



The Last Chapter in the ROMANCE of FUR

BY JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD
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THE day of romance—romance of the old sort, of pirate-infested seas of peril-ridden lands of gold, of strange and unknown countries filled with the lure that has drawn men from the beginning of time—has rapidly passed away. It is followed now by the romance of iron and steel, the romance of invention, of progress, of a civilization that is fast crushing out the last vestige of the primitive and adding each day new chapters to its own marvelous achievements. It seems like a fitting decree of fate that the oldest and most romantic of all the industries of man, with the exception of his earliest fight for food, should be the last to die. There is something of pathos in it, especially when it is pointed out to one as it was pointed out to me by Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal, head of the great Hudson's Bay Company, who said, "The last chapter in the romance of fur is being written. It has been a glorious story—a glorious story."

For three thousand years the pelts of wild beasts have played their part in the lives of men. For the last ten centuries fur has played an important part in history. It has held out the lure of romance—of adventure and gold. It has caused wars, and has led to the discovery of new lands. Fur hunters have done more exploring than any other class of men. It was the beaver that lured men from the St. Lawrence to the Mississippi, and thence to the Rockies, opening up a continent. It was the sable that drew the tribesmen of Asiatic Russia across to far Kamchatka, and the sea otter that led the Spanish and the English all around the world in crazy craft, and gave us our first knowledge of the Pacific coast from Alaska to California. When, away back in 1679, a wandering and adventurous Frenchman by the name of Groseleur fired Prince Rupert's imagination with glowing tales of a land filled with priceless furs, and a little company was formed with a capital of \$50,000, he did not dream that his wild project meant the opening up of a country almost as large as the whole of Europe and the beginning of an adventure which was to run through centuries. It was this little company of "gentleman adventurers" who formed what is today the Hudson's Bay company, the greatest landed corporation on earth—something which will remain for all time in history as a cenotaph to the tremendous part which the furred things of forest and mountain and sea have played in the fortunes of men.

Last year the raw fur industry of the world amounted to forty million dollars. Next year it will be fifty million, and the year after that the figures will be larger still. Five years ago it was less than twenty millions. Yet in spite of these figures—in the face of the fact that the fur-treasure of the world is increasing in value each year, and will continue to increase for perhaps another decade, the furred things of the earth are fast becoming extinct.

A year ago a big London fur buyer, whose business amounts to over a million dollars annually, said to me, "Within another five years only a very few people of moderate means will be buying furs. Only the wealthy will be able to afford those furs which are cheapest today, and even the muskrat, whose pelt sold for five and six cents a few years ago, will be priced as a luxury."

Ten months did much to verify this fur dealer's statements. Within that time raw pelts advanced from twenty to one hundred per cent. A Montreal dealer who purchased \$5,000 muskrat skins at twenty cents per skin a year before sold them in London for seventy. A month later they had gone to eighty. Two months later they were bringing a dollar. In a single season the value of the world's annual production of fur leaped from \$25,000,000 to over \$40,000,000. I had just come down from my last trip to the Barren Lands, where I had spent eight weeks among the far northern fox hunters, when word was passed from post to post and from trapper to trapper throughout hundreds of thousands of square miles of Canadian wilderness that a fur famine had struck London and Paris, the fur centers of the world, and that from Winnipeg, Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal both the "independents" and the agents of the big companies were making fabulous offers for pelts.

It will be interesting to note the conditions that this famine will bring about during the next two or three years. Millions of women are as yet unaware of what the great fur dealer I have quoted above describes as "the mine that is about to explode under their feet." It cannot be said however, that they have not had some warning. The woman who bought a mink muff for twenty dollars five years ago pays sixty for the same grade of article today; she will pay from seventy to eighty for it this coming season—a hundred or more two years from now.

These statements are not made at random, but only after the closest personal investigation



tion of the fur situation as it exists today, and after a long acquaintance with the great fur companies, buyers, and trappers. But a few facts are necessary to show at what ruthless pace the slaughter of fur animals has gone on during the past decade. It was not long ago that 150,000 skins of the sea otter were taken from the Aleutian Islands each year. Today there are less than 400 skins taken annually. Ten years ago sea otter was a popular fur; today it is worn only by the royal blood of Europe. Twenty years ago it was estimated that seal herds of the Frobisher's numbered over five millions. Today, in spite of international treaties for their protection, there are not more than 150,000 seals on the island! About 10,000 skins were taken last year, and so relentless was the slaughter on account of the princely sums offered for the fur that 10,000 baby seals died during the season, chiefly of starvation because of the death of their mothers.

The glossy little wood marten is dying out. Four years ago I met two Canadian trappers who were coming down from the upper New Ontario game regions with 300 marten, worth then from four to five dollars a skin. Today they are worth twenty-five dollars, and a half a dozen are a big "catch" for any one man in a single season. Five years ago 1,760,000 foxes were killed to supply the world's market. Three years ago the number had fallen to 1,500,000. Last year less than a million were caught. From two dollars a skin the red fox jumped to twelve; the "cross" fox from twenty-five to as high as a hundred, silver and black fox to prices that made their skins ten times the value of their weight in gold!

The silver and black are now so rare that they are "bid" for only by dukes and duchesses, the rulers and the heirs of kingdoms and empires. Seldom does one sell in the London or Paris markets for less than from \$700 to \$1,000. A year ago one pelt sold for \$4,000. In this same way are going the black sable and the little white ermine whose pelt has been worn in the robes of royalty for more than seven centuries. It was not long ago that 100,000 skins of the black sable found their way into the market each year. Last year this number had dwindled to fifteen thousand!

The "signs of the change" are now at hand in another way, and as a consequence never in history will the women of the world be "up against" a greater assortment of substi-



tutes in the fur line than during the coming seasons. The world's prosperity and its rapid increase in population are, of course, the chief causes of the extinction of fur. As recently as ten years ago the people of the United States were not counted among the great buyers of fur. Now the majority of women among ninety million people are purchasers of fur of one kind or another. Five years ago London was the world's greatest fur center, with Paris a close second. Today, so enormous has the demand for fur become in this country as well as across the sea, that there are over 3,000 establishments for the treatment of fine furs and the making of fur garments in New York City alone.

London and Paris have now taken second and third places in the actual making of fur garments, though London handles more raw fur than the other two combined. Last year the value of New York's "finished" output was nearly \$20,000,000, and fully sixty per cent. of this was represented by the furs which a few years ago were considered almost worthless.

"Three years will clean out the cheaper class of fur," said a Montreal buyer to me, "and then the real famine will be at hand."

This passing of the old romance of fur is marked not only by the pathos of the furred things themselves, but by that of the wild and picturesque life of those thousands of wilderness people whose centuries-old vocation must go with the things which gave it birth. There is some comfort for the lover of the wild and what it holds in the thought that at least in a great part of the far Canadian wilderness the picturesque fur-hunter will never, like the courier du bois, quite die out. In a country one-third as large as the whole of Europe railroads and civilization will never go. This vast wilderness region, long described as a "waste," stretches from the coast of Labrador, through Ungava, skirts Hudson's Bay and swings north and west to Mackenzie Land and the polar seas.

It is a land where for six months out of the year man's life is a bitter fight against deep snows and fierce blizzards—against hardships of all kinds, starvation, and a cold that reaches sixty degrees below zero and which is so "dry" that one may freeze almost to the point of death without being aware of especial discomfort or pain. It is, as Lord Strathcona says, "the last great trapping ground." Out of this trapping ground there has come

a constant stream of treasure for nearly two and a half centuries. Last year, according to Canadian export figures, this treasure amounted to \$2,719,822, but no credit was given for the enormous home consumption of raw pelts. The actual catch was worth at least \$5,500,000. The coming season will see \$7,000,000 worth of furs caught in Canada, in spite of the fact that the actual number of skins will be at least a quarter less than a year ago, when the lives of between thirty and forty million wild things were taken that 11,000,000 of civilization might have her furs.

As recently as eight years ago, when the writer first began his journeys into the northland, one struck the great fur country as soon as he crossed Lake Superior. From there it ranged to the Arctic sea. Less than a decade has brought about a tremendous change, and now one travels a hundred miles farther north before he enters the "last great trapping ground." From this great trapping ground comes seventy per cent. of the better class of furs worn by the American woman and her Canadian sister.

In a vast desolation one-third as large as the whole of Europe there is no railroad, no white man's village, and its population is less than that of the Sahara Desert. In its center is Hudson's Bay, the great "ice box" of the north—nine times as large as the state of Ohio. Over this vast territory at distances of from one to three hundred miles apart are scattered the Hudson's Bay Company's posts and those of its French competitors, the Revelon Brothers. In most instances a post consists of nothing more than a company "store," the factor's house, and two or three log cabins. Except during the months of the trapping season these are practically the only points of human life in a country that runs two thousand miles east and west and from two to eight hundred north and south.

With the first breath of winter the fur-gatherers begin to bury themselves in the vast desolation about them, traveling one and sometimes two hundred miles away from the post to their old trapping grounds. From the moment he leaves his door to go over his line, three days' supply of food and a thick blanket in his pack-sack, a knife, a belt-ax and a rifle as weapons, every hour is filled with excitement for the hunter of fur. On his snowshoes he speeds swiftly from trap to trap, every mile of snowy forests and swamps revealing the mysteries of the wild things to him as plainly as a picture-book.

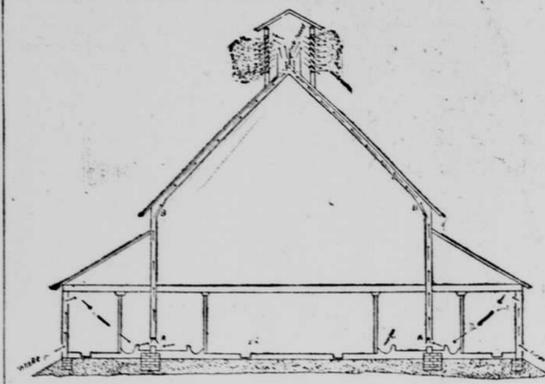
In one trap he finds a great white owl, and cuts off the beautiful wings for the wife and children back in the cabin. In the next there is a huge snow-shoe rabbit, frozen stiff as it had died. And then, from through the thick and gloomy balsam ahead, he hears the faint clinking of a chain. His blood leaps now, for this royal sport of the wilderness never grows old to the fur-hunter. The chain clinks loudly before him, a great excited breath as he lifts the hammer of his rifle and stares ahead. He comes suddenly upon the next house, and there is a snarling, leaping thing in the air before him, a great silver-gray furred thing, lithe and beautiful as it crouches at bay—a lynx. And a magnificent specimen, its six-inch fur as fine as a woman's hair, crumpled and lying richly upon the blood-stained snow as it waits for the man to come within springing distance. But the hunter knows better. He aims carefully for a spot where he can see up the bullet-hole, and fires. Only a short time from now some gently nurtured beauty of civilization will press the warmth and regal loveliness of that thing to her face, and—is it possible that a vision of this wilderness tragedy will come to her then? No more than the dark-faced hunter sees a vision of that woman's loveliness as he skins his catch and hurries on. To each is given but a part of the picture.

The forest man knows only that he has caught a "Number One, Extra" lynx, and that the Company will pay him fifteen dollars for it. His mental visions go no farther than that. He makes no effort to follow it in the great ship that will carry it to Paris or London, where it will be sold at great profit; nor to the furrier's shop, nor to the dainty girl or the society matron in New York who will pay \$150 for that same fifteen-dollar lynx—in an "imported" muff. He goes on, keyed to higher excitement, until the end of the day comes, and in the first gray gloom of early night he stops at one of the three or four small log shelters which he has built for himself along the trap-line, gets his supper, lights his pipe, and reviews the happenings of the day until slumber closes his eyes.

It will take him three days to cover a forty-mile trap-line, and when he returns to his cabin at the close of the third he is welcomed by the glad cries of his children and the laughter and joy of his wife, who has a tender roast porcupine or a venison stew waiting for him. For two days after that he rests, smokes his pipe, and tells of his adventures, while his wife scrapes the fat from his pelts and stretches them on sticks. Then, once more, he shoulders his pack, and goes again upon his round of excitement, adventure and profit.

IMPORTANT FEATURES OF GOOD VENTILATING SYSTEM

In Order That Our Dairy Products May Rank Higher More Attention Must Be Given to Health and Sanitation—One Plan.



Method of Running Ventilator Flues. Fresh Air is Admitted at the Bottom and Foul Air Taken Out at A and B.

(By J. H. FRANDSON.) Through mistaken ideas of some writers, many of our farmers have developed the idea that to keep cows healthy and comfortable and to produce sanitary milk it is absolutely necessary to have expensive barns. As a matter of fact many of the dairy barns whose sanitation is the primary object are quite inexpensive.

On the other hand if it is to be conveniently arranged to embody the most accepted sanitary features, it is very essential that some attention be given to the plans and specifications of the barn that is to house the dairy herd to the best advantage. Every detail of a new barn should be carefully worked out before actual construction takes place.

The illustration here shown will, it is hoped, give the builder some new ideas as to how the barn can be made more sanitary.

In building a dairy barn, or any other kind of a barn for that matter, the plans must be worked out to suit different conditions and locations. Hardly any two sites would permit exactly the same plan being used.

If wholesome and sanitary milk is to be produced the farmer should realize that the cows must be kept out of the mud as much as possible. Conditions in and around the barn can, in many cases, be greatly improved by draining and grading. Draining is not of itself sufficient, as the tramping of the cattle soon puddles the surface, thus practically preventing the water from reaching the tiles below.

The barnyard should have good slope, such as will insure good surface drainage, and should have a good top layer of gravel or cinders. In many places this may involve a great deal of work, but even if the grading cannot all be done in one year, arrangements should be made by which at least part of it is done every year.

Too much stress cannot be laid on the fact that we have no better disinfectant than good, old-fashioned sunlight. For this reason in planning our barns much more attention should be paid to the question of securing sufficient light. It is said by authorities on the subject that four square feet of window light should be allowed for each cow in the barn. Long windows reaching well to the ceiling have been found the most satisfactory for the reason that the light coming through them can reach all parts of the barn better than if the short windows are used. It is also of importance to remember that there is no better way of preventing the spread of tuberculosis in our herds than by admitting plenty of sunlight and fresh air into the barn.

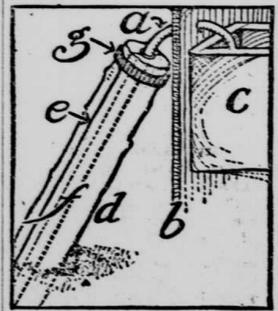
The height to ceiling differs somewhat according to different ideas of the builder, but the height should be sufficient to give ample air space in the structure.

The important features of a good system of ventilation are that it provides a constant supply of pure, fresh air, that the fresh air is admitted near the ceiling and that the impure air is taken out near the floor. The fresh cold air should be admitted near the ceiling, so that it may, by contact with the warm air, be tempered before reaching the cows. By forcing the impure air out near the floor less heat is lost and, as is claimed by most authorities, the major part of the impure air is found near the floor where the cows are constantly depositing many of the impurities given off in breathing. A damp stable favors the breeding of disease germs. A good system of ventilation will carry away all extra moisture. No system of ventilation can be successful in a barn where the cracks and crevices in the walls permit cross-currents to interfere with the work of the ventilating flues.

KEEP FROST FROM PIPES

Illustration Shows Excellent Method of Protecting Water Pipes During Severe Weather—How Done.

This diagram illustrates one way of protecting water pipes against frost. In the cut a is the pipe, b a partition through which the pipe runs, c the water tank, d the ground, f a wooden post and g an iron ring. In operation the post, which may be six to eight inches in diameter, is split in the middle, as shown at e. The center is hollowed out slightly in each half, and



Details of Arrangement.

into this space pipe fits. The iron ring at g holds the halves firmly together, says the Orange Judd Farmer. This protection might, and probably would, in actual practice, continue on through the wall of the building. It could be

arranged for by setting the pipe at a greater angle.

Ensilage for Beef Cattle. We feed the ensilage to our herd of Angus cows and to the young stock, and finish out the steers on corn and grass in the summer, writes an Illinois breeder. We turn the cattle on shock fodder until the middle of February, and then give them ensilage and good oat straw that has been threshed into the barn, or hay, and if we have plenty of ensilage and other rough feed we do not feed any grain. Last year the snow came early, so we ran short of rough feed and had to feed some corn, too, but it is the first time for years that anything but the steers and calves were fed on grain.

Fresh Manure Dangerous to Trees. When an old orchard is renewed the soil may probably receive a liberal application of well-rotted manure. This should be applied only under the extremities of the branches and worked well into the soil. Fresh manure should not be applied. Ashes may be used in addition to the well-rotted manure, or it may be thrown near the base of the tree to destroy many of the insects there.

Feeding Pigs. Make a feeding platform for the hogs eight inches high with a two-inch protecting board all around to keep the feed out of the winter's mud.

Bedding Cows. Look well to the bed your cow lies on in cold weather. Some cows are subject to inflammation of the udder and must have a dry bed of straw, sawdust or planer shavings.

IN TANNING SMALL SKINS

Excellent Methods Given for Preparing Hides of Either Muskrat or Rabbit for the Market.

The skins should—first be heated by sprinkling fine salt over the flesh sides—then roll up and allowed to remain for 12 months. If the pickling method be preferred, the skins may be immersed in a strong solution of brine. After being treated with the salt, wash in cold water, and then all the flesh and fat scraped off. Then sew together to form pouches with hair inside and placed in weak wattle bark solution. The wattle bark solution is made by boiling the bark and having the decoction stand for 24 hours, then taken out and skins are left in this bark solution for 24 hours, then taken out and allowed to draw. The strength of the solution is increased by the addition of more oak

bark every day for six days. At the last day take out the skins, wash off, and coat the flesh side with dubbing. The skins are then thoroughly worked and stretched and hung up to dry, and the fur cleaned and evenly smoothed.

Another method of curing skins is to treat them with salt and sulphuric acid. Over two quarts of wheat bran pour six quarts of boiling water, then strain. Make an equal quantity of strong brine. Mix brine and bran together and to each gallon of the mixture add one ounce of sulphuric acid. Then immerse the skins, stirring them occasionally until tanned. Rabbit skins will tan in 30 minutes in this solution, when tanned, wash the skins in cold water, and hang in cellar to become partly dry. When skins are nearly dry, being moist to the hand, work and stretch until they become soft and pliable. The skin side should then be thoroughly rubbed with prepared chalk.

Continuous, liberal feeding brings the most profit and the best practical results.

Early Marriages Are Best

To Grow Alike in Tastes and Hopes and Aims is Certain in Youthful Pair.

To lay down hard and fast rules on any subject is always ridiculous. Yet, because it has become the fashion to abuse early marriages, the whole world is unthinkingly ready to agree that they should never be permitted, and to

deprecate the bad old times when they were all too common. Yet for so-called "boy-and-girl" marriages there are many things to be said. In the first place they are always love matches. No thought of worldly advantage brings two young creatures together—nothing save the one thing that makes marriage holy. Trials are inevitable, but early youth surmounts

them infinitely more easily than maturer years—and troubles borne together bind hearts in bonds that can never be broken. Besides, to give and take, to grow alike in tastes and hopes and aims, is certain in a youthful pair. The same "oneness" is an absolute impossibility when both man and wife have, perhaps, left their 30th birthday behind them.

It must be acknowledged, however, that fit subjects for youthful marriages are considerably more rare than they were in the last two genera-

tions, and this probably has much to do with the prejudice against such marriages. Husband and wife must be friends—congenial companions—or there can be no lasting happiness for either. Yet it is a moot point whether the welding together of likes and dislikes in early youth, the mutual reliance induced by long years of mutual dependence, does not make more for an ideal companionship than all the knowledge and careful choosing of those whose first gray hair is far off. The children of youthful pa-

rents are certainly the luckier, anyway. With papas and mamas who are so young that they have not forgotten their own babyhood, and so bring a gay and comprehending sympathy to childish joys and woes, they thrive as only in the atmosphere that suits them children do thrive, and grow up with never a hint of advancing age in their parents to sadden them. Somehow one feels quite sure that Darby and Joan, in the dear old song, married very, very young—Boston Traveler.