Taking the beaver skin as the standard, he thus
proceeds, "for a quart of English spirits, which the company
export at six-pence, and before they sell it to the natives, mix
it with one-third water, which reduces it to four-pence; they
take a beaver skin, which has been sold at the company's
sale, at a medium of ten years, for six shillings three far-
things the pound, and a beaver-skin generally weighs a
pound and a half; so that they get nine shillings and one
penny for four-pence, which is 2700*l.* per cent. profit.
Upon other articles not so material, they do not gain above
500*l.* or 600*l.* per cent.; but in exchange for martens the
profit is double of that upon beaver; for they value three
martens only as one beaver, and those, at a medium of ten
years, have sold for six shillings a skin. It appears also from
the standard that one-third more is charged upon many ar-
ticles at Nelson and Churchill factories, than at Moose and
Albany; those factories being farther from the French, who
till within these few years had not intercepted the trade there;
and not content even with this extravagant profit, the factors
are allowed to sell their goods considerably above the stand-
ard, which is called the profit upon the *overplus* trade;
yet with all this advance upon their goods the company is
reduced by the expence of management, shipping, factories,
officers, and servants, to a little more than 200*l.* per cent.
For by a medium of ten years trade, their sales amount
annually to 27,354*l.* 5*s.* 5*d.* and their expences to 19,417*l.*
8*s.* 6*d.*; their net profit, therefore, at the same medium,
amounts to 7,936*l.* 16*s.* 11*½d.* which upon 3,674*l.* 3*s.* 1*½d.*,
their annual export at the same medium, is about 216*l.* per
cent. profit upon the annual stock in trade, and near 7*½l.* upon
the

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the nominal capital of 103,957."—But from this statement, compared with Mr. Dobbes's, the profits of the concern are by no means so enviable as might at the first glance be imagined. For upon viewing the proceeds of the company's sales, it may be observed, that if their capital stock be about 100,000*l.* that thereon they had not for many years divided more than 10*l.* percent, and if the sale in 1743 be any rule to determine for other years; the rest being absorbed in the company's annual expences for shipping, forts, garrisons, salaries, and home charges, which may amount to about 20,000*l.* So that although Mr. Dobbes has evidently spared no exertions to become master of his subject, yet, after all, considering the risks to which the company are constantly liable, their gains, as Captain Middleton observes, "are little to be envied. Indeed their recent dividends of eight per cent. form no very alluring object for mercantile speculation. The last mentioned author, in his pamphlet, printed in 1743, states, "that until a little above twenty years before, the voyage to Hudfon's bay was seldom made without wintering there." This shews the company have by that alteration made a considerable improvement, and great saving must accrue from such an economical measure. But the existing necessary expences might be materially diminished, except in the article of freight, if the trade were laid open, the country settled, and the possessions thus secured without charge; whilst the exports and imports would be greatly increased, perhaps as some have calculated, to one hundred times their present value, for there is a sufficient scope; and an extent of country, which by proper cultivation, and due encouragement to the natives, to support the computation. Indeed this latter measure, the civilization of the Indians, is highly desirable; for by instructing them in the knowledge of useful arts, and inducing them to attain habits of industry, by allowing a fair and equitable trade, a solid foundation might thus be laid for their conversion to Christianity.

Respecting the future progress of the trade, and the nature of its concerns, little more can be collected than what is furnished by the invoices of the cargoes, imported in the company's ships; and the reports of their public sales. For subsequent to the parliamentary investigation they have been unusually jealous of inquiry, and peculiarly tenacious of information. A few notices, extracted from these, will serve to elucidate similar kinds of statements; which will be found in the subsequent account of the Canadian branch of this commerce. From the time of Mr. Dobbes's statement, the concern for some years was evidently on the decline; but after the American war had terminated in establishing the independence of the United States, this, among other kinds of traffic, was more vigorously pursued with those parts of America still subject to the crown of Great Britain. The importation of the year 1789 affords the following result, viz.

"Coat beaver skins 4,900; parchment ditto 26,750; cub ditto 14,900; marten 25,900; otter 2,650; cat 1,530; fox 3,790; woolverin 240; bear 400; wolf 2,420; fisher 160; mink 460; raccoon 480; musquash 5,200; elk 26; deer in the hair 2,980; rabbit 5,000." In the year 1791 the company made an alteration in the mode of sale. Instead of allotting the different skins and furs according to their kind, they arranged each kind in six different classes, according to their respective goodness and value; but more especially with the view to the various uses to which they might be applied. By the adoption of this plan, the company became wholesale furriers, as well as importing merchants; and by dividing of qualities, and designating uses, united the double profits of two very beneficial concerns.

The following is the statement, in the report of the sale for 1791.

	AR	MR	EM	YF	SR	CR
Coat beaver	1100	50	34	1957	104	1133
Parchment do.	7387	2899	3047	18,493	4047	4738
Cub do.	2227	651	550	1848	880	350
Marten	6499	2641	3614	1947	3773	2471
Otter	4524	500	485	441	600	149
Cat	477	228	43	748	86	21
Fox	227	281	2142	2811	143	221
Woolverin	11	2	0	138	7	38
Black bear	205	100	77	36	26	3
White do.	—	—	6	6	—	—
Wolf	5	—	19	3174	14	19
Fisher	72	46	27	37	—	—
Mink	204	159	44	119	—	50
Raccoon	203	180	183	38	—	—
Musquash	2197	5960	580	180	51	36
Deer	35	—	324	1218	1313	142
Rabbit	2745	1530	3233	1286	496	—
Squirrel	—	—	152	144	—	20

The greatest importation the company appears to have made, was in the year 1794, which amounted, as per invoice of cargoes, to 37,777 parchment beaver skins; coat do. 4024; cub do. 14,740; and the various kind of skins nearly in an equal proportion. From this period the decline of imports is evident from almost every annual sale report. That for 1807 and 1808 will exhibit very nearly the present state of the company's trade.

	AR	MR	EM	YF	SR	CR
Beaver coat lbs.	125	36	—	433	90	327
Do. parchment whole skins	4869	2619	553	3304	781	1279
Do. cub	2732	1604	302	1593	404	692
Marten	10,965	5613	3291	9270	6131	4912
Otter	988	382	339	953	611	174
Cat	125	360	116	273	17	161
Fox, about 2500 white	3439	338	1960	6986	335	226
Woolverin	34	—	19	174	14	72
Black bear	165	43	76	146	5	79
White do.	11	—	4	4	30	3
Wolf	1669	2	14	2475	2	98
Fisher	284	37	—	95	—	1
Mink	395	405	76	831	63	110
Raccoon	794	120	241	295	—	50
Musquash	1552	4683	1795	11,698	600	718
Deer	292	—	51	3453	—	645
Rabbit	2886	2910	6865	18,185	3900	—
Swan	—	—	—	396	—	—

The following is the amount of the quantity imported by the Hudfon's bay company in the year 1808, as appears from the sale report for 1809, viz. beaver coat 1684 lbs.; ditto whole parchment skins 20,821; ditto cub ditto 12,063; musquash 33,706; otter 5077; cat 2788; fox 1370; ditto kitt 2371; woolverin 163; bear, black, 971; ditto, white, 89; wolf 3704; fisher 71; mink 3185; rac-

coons

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coon 5339; deer 5339; swan 1067; squirrel 905; rabbit, 25,914. The highest price of coat beaver was nineteen shillings and sixpence per pound, the average fifteen and sixpence; parchment ditto twenty-three shillings and ninepence, average ditto, twenty-one shillings and fourpence; cub ditto, twenty-three shillings, average ditto, twenty-one shillings and eight-pence. In this statement, it is proper to observe, that these prices were obtained for the prime and fair articles; what are called damaged and *flaged* skins, of which there is a very considerable portion in every annual importation, are sold at very inferior sums.

Canada, the grand entrepot, or market of communication for the trade in furs and peltry, was first colonized by the French, who visited America for the purpose in 1540; when M. Cartier and baron Roberval, with about 200 men and women, as settlers, sailed from St. Maloes with five ships, and proceeded up the river St. Lawrence, four leagues above the haven of St. Croix; where, having landed, they constructed a fort for the protection of the infant colony. Emigration and population proceeded so rapidly, that the country, near the north bank of the river St. Lawrence, soon became well peopled, so that from the account given of it by governor Lahontan, about the end of the sixteenth century, the number of inhabitants amounted to 180,000. In the year 1603, the French went higher up the river, and began to settle in the country now called Canada, or New France, on the north side of the river, and erected houses at the point of Trois Rivieres; but they did not extend so high as Quebec till the year 1608. They continued to erect habitations and forts in the same direction, between Quebec and Montreal till 1629, when the country was taken by an English force under the command of sir David Kirk, but was shortly restored again to France. For a series of years this valuable territory was much neglected by the mother country. During a long time the further colonization was left to private individuals, who fitted out expeditions of adventure at their own expence. These were usually men of rank and fortune, who obtained from the government an exclusive right to trade with the native Indians for divers kinds of furs and peltries, then the principal articles of Canadian commerce. But experience quickly demonstrated that these expeditions were upon too small a scale to insure either the success or the safety of the settlers, who were consequently subject to be harassed by continual incursions of the Indians for the sake of plunder. From the year 1535, when it is said Quebec was first discovered, to the year 1664, the government and trade of Canada were entrusted to private merchants, holding under patents, granted by the king of France. In the year 1664, the two departments were separated, and changed possessors: the crown assuming the government, while the trade was put exclusively in possession of the company des Indes Occidentales. But even after the French government had taken the colony under its own more immediate care, greater attention appears to have been paid to the spreading of the Roman catholic religion, by numerous missionaries exploring the interior, and cultivating friendship with the various Indian tribes, for the furtherance of the fur trade; than to the internal improvement of the country, by agriculture and arts. Indeed, from the first settlement of Canada, the fur trade was considered of the greatest importance to the colony. Soon in the vicinity of the trading settlements, the skins of such animals as were deemed precious in a commercial view, became scarce and daily more valuable. To procure the necessary supplies, the Indians were constrained to penetrate farther, and explore the distant woods for hunting pursuits, in which they were often accompanied

by native Canadians. These in time, by means of the intercourse they thus obtained with persons belonging to the remoter tribes, induced the latter to bring to the settlements belonging to the trade the kind of skins which were most in demand. Such Canadians, who thus conformed with the Indians in these hunting excursions, were denominated "Coureurs des bois," and becoming a kind of pedlars or middle men, proved extremely useful to merchant's engaged in the trade; who found it their interest to grant the necessary credit, to enable them to undertake their commercial speculations. Three or four of these pedlars would put their property, as a joint stock, into a canoe constructed of birch-bark, which they would navigate up the rivers and lakes, and either ascend to the places where the natives were accustomed to hunt, or to such as they were used to frequent, for the purposes of trade. At length, to such an extent did they proceed, that these voyages would take up from twelve to fifteen months, when the adventurers would return freighted with rich cargoes of furs, attended by numerous canoes, containing still more, belonging to the Indians. The dissolute lives of these men, however, tending to obstruct the work of the missionaries, and lessen the Canadians in the eyes of the natives, the suppression of such a class of men was attempted by an edict prohibiting any person from going up the country without a licence from government. But these licences being transferable, many of them came into the hands of the merchants, who, as they formerly did, had recourse to the agency of the *coureurs des bois*, which caused a renewal of the former complaints; in consequence of which, military posts were established at the confluence of the different large lakes of Canada; a measure which tended in a great degree to check the evil consequences arising from the improper conduct of the foresters. The trade also flowed in more numerous and profitable channels. Many respectable men, retired from the army, prosecuted the concern in person with great regularity, under their respective licences; and by persevering industry extended it to such a distance, as in that period was considered an astonishing effort of commercial enterprize. These traders, and their missionaries, having combined their views, and agreed to act with concert, in the course of time secured the respect of the natives, and the obedience of the people necessarily employed in the laborious departments of the concern. These religious men were of extensive service to the *commanders*, as the licenced traders were denominated, engaged in those distant expeditions to the remote settlements, and enabled them to carry the fur trade as far as the banks of the river Saskatchewan, in latitude 53° north, and longitude 102° west. Thus expanded was it, notwithstanding the restrictions by which commerce was oppressed under the French government; and thus did it surmount many of the most discouraging obstacles; while at the same time no exertions were made from the people of Hudson's bay to obtain the smallest share in the trade of a country, which, according to the charter of that company, formed part of their own possessions; and, from its proximity, is accessible with so little comparative difficulty to the mercantile adventurer.

What the quantity of furs and skins was, on an annual average, that France imported from Canada, previously to the cession of the province to the English, it is not easy accurately to ascertain. Mr. Dobbes has given an enumeration of the peltry imported in the year 1743 by the port of Rochelle, the principal import place, *viz.* beaver skins 172,080; bear do. 16,512; raccoon do. 110,000; marten do. 30,325; otter and fisher do. 12,428; mink do. 1700; fine cat do. 1220; wolve do. 1267; woolverins 92; grey fox,

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fox, and cat do. 10,280; red fox do. 451: total 311,355 skins, worth about 120,000*l.* sterling

On the 8th of September, 1760, the town of Montreal, together with the rest of Canada, was surrendered to the British forces, under the command of general Amherst, by the French general M. Vaudreulle; and in the treaty of peace, concluded in 1763, the whole province, and its dependencies, were ceded to Great Britain. From this invaluable acquisition, not only did the country obtain a vast addition of territory; but, what is of very great importance, became possessed of the entire fur and peltry trade of the American continent. And though a portion of it was again alienated by the act, which declared the independence of the United States, yet while we retain the country on the banks of the great river St. Lawrence, the key to the lakes, and the land of furs, it must ever be carried on by this kingdom to the most considerable extent. Canada now become a British province, the lords of plantation addressed the king, that the trade might be put under the same regulations with that of the other colonies, except such cases as might be otherwise provided for by the articles of capitulation and cession. Large orders for furs were now forwarded to this country from Flanders and other places on the continent, and even from Russia, which, though considered a fur country, does not produce a sufficient quantity for the supply of its own wants. But though the demands in the market were great, yet for some time after the conquest this trade appeared almost suspended; owing to an ignorance of the country in the conquerors, their want of commercial confidence in the conquered, and the numerous discouragements arising from the hostile dispositions of the Indian tribes, who had been in alliance with the French. Hence it was, that so late as the year 1766, the trade from Michilemakinae only commenced. In the undermentioned years, Mr. Macpherson gives the number of skins, or furs, exported from the province of Canada, according to the returns from the offices at Quebec; where the species of furs are not distinguished, but simply entered under one head of, "peltries, skins,"

1764, 106,035 skins, besides 58 casks, 207 bales, and 1 trunk, whereof the contents are not ascertained.

1765, 275,206.

1766, 346,749.

Some of the adventurers now proceeded beyond Grande Portage, situated on a bay in latitude 48° north, and 90° west longitude, which has since that period become the principal north-western entrepot of the trade. Subsequent to this an adventurer, by the name of Mr. Thomas Curry, having penetrated to the furthest limits of the French discoveries in the fur country, and returned with a successful cargo; numerous persons were encouraged to embark their capital, and engage in the concern, and they, or their agents, began to spread over every part of the country, particularly where the French settlements had previously been established. The trade was now pursued with such avidity and irregularity, that in a few years it became the reverse of what it ought to have been, for the benefit of the persons concerned. An animated competition prevailed, and the contending parties carried the trade beyond the line of demarcation laid down by the French, though with little advantage to themselves, and to the serious injury of their neighbours, the Hudson's bay company, who, in the year 1774, and not till then, thought proper to move their depot and factory to the east bank of Sturgeon lake, in latitude 53° 56' north, and longitude 102° 15' west. Roused from torpidity, they now evinced more jealousy towards their fellow subjects, and perhaps with greater reason than they

had ever done towards those of France. This competition, and many other incidental circumstances, for some considerable time, injured the Canadian trade; and which, by the irregular mode it was conducted, yearly grew worse and worse. About this time that direful malady, the small-pox, raged with uncommon virulence among the Indian tribes, and as Mr. Mackenzie describes it, "the fatal infection spread around with a baneful rapidity which no flight could escape, and with a fatal effect that nothing could resist, spreading its destructive and desolating power as the fire consumes the parched grass." These combined circumstances reduced the fur trade of Canada to a forlorn condition. During the winter of 1783—4, the Canadian merchants engaged in this concern formed a junction of interests, under the name of the North-west Company; who divided their firm, for capital they had none, into sixteen shares; each partner furnishing a proportionate quota of such articles as were necessary for carrying on the Indian intercourse. The traders in the country, forgetting their former animosities, and with the expectation of having their labours adequately rewarded, entered into a co-partnership with the merchants of Montreal, engaging with the utmost spirit and activity to further the general interest. The trade, thus consolidated, was directed by able men, who, from the powers with which they were entrusted, were enabled to carry it on to the utmost capable extent. In the year 1787, this company was joined by a rival company, which had started soon after the first was formed, and in which Mr. Alexander Mackenzie, the author of "Voyages from Montreal, &c." bore a distinguished part. This commercial establishment was, by union of ability, and local knowledge, founded on a more solid basis than hitherto had been known in the country; and it not only continued in full force, vigour, and prosperity, in defiance of all interference from Canada, but maintained at least an equal share of advantage with the Hudson's bay company, notwithstanding the decided superiority of their local situation. This new, or combined North-west company, consisted of twenty sharers; of these, some were called the company's agents, and managed the concerns in Canada. Two went annually to the Grande Portage to transact the business there; while others were obliged to winter among the Indians, and to conduct the intercourse with the respective tribes. By such wise commercial arrangements, and prudent minor regulations, did the self-created company insure its subsequent success. In the year 1788, the gross amount of the annual adventure did not exceed forty thousand pounds, which might be considered at that time the *stock* of the company; but by the exertion and enterprize of the proprietors, it was brought in the space of eleven years to upwards triple that amount; yielding proportionate profits, and surpassing every thing in this department of commerce ever before witnessed in America. Such a prosperous state of affairs induced others to embark in similar undertakings. In 1798 the concern underwent a change, the shares were increased to forty-six. This produced the termination of the company, which was not renewed by all the parties previously concerned, the majority continuing to act under the old firm, and the rest setting up another, under the name of the South-west company; a title the establishment assumed from the circumstance of the furs in which they trade being brought from the Indian settlements in the western parts of America, in the vicinity of the rivers Ohio, Missouri, and Mississippi. This trade had been carried on individually by the persons forming this company, who, by interfering in each other's concerns, did themselves a deal of injury which is now avoided by their union. But it yet

remains

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remains to be decided, whether two parties under the same regulations, and by similar exertions, though unequal in number, will be able to continue carrying on the business to a successful issue. The contrary opinion has been entertained by many, which, if verified, will make it the interest of the parties again to coalesce; for neither appears deficient in capital, to support their respective claims on a market, and it is not probable that either will relinquish them on any other terms, than perpetual participation.

These two companies have nearly monopolized the fur-trade, for having scarcely any competitors, they have in a great measure the Indian market in their own power; but they are obliged to pay latterly an advanced price for their skins and furs; because the Indians, so long accustomed to the trade, have long since learned, that a beaver skin is worth more than a two-penny knife, or a six-penny trinket.

By the printed documents of the annual importations from Canada, the quantity of furs and skins, which arrived in England in the year 1783, was as follows: "96,000 parchment beaver; 3000 coat ditto; 105,000 deer in the hair and shaved; 10,000 ditto Indian; half-dressed, 85,000; 10,500 bear; 17,700 otter; 3400 fisher; 40,000 marten; 5600 wolf; 300 woolverin; 7300 cat; 6400 mink; 3900 fox; 3600 elk; 65,000 musquash."

After the north-west company had been formed, how very considerably the trade was increased by their united exertions, will appear from the imports of 1784, viz. "116,000 parchment beaver; 4000 coat ditto; 130,000 raccoon; 40,000 marten; 19,000 otter; 11,000 bear; 7000 wolf; 8000 cat; 8000 mink; 6000 fox; 4000 fisher; 300 woolverin; 6000 elk; 160,000 deer in the hair and shaved; 5000 Indian ditto half-dressed; 84,000 musquash."

Subsequent to the junction of the two rival companies in 1788, the trade was still further extended, and a much larger quantity of furs were brought into the English market. The invoices of the cargoes belonging to sundry ships, which arrived from Canada in the year 1791, give the following result, and it forms the greatest annual importation ever made from that country, viz. "168,000 parchment beaver skins; 5500 coat ditto; 178,000 raccoon; 37,000 marten; 22,500 otter; 15,600 bear; 9600 wolf; 9400 cat; 21,000 mink; 11,000 fox; 600 fisher; 650 woolverin; 147 musquash; 86,000 deer in the hair and shaved; 1000 ditto half-dressed; 2000 elk." The two ensuing years were nearly as productive; but after the dissolution of the company, and the partial reformation of a similar firm, the annual imports began to decline. Thus the import of 1799 gives the following statement, viz. "113,000 parchment beaver skins; 1200 coat ditto; 126,000 raccoon; 34,500 marten; 16,000 otter; 21,000 bear; 5900 wolf; 12,500 cat; 8000 mink; 7800 fox; 5400 fisher; 780 woolverin; 6000 musquash; 160,000 deer in the hair and shaved; 1000 elk." From this period, though the quantity imported in one or two years exceeded that of 1799; yet the average arrivals have fallen short of it. Thus the report of 1803 gives, "93,000 parchment beaver skins; 200 coat ditto; 150,000 raccoon; 32,000 marten; 17,000 otter; 25,000 bear; 5600 wolf; 14,000 cat; 12,000 mink; 10,000 fox and kitt; 57,000 fisher; 1400 woolverin; 76,000 musquash; 204,000 deer in the hair and shaved; 600 elk." The year following produced rather more, and the succeeding one much less. The result of 1807 will serve to give a general view of the present state of the trade: "106,000 parchment beaver skins; 125,000 raccoon; 54,000 marten; 12,000 otter; 16,000 bear; 1000 wolf; 5,300 cat; 15,000 mink; 10,000 fox. N.B. 2300 white; 7000 fisher; 200

woolverin; 15,500 musquash; 216,000 deer in the hair and shaved; 800 elk."

What have been the causes of this gradual diminution in the quantity brought to market has been a subject of serious inquiry. By some it has been attributed to the interference of the Hudson's bay company; and their agents, engrossing a considerable portion of the intercourse with the Kniteneaux, Chepewyan, and other tribes of Indians, who used exclusively to trade with the Canadian adventurers. But by reverting to the state of the sales belonging to that company, it will be evident this could not have been the cause, for the arrivals in the market through that channel also have been progressively growing less. Two reasons may be assigned for the defalcation. First, the distance the adventurers are obliged to go to meet with new Indian tribes for the purpose of profitable barter, and the expensive range the hunters are necessitated to take, for successful pursuit in procuring saleable skins. A second reason may be found in the recent formation of a new company at New York for carrying on the fur-trade in the United States; who, though at present they do not much annoy the Canadian traders by their rivalry in the commerce of the extensive lakes; yet by the quantity of furs they import from Canada, for the purpose of supplying the Chinese, they occasion a considerable drawback on the quantity of goods which otherwise would be exposed in the English market. These two co-operating causes have had a considerable influence, both upon the trade in Canada, and also at Hudson's bay; and they furnish two powerfully persuasive arguments, why the intercourse should be extended and improved with the countries bordering on the north-west coast of America.

The prices of this article have been progressively rising, not merely, as stated by some, on account of the less quantity brought into the market; but from more powerful though less obvious causes. The competition, which has tended to enhance the value, has arisen from a different quarter. Luxury ramifying and increasing through all ranks and gradations of society, has been the primary and continuative cause of the average advance in the price of furs. Other incidental causes may have occasioned temporary fluctuations; but these soon ceasing to operate, the trade reverted to its usual level. The leading and grand cause is, that change that has taken place in the national manners of this country; which is technically couched under "the nature of the trade." To instance, respecting beaver, where some years since one person wore a hat fabricated from that species of fur, a thousand probably do at present. Formerly muffs, tippets, and furred garments were only worn by people of quality, or distinguished the upper classes of gentry. Now costly furs adorn the dress of females in that sphere of life, in which persons at no remote period were usually clad in the plainest and most homely attire. To this may be added the expence of freight, insurance, &c., owing to a protracted war. And the indirect influence of general taxation, as well as the effects of a direct impost, and an additional fifteen per cent. lately put upon the article, subjects the consumer to an accumulated charge. It is not requisite to enter into details minutely to investigate the scale of gradation, or mark the different periods of advance; suffice it to observe, that by the sale prices of the Hudson's bay company, on an average of eleven years from 1722 to 1733 inclusive, the price of beaver, which to a certain extent regulates the rest, sold from three shillings and three-pence to seven shillings and six-pence per pound, forming a medium of five shillings and four-pence halfpenny. By the accounts laid before parliament in 1749, the average price, reckoning for ten years prior to that period, of a pound weight of beaver, was six

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fix shillings and three half-pence. Since that time it has variously fluctuated, but still kept progressively rising; till at one time it had advanced to the enormous height of thirty shillings per pound. It then fell considerably, and at present maintains the average rate of *twenty-four*. Mr. Gray, who in his account of Canada frequently alludes to the fur trade, furnishes a few remarks, calculated to illustrate this subject; for by contrasting the prices at the London sales with those

of Canada, which he gives in his statement, it will be seen, that not monopoly, but the increasing demand in the market, and the difficulty of supplying it, have been the actual causes of the advance in price.

The following were the quantity, kinds, and prices of furs and peltry exported from Canada to Britain, on an average of three years ending 1805, *viz.*

			average weight each	at	per lb.	£.	s.	d.
Beaver skins	99,076	-	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb.	at	14s.	92,470	18	8
Marten	21,370	-	at	4s. each	-	4,634	0	0
Otter	17,649	-	—	17s. 6d.	-	33,091	17	6
Mink	11,687	-	—	2s. 6d.	-	1,460	17	6
Fisher	5,657	-	—	8s. 6d.	-	2,404	4	6
Fox	8,636	-	—	12s.	-	5,181	12	0
Bear and cub	20,074	-	—	40s.	-	40,148	0	0
Deer	223,290	-	—	5s.	-	55,822	10	0
Raccoon	151,710	-	—	2s.	-	15,171	0	0
Muskwash	79,650	-	—	1s. 2d.	-	4,646	5	0
Cat, skinned and open	12,221	-	—	7s. 6d.	-	4,582	7	6
Wolf	6,425	-	—	8s.	-	2,570	0	0
Elk	1,032	-	—	10s.	-	516	0	0
Wolverin	1,250	-	—	5s.	-	812	10	0
Hare								
Rabbit								
Ermine	3,062	-	—	8d.	-	76	11	0
Squirrel								
Total in value						£ 263,088	13	8

Exclusive of this part of the trade, a large quantity of furs of all descriptions are annually sent by way of St. John's into the United States; not merely for supplying the demands of that country, but for exporting to China, for which market the finest furs and prime peltries are in request. The amount of these articles sold to the Americans in the year 1806, Mr. Gray states at 62,009*l.* 15*s.* 2*d.* The reason of the furs being sent by this channel, rather than through the London market, is the difficulty of getting home the produce obtained for the furs in China by the East India company's ships, together with the various restrictions laid by the directors, and the heavy duty payable on the exportation.

Mr. Gray's account of the exports of furs and peltries from Quebec in 1808, is as follows, *viz.*

			£	s.	d.
Beaver	126,927	at 18s. 9d.	118,994	1	3
Marten	9,530	— 3s. 4d.	1,588	6	8
Otters	7,230	— 20s.	7,230	0	0
Mink	9,108	— 2s.	910	16	0
Fishers	3,866	— 4s.	773	4	0
Foxes	1,038	— 5s.	259	10	0
Bears and cubs	1,298	— 25s.	1,622	10	0
Deers	103,875	— 3s. 4d.	17,312	10	0
Skinned and open cat	5,718	— 3s. 4d.	953	0	0
Raccoons	123,307	— 2s.	12,330	14	0
Musk cats	6,513	— 1s. 6d.	488	9	6
Wolf	18	— 7s. 6d.	6	15	0
Elk	662	— 15s.	496	10	0
Wolverins	39	— 5s.	9	15	0
Seals	10	— 4s.	2	0	0
Buffalo	1	— 20s.	1	0	0
Total value			162,979	1	5

By this statement it will appear that the fur trade to Britain has recently declined; and that many of the articles have sold at a reduced price, compared with the average amount and prices in 1805.

The Canadian imports, for the year 1808, consisted of 92,000 parchment beaver; 3000 coat ditto; 123,000 raccoon; 10,000 marten; 7000 otter; 1300 bear;—wolf; 5700 cat; 9000 mink; 1000 fox; 3900 fisher;—wolverin; 5400 muskwash; 103 deer, in the hair and shaved; 600 elk. The highest price obtained for parchment beaver was twenty-one shillings, the average twenty; cub ditto, twenty-five, average ditto twenty-three and six-pence; coat ditto, fourteen and five-pence, average ditto eleven and ten-pence. By comparing this statement with the one previously given from the sale-report of the Hudson's bay company, for the same year, it will appear, that notwithstanding the gradual defalcation in the quantity of furs brought from Canada, yet the importation from that country is nearly treble the amount of that from Hudson's bay; and that the price of coat-beaver from the former country is considerably lower than what is brought from the latter, while the cub and prime parchment beaver reaches a higher standard. This difference can only arise from the quality of the respective articles, since the sales are conducted on a similar plan, *viz.* "by the candle at a public auction." To explain the general mode of carrying on the fur trade, and conducting the necessary interchange of commodities with the Indians, it will be necessary to have recourse to the details given on this subject by that intelligent merchant and observant traveller, Alexander Mackenzie, whose voyages of discovery in the interior, indefatigable labours for the furtherance of this branch of commerce, and the prosperity of our northern states in America, deserve the highest encomium; and doubtless his fame, with his valuable works, will descend to the latest posterity. The facts which those afford will be interspersed with others furnished by Hearne, Vancouver, Gray, &c. &c.

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with such additional remarks as may tend to the elucidation of the subject.

The commercial relations with the Indians form purely a barter trade, as money is of little value in a country where every thing bought and sold is, and must be, in kind. The articles necessary for the trade are, coarse woollen cloths of various kinds, milled blankets of different sizes; arms and ammunition; twist and carrot tobacco; divers sorts of Manchester goods; linens and coarse sheetings; threads, line, and twine; common hardware; cutlery and ironmongery of several descriptions; brass and copper kettles; sheet iron; silk, and cotton handkerchiefs; hats, shoes, and hose; calicoes, printed cottons, &c. &c. These are imported from England. Spirituous liquors, and divers articles of provision, are purchased for the concern in Canada. These goods are previously made up, and properly prepared for the Indian market at Montreal. The expence of this, the transporting them to the Indian territory, and freighting back the goods obtained in exchange, including wages to clerks, interpreters, guides, and canoe men, constitute about half the annual amount against what is termed *the adventure*. These are conveyed by bateaux, flat-bottomed boats, and canoes, which commence their voyage at La Chine, about nine miles above Montreal, the rapids in the river St. Lawrence preventing the working up loaded canoes between those two places. Some proceed by way of lakes Ontario and Niagara, &c.: but the greater number by the river Altawa, or Outawais, and by other rivers and portages, to lake Nipissing, lake Huron, lake Superior, and thence by several chains of large and small lakes and rivers to lake Winipey, Athabasca, or Arathapescow lake, and the great Slave lake, which is within a few hundred miles of the western coast of North America. In this range of their trade the company have at times from one to two thousand people in their employment, as their agents and servants, at their numerous posts, dispersed over the country, who conduct the business and cultivate the friendship of the Indians, among whom some of them constantly reside. At one particular period Mr. Mackenzie thus particularly states the number of men employed in the concern by the North-west company. "Fifty clerks, seventy-one interpreters and clerks, one thousand one hundred and twenty canoe men, and thirty-five guides. Of these, five clerks, eighteen guides, and three hundred and fifty canoe men were engaged for the summer season in going from Montreal to the Grande Portage in canoes; part of whom proceeded from thence to Rainy lake. These, which are called porkeaters, or goers and comers, and hired in Canada or Montreal, were absent from the first of May till the latter end of September. For this trip the guides had from eight hundred to a thousand livres, and a suitable equipment; the foreman and steersman from four to six hundred livres; the middle men from two hundred and fifty to three hundred and fifty livres, with an equipment of one blanket, one shirt, and one pair of trowsers, and were maintained during the voyage at the expence of their employers. Independent of wages, they were allowed to traffic, and many of them earned to an equal amount. About one-third of these proceeded to winter, and had more than double the above allowance and equipment. All the rest were hired by the year, and in some instances for three years. Of the clerks, many of them were apprentices, who were generally engaged for five or seven years, for which they had only one hundred pounds, with provision and clothing."

The necessary number of canoes having been purchased, at three hundred livres each, the goods formed into packages,

of about eighty or ninety pounds weight, and the lakes, with their connecting rivers, free of ice, which generally happens by the beginning of May, the voyagers, with their vessels and cargoes, are dispatched from La Chine. Eight or ten men are appointed to each canoe, and their baggage, provisions, stores, with other necessary articles, and sixty-five packages of goods, are stowed into this small vessel. "An European, on seeing one of these slender vessels, (says Mr. Mackenzie,) thus laden, heaped up, and sunk with her gun-wale within six inches of the water, would think his fate inevitable in such a boat, when he reflected on the nature of her voyage; but the Canadians are so expert, that few accidents happen." The canoe is constructed with much ingenuity, it is perfectly light, and by that means answers remarkably well the purposes for which it is intended. The length of those canoes, which are used in the fur trade, is about thirty feet, the greatest breadth six, gradually narrowing towards each end, till they terminate in a point; the bottom is rounded, and they have no keel. A frame is formed of slight pieces of light wood, over which is fastened a sheathing, composed of sections of bark, taken from the birch tree; these are sewed together with filaments from roots of the spruce fir tree called *watape*; and the calking, or making the seams water-tight, is effected by a species of gum which hardens and adheres more firmly in the water. "I had the pleasure, (observes Mr. Gray,) of seeing both an arrival, and departure of canoes from, and to, the north-west territories. It certainly is a curious spectacle. The canoes, when they take their departure from La Chine, are loaded to within about six inches of the gun-wale, or edge of the canoe. Instead of oars, they use paddles, which they handle with great dexterity. They strike off, singing a song peculiar to themselves, called the "voyager's song;" one man takes the lead, and all the others join in a chorus. It is extremely pleasing to see people, who are toiling hard, display such marks of good humour and contentment, although they know, that for a space of more than two thousand miles, their exertions must be unremitting, and their living very poor; for, in the little space allowed in the canoe for provisions, you find none of the luxuries, and a very scanty supply of the necessaries of life. The song is of great use; they keep time with their paddles to its measured cadence, and, by uniting their force, increase its effect considerably."

Leaving La Chine they proceed to St. Anne's, within two miles of the western extremity, in the island of Montreal, on the lake of the two mountains, which is considered the commencement of the Utawas or Outawais river, and presents itself to the voyagers; who, to pass the rapids of St. Anne, are obliged to take out part, if not the whole, of their lading. From this spot they consider their departure, because near it stands the last church on the island, dedicated to their tutelar saint. The lake of the two mountains is about twenty miles long, and contracting its waters forms the river Utawas, whose navigation is interrupted, at intervals, by a variety of cascades and rapids, that either render discharges, or portages necessary. By the former are meant places where the canoes must unload their cargoes, and the packages be carried over to points, where the river again deepens, and becomes fit for navigation; and by the latter, such places where the obstacles oblige the voyagers to carry over both canoes and cargoes. Thus they proceed to lake Nipissingui, from which by French river, in latitude north 45° 53', they enter lake Huron. Hence passing the island of Michilimakinac, at the confluence of lakes Huron and Michigan, and passing along the north shore of the former, they portage over the falls of the river St. Mary, which

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which extends to lake Superior; and having crossed that immense body of water which forms the grand reservoir of the river St. Lawrence, they arrive at the important entrepot denominated the Grande Portage. At this place they are met by the northmen, who generally come down about the beginning of July. At this period it becomes necessary to select from the pork-eaters a number of men, among whom are also the recruits, or volunteer winterers, sufficient to man the canoes necessary for carrying the goods and provisions requisite for the Athabasca country, to the river of the Rainy lake. The northmen, who have arrived at Grande Portage, are regaled, have their accounts settled, and such as choose to send any of their earnings to Canada receive draughts to remit the same to their relations. Such as have not previously entered into engagements during the winter, as is customary, now contract for returning up the country, to perform the annual voyage for one, two, or three years; and as soon as every thing can be got ready, which usually requires a fortnight, they are again dispatched to their respective departments. This done, the agents, assisted by their clerks, prepare to return eastward, by getting the furs and skins across the Portage, and re-packing them in bales of one hundred pounds each, to send them down to Montreal, where they commonly arrive about the month of September.

The trade from the Grand Portage to the interior is, in some particulars, carried on in a different manner from that between it and Montreal. The canoes employed in the transporting goods from the latter place are too large for carrying them beyond the former. Others therefore of about half the size, navigated by about four to six men, are here procured from the natives. These boats carry, on the average, about thirty-five packages, in which twenty-three are for the purposes of trade, and the rest are used for provisions, stores, and baggage. A pilot, or conductor, is appointed to every four or six of these canoes, and thus loaded, the voyagers embark on the river Autort, on the north side of the Portage. Thence proceeding to lake Outard, they enter the Mountain lake, pass by numerous portages to lakes Rose, Saginaga, De la Pluie, and De Bois, which contracts into the river Winipic. The course is now through various small lakes and rivers, with numerous intervening portages and discharges to the last, at the great waters of lake Winipic; between which, and Hudson's bay, two communications are formed by means of the Severn and port Nelson rivers. Several other rivers discharge their waters into this lake, viz. the Dauphin, Red-deer, and Saskatchewan: and the whole country, to the south of the latter, abounds in beaver, moose-deer, fallow-deer, elks, bears, buffaloes, and numerous other animals, calculated to the trade in furs and peltry. On these waters are three principal forts, for the protection of those conducting the concerns. Fort Dauphin, erected by the French, prior to the conquest; Red-deer, and Swan-river forts, with several small detached outposts belonging to each. Up the Saskatchewan the flotilla of canoes proceeds to Cedar lake, from whence the abovementioned river is navigable to near its source. On this fine communication are five principal factories: viz. Nepawi-house, South-branch-house, Fort George-house, Fort Augustus-house, and Upper Establishment. Leaving the Saskatchewan, the voyagers enter the river that communicates with the Sturgeon lake, on the eastern bank of which is situated another factory, Cumberland-house. Thence the rout lies through Pine-island lake, lake de Boucau, Miron lake, lake de Bois, to the Missinipi, called also Churchill river. The inhabitants of this part of the country are the Knisteneaux Indians, whose furs the

traders for several years succeeded in obtaining till 1793; when the servants of the Hudson's bay company thought proper to send their people amongst them, for the purpose of securing their credits, which the natives are apt to forget, and advancing towards the interior by a new line of commercial speculation. Why they had not adopted such a measure long previous to this period is not very obvious: for it must have been, as the fact has since proved, highly beneficial to their concerns. From the short distance they had to come, the quantity of goods they were able readily to supply, the trade, as experience has evinced, must have reverted to them: the Canadian merchants being unable, from the remoteness of their situation, and other circumstances, to meet the company's agents upon adequate terms.

The course of this river is interrupted by rapids and falls, and the flotilla has yet to pass by several small lakes and rivers to Otter lake; thence by lakes de l'Isle d'Ours, lake des Souris, lake du Serpent, lake Croche, lake Shagoina, lake la Croise, lake de Bœuf, up the river la Loche, and thence by the Elk, which communicates with the lake of the Hills, in latitude 58° 36' north. On the southern side of this is situated what is termed the "Old Establishment," which was the only one in this part prior to the year 1785. It was formed by a Mr. Pond in 1778—9, about forty miles distant; and transferred to this place in 1788, by the order of the north-west united company. This, called Fort Chepewyan, is in latitude 58° 38' north, and longitude 110° 26' west. This was the settlement where Mr. Mackenzie resided eight years, conducting the concerns of the north-west company, whence he took his departure on both his expeditions of discovery; and the furthest to the north-west hitherto established for carrying on the commerce in furs and peltry. The following is the statement he gives of the mode adopted in transacting the business. "The flotilla of laden canoes, which leave lake de Pluie about the first of August, do not arrive here till the latter end of September, or the beginning of October, when a necessary proportion of the number is dispatched up the Peace river, to trade with the Beaver and Rocky Mountain Indians. Others are sent to the Slave river and lake, to traffic with the inhabitants of that country. A small part of them, if not left at the fork of the Elk river, return thither for communicating with the Knisteneaux; while the rest of the people and merchandize remain here to trade with the Chepewyans. In the fall of the year, the natives meet the traders at the fort, where they barter the furs or provisions which they have procured, then obtain fresh credit, proceed to hunt the beavers, and do not return till the beginning of the year; when they are again fitted out in the same manner, and come back the latter end of March, or the beginning of April. But they are now unwilling to repair to the beaver hunt until the waters are clear of ice, that they may kill them with fire-arms, which the Chepewyans are averse to employ. The major part of the latter return to the barren grounds, and live during the summer with their relations and friends in the enjoyment of that plenty which is derived from numerous herds of deer. Yet persons of that tribe who are most partial to those deserts cannot remain there in winter, and they are obliged, with the deer, to take shelter in the woods in that rigorous season, during which they contrive to kill a few beavers, and send them by young men, to exchange for iron utensils and ammunition. Till the year 1782 the people of Athabasca sent or carried their furs regularly to fort Churchill, Hudson's bay, and some of them have since that time repaired thither, notwithstanding they could have provided themselves from the Canadians with all the necessaries which they required. The difference of the price set on

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goods, here and at that factory, made it an object with the Chepewyans to undertake a journey of five or six months, in the course of which they were reduced to the most painful extremities, and often lost their lives from hunger and fatigue. At present, however, this traffic is in a great measure discontinued, as they were obliged to expend, in the course of their journey, that very ammunition which formed its most alluring object. Such is the substance of the communications of the most intelligent writers upon this interesting subject, several of whom were ably qualified to give it elucidation from having had ocular demonstration of the facts they relate. But none of them attempt to detail the particular mode of intercourse with the Indians, or the ratio of exchange or barter between them and the traders. This, which will be regretted by all who have read the very important information contained in their works, particularly in Mr. Mackenzie's voyages, may be accounted for thus: the writers were persons interested in the trade, the lucrative returns of which formed a strong inducement to give general information rather than narrate particular circumstances, that, if developed, might have led to an injurious competition. Some idea, however, of the agio, or rate of exchange, as well as the manner of effecting it, has already been given in the account of the commercial relations between the Indians and the Hudson's bay company. A further elucidation may be found in the following statement, which, as a maximum fixed by government for the benefit of both parties, though occasionally departed from, probably constitutes a general guidance or regulation for the trade.

In the year 1762 the governor of Nova Scotia, having conciliated the friendship of the neighbouring Indians, who had been converted to the religion and interests of the French, an act was passed by the provincial legislature to guard against the interruption of the provincial harmony, by fraudulent practices in persons who trade with the Indians; and to oblige all such to take out licences, and give security for their compliance with the regulations of the act. The statute moreover established a tariff of regulated prices, which were fixed as the standard of the trading intercourse between the white people and the Indians.

A pound of the best spring beaver, valued at 5*l.* was established as the fixed standard, by which all other goods were to be estimated, *viz.*

1 $\frac{1}{4}$ Of fall beaver	}	To be considered equivalent to 1lb. of spring beaver.	
1 Otter skin			
3 Sable or marten skins			
6 Mink skins			
13 Musk rats, or musquash skins			
5lb. Of deer skins			
10 Ermine skins			
1 Large good bear skin equal to			1 lb. of spring beaver
1 Red fox skin - - - -			$\frac{1}{2}$ - - - -
1 Black fox skin - - - -			2 - - - -
1 Silver fox skin - - - -	$2\frac{1}{2}$ - - - -		
1 Large moose skin - - - -	$1\frac{1}{2}$ - - - -		
1 Large cat skin, loup servie - -	2 - - - -		
Seal skins, according to size, from 8 <i>l.</i> to 3 <i>s.</i> and 4 <i>l.</i>			
6lb. Of feathers - - - -	1lb. of spring beaver.		
1 Large blanket - - - -	2 - - - -		
Rum, per gallon, - - - -	$\frac{1}{3}$ - - - -		
Molasses, per gallon - - - -	$\frac{2}{3}$ - - - -		
30lb. Of flour - - - -	1 - - - -		
14lb. Of pork - - - -	1 - - - -		
Stroud, per yard - - - -	$1\frac{1}{2}$ - - - -		

And all other merchandize in proportion to these rates. From this, and preceding statements, it will readily occur to the reader, that the profits of the fur trade are very large,

and so they reasonably ought to be, for the capital employed is great, and the returns peculiarly tardy. The agents are obliged to order necessary goods from England in the month of October, eighteen months before they can leave Montreal; that is, they are not shipped from London until the spring following, when they arrive in Canada during the summer. In the course of the following autumn they are made up into such articles as are required for the Indians; they are then packed into parcels of eighty or ninety pounds each, but cannot be sent from Montreal until the ensuing May; so that they do not get to market before the winter following, when they are exchanged for furs, which arrive at Montreal the next autumn, and from thence are shipped, to London chiefly, where they are not sold, or at least paid for, till the succeeding spring, or even as late as the month of June. Thus payment is made forty-two months from the time the goods were ordered in Canada; thirty-six after they had been shipped from England, and twenty-four subsequent to their having been forwarded from Montreal. So that from the time the goods have been bartered for furs, and these arrive in London, are sold, and remittances made, full three years have elapsed. Consequently, the merchant, allowing he has twelve months credit, does not receive his returns, to pay for those goods, and answer the necessary attendant expences in procuring them, which are about equal to the value of the goods, till two years after they are considered as cash, which renders this a very heavy business; the profits ought therefore to be at least triple the profits of a trade where the capital is turned once a year.

The fur trade to the Canadians is nearly as valuable as their corn trade; it employs a great number of people, and a large capital. Besides the expenditure it occasions in Canada, the concern ultimately tends to the encouragement of British manufactures, for those who are employed in the different branches of this business are enabled by their gains to purchase British articles, of which they otherwise must forego the use. The duty paid in England on furs and skins imported from Canada amounted, on an average of four years, ending 1806, to 22,053*l.* per annum. And further, we not only gain by thus being almost exclusively possessed of the commerce in furs and peltry, but also by the articles taken in exchange, which, it has been seen, are coarse woollens, iron-ware, copper, and brass utensils, fire-arms, gun-powder, shot, and other manufactured articles. It has been pregnant with still more general benefits, both to the important objects of science and commerce; for the one has had new regions developed to its ken, by the reiterated exertions to extend the other. Thus what is generally considered, and in too many instances has been, congenial to the attainment of geographical information, in the present case has been productive of the most happy discoveries. Our Indian traders and wood rangers have explored several unknown countries, and found many nations and tribes to traffic with, far back in the interior of that vast continent, till at length they have penetrated to the great western Pacific ocean, and opened a new way of intercourse with Japan and China. It has developed more, for it has set at rest for ever that long agitated, and justly deemed interesting question, respecting the existence of a north-west passage, or communication by sea, between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Mr. Hearne, a naval officer, but then in the service of the Hudson's bay company, in consequence of some information received from the Indians, was sent by the governor of Fort Prince-of-Wales on a journey of discovery in the year 1770. Having penetrated to the Frozen ocean at the mouth of the Copper-mine river, which by his statement lies in nearly 72° north latitude, he

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learned from conversation with the Indians, that the continent stretches away from thence a prodigious way to the westward. By this journey it was ascertained that any communication between the Atlantic and Pacific, if existing, must be beyond that high latitude. But since the conquest of Canada, more has been done in this way by a few spirited merchants, than had been effected for two centuries by the Hudson's bay company, although their charter was principally, as it ostensibly states, granted for that important purpose. The North-west company of Montreal, having been informed by one of their remotest agents, that the Indians had told him of a river flowing into a sea, which was at no great distance to the northward; Mr. Mackenzie, one of the partners, left Montreal in the beginning of the summer of the year 1789, purposely to ascertain the veracity of a communication so interesting to science and commerce. Attended by a few Indians, he traversed partly in canoes, and partly by walking, the great extent of wilderness in which their posts are established, and proceeded beyond them down a considerable river, running north, till he actually arrived at the Frozen ocean, in which he saw some small whales among fields of ice, and observed the rise and fall of the tide. On an island, to which he gave the name of Whale-island, at the mouth of the river, to which also he affixed his own, he erected a post, near a few old deserted huts, engraved on it his name, the number of persons with him, the time they remained, and the latitude of the place, which was found by observation, $69^{\circ} 14'$ north. This voyage, or journey of discovery, and also that of Mr. Hearne's previously noticed, having developed the unfrequented regions of America, must be sufficient to prove the utter impossibility of a navigable communication existing in any temperate part of that continent; and we might reasonably expect to have no more conjectures or speculations upon that subject, more especially since the voyage of captain Vancouver in 1792, 3, and 4, who made a survey of the whole north-western coast of America, from latitude $39^{\circ} 27'$ north as far as the inlet, called Cook's river, and Prince William's sound. Upon a very careful and minute inspection of every creek and inlet of a coast, consisting entirely of creeks and channels, formed by an innumerable multitude of islands, he was enabled positively to ascertain that there is no navigable passage between the Pacific and Atlantic oceans; unless there may be a possibility of sailing through the generally frozen strait between Asia and America, and navigating the polar ocean, which bounds the unknown extremity of the latter continent. Mr. Mackenzie, in 1793, set out on another inland voyage of geographical and commercial discovery. In this second expedition he directed his course to the westward, and after passing the highest land, and walking above 100 miles, he and his party re-embarked on a river running west, and plentifully stocked with excellent salmon, which conveyed them to an inlet of the Pacific ocean, where they saw porpuses and sea-otters, and observed a considerable rise and fall of the tide. There, at a place previously denominated Cascade Canal, by captain Vancouver, he painted upon a rock the words "Alexander Mackenzie from Canada by land, 22d July 1793." From these discoveries, and the fact having been ascertained, that there exists no practicable north-west passage by sea between Asia and America, the practicability of a different kind of communication becomes an object of important consideration. The Russians, who first discovered, that along the coasts of Asia no useful and regular navigation existed, opened an interior intercourse by rivers and lakes, through that long and widely extended continent to the strait separating Asia from America, over which they passed to the

territories of the latter. From this Mr. Mackenzie infers, that since the non-existence of a practical passage by sea, and the existence of one through the continent have been proved, the situation of our North American settlers has become nearly similar to that of Russia.

The trade in furs and peltry experience has proved, from its nature, cannot be advantageously carried on by individuals, for as a very large capital, credit, or both is necessary to conduct the concern with any prospect of success, it consequently follows, as an essential point, that an association of men should be formed, some of wealth to direct, and others of enterprise to execute, and so to act together in one common interest, and on such principles, that the latter might succeed the former in continual gradation. The junction of such a commercial association with the Hudson's bay company, Mr. M. conceives would be a very important measure, which, if adopted, the trade might then be pursued with a very superior degree of advantage, both in a private and public view, under the privilege of their charter, and would in fact prove the only method of completely fulfilling its stipulated conditions. He also obviates any objections to such a plan, by considering it would be equal injustice to exclude either party from the option of such an undertaking; conceiving, the right the one possesses by charter, as counterbalanced in the other case by prior possession. And should the company be adverse to such an union of interests, it would be a fair and reasonable proposal, upon a proper indemnification being offered, for government to oblige them to relinquish a right they refuse to exercise, or to allow others the navigation of the bay to Nelson's river; by which means the trade might be extended to the head of the Saskatchewan river, to the mutual advantage of Canada, and of Britain.

He further suggests, that by means of Port Nelson river, which empties itself into Hudson's bay, the Peach river, the Saskatchewan, that rises in the rocky mountains, and the Columbia, which has its source on the western side of the same; a communication by water might be formed nearly the whole length between the two great oceans, the Pacific and the Atlantic. By opening this intercourse the Canadian merchants would be enabled to supply the natives of the interior with a larger quantity of useful articles, and at a reduced price. The enhanced value of which, and the difficulty of transporting them, will be easily comprehended, when the attendant circumstances are taken into consideration. The tract of transport occupies an extent of land from three to four thousand miles, through upwards of sixty large lakes, and numerous rivers, and the means of conveyance are slight bark canoes. And those waters are interrupted by more than two hundred rapids, along which the articles of merchandize are chiefly carried on men's backs, and over a hundred and thirty carrying places, from twenty-five paces to thirteen miles in length, where the canoes proceeded by the same toilsome and perilous operations. By the route proposed most of these retarding circumstances would be obviated, or greatly diminished.

Since the discoveries on the north-west coast of America by captain Cook, one of the numerous advantages resulting from the labours of that enterprising circumnavigator was, the opening a new and extensive source for procuring furs of the most valuable quality, and a new market for European commodities; the nature of which has been further elucidated by the exploratory voyages of captain Vancouver. By opening, therefore, the intercourse recommended by Mr. Mackenzie, forming regular establishments through the interior, and at both extremes, as well as along the coast; the entire command of the fur trade with North America might be

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be obtained from 48 degrees of north latitude to the pole, except that portion of territory occupied by the Russians. Such would be the spacious field for enterprising exertion, and incalculable would be its advantages, if supported by the influence of credit and capital; means which Great Britain so pre-eminently possesses over other nations. Then would this country begin to receive some remuneration for the money it has expended in discovering and surveying the coasts of the Pacific ocean, which at present are principally left to American adventurers, who, without regular system, or adequate means to embark in the concern, and regardless of conciliating future confidence, look only to the interest of the present moment. These having therefore collected all the skins they can obtain, and in whatever manner best suited to their means, proceed with them across the Pacific to Canton, exchange them for the produce of China, and return with their wealth to their own country. Such adventurers, and many of them are very successful in their concerns, would speedily disappear on the establishment of a well-regulated trade; and nearly the whole traffic in furs must and would circulate through the channels of British commerce.

Some scheme or other, upon a grand scale, it is essential to adopt, if it be desirable to preserve the fur trade in the hands of the Hudson's Bay and Canadian merchants. For since the setting up of the New York company, the discoveries on the north-west coast of America, and the finding what a profitable concern the sale of fur was in the Chinese and other eastern markets, the American merchants have made it an important subject of their speculations. For the purpose of collecting information, and opening an intercourse with various Indian tribes, an expedition was undertaken at the expence of the American government, by "a corps of discovery," as it was termed, under the command of captains Lewis and Clarke, belonging to the army of the United States. The voyagers, for it was performed greater part of the way in canoes, spent the years 1804, 1805, and 1806, in obtaining the object of their pursuit, which was, to find a passage by the Missouri and Columbia rivers to the Pacific ocean. The intention was fully answered by their ascertaining the existence of such a practicable communication. By this means the people of the United States have obtained a fine clue to the north-west Indian tribes, and the river Columbia, with the adjacent bays and creeks, which abound with immense numbers of the sea-otter, an animal that produces the finest and most valuable fur. Thus have they become possessed of the power of competition with the inhabitants of the northern states subject to Britain; and are likely, if the Canadians still continue to be circumscribed by the tenacity of the Hudson's Bay company, to out rival the British merchants in their own market.

See "Voyages from Montreal on the River St. Lawrence, through the Continent of North America to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans, in the Years 1789 and 1793," by Alexander Mackenzie, esq.; "Annals of Commerce, Manufactures, Fisheries, and Navigation," by David Macpherson; "An Account of six Years' Residence in Hudson's Bay, from 1733 to 1736, and 1744 to 1747," by Joseph Robson; Vancouver's "Voyage round the World;" Gals's "Journal of a Voyage up the Missouri, &c.;" Umfreville's "State of Hudson's Bay, and the Fur Trade;" "Letters from Canada, written during the Years 1806, 1807, and 1808," by Hugh Gray; Invoices of cargoes in the ships belonging to the Hudson's Bay company; Invoices of cargoes of the ships employed in the fur trade from Canada; and reports of the respective sales.

FUR, in *Heraldry*. See FURR.