

be interrupted. But in spring nothing could stop the southward progress of the herd. By night as well as day it swept onward in living torrents which no obstacle could turn from their paths. In crossing the two Saskatchewan precipitous banks were often the scenes of frightful destruction, the rear hordes pushing the vanguard over with irresistible force. Myriads perished by falling through the rotten ice, and one old traveller mentions having counted 8,000 animals mired at a single ford. The spring migration began as soon as the thaw set in. The bulls and cows formed into files, the cows taking the lead, and all went south, invariably following the old paths, multitudes of which are worn deep into the prairie soil by centuries of use. It was at this season and in the fall that these paths which interest strangers so much were formed. No one now-a-days takes the pains to trace out these paths for any distance, but if one were to do so one would find that they are astonishingly direct routes from point to point. As a matter of fact they were often made use of by the early adventurers. La Salle and his nephew, Moranget, followed them in the fatal wilds of Louisiana in 1687, and many a wanderer has since been led by them to water and to safety in the bewildering deserts of the south and west. When once fairly out on the broad plains the buffaloes scattered, the cows keeping to themselves, and all fed like domestic cattle. Early in July the rutting season began and then a terrific scene of roaring and running took place, including innumerable bull fights often of the most deadly character. The young bulls came off victorious, and often ended the contest by burying their horns to the roots in their elder antagonists, though sometimes both combatants perished. Of course the noise caused by such a tumult and concourse of huge animals, often numbering tens of thousands, was stupendous, and, incredible as the statement may seem, by putting the ear to a badger hole, could be distinctly heard at a distance of thirty miles. If one will endeavour to pronounce the monosyllable him-m-m with closed lips and without break, one will have a good idea of the continuous sound of a great buffalo herd conveyed by the earth as through a telephone wire. After the fighting ended intercourse began, and invariably took place in the act of running; preceded, however, by a fact in natural history so singular that were there not ample testimony to its truth, I should hesitate to set it down. The young and victorious bulls selected the old cows, whilst the young cows became the property of the old bulls. To this curious custom may be traced, of course, the singular features of the buffalo dance which was performed by all plain Indians just before or during the animals' rutting season. This dance, though to all seeming a sensual orgy, was in reality a serious ceremony akin to the Andacwandet, or sickness-cure of the Hurons, though not as gross. Both sexes joined in it, the males wearing masks made of the head of the buffalo with horns attached, and imitating throughout the dance the antics of the animal with remarkable fidelity. At its close the young warriors took the elderly women, and the old warriors the maids, and, leading them to the door of their respective lodges, there left them. It would appear that individual attachments occasionally arose between the male and female buffalo; not commonly indeed, for intercourse, subject to the curious custom referred to, was with them as with domestic cattle. But I am satisfied that, if not pairing, something remarkably like it occasionally took place. In general, when attacked by hunters, the herd ran in a compact body, the cows in the centre and the bulls around them. In the scurry and mêlée, the shooting of cows, which were the animals generally singled out for slaughter, drew no attention from the bulls—all swept on and left them. But instances