

can only say cross the Saskatchewan plains in August. Even the sharp frosts of September, though they lessened the activity of the mosquitoes, had no apparent effect upon that of the black-flies; directly the sun rose, even though the ground was covered with snow, they were as virulent as in the hottest day in summer; and I was credibly informed that horses have frequently died from the result of their attacks; there is no doubt that they suffer frightfully from this cause, and if measures are not taken to protect them, rapidly become so poor and weak as to be unable to travel.

Not many years ago, the region we traversed was swarming with buffaloes; now their skulls whitening on the plain, and the deep worn and grass-grown tracks which traverse the prairies in all directions are the only evidence of their former existence. Not a single buffalo was seen during the journey, and very little large game of any kind,—only a few antelopes or *cabri*, one moose and one red deer. Foxes, wolves, badgers, skunks, minks and beavers were seen or heard occasionally. Muskrats are very abundant and swarm in the delta of the Saskatchewan. The officer in charge at Cumberland House informed me that he had last year collected and sent away 240,000 skins of these animals. On the prairies, the little gopher or ground squirrel is almost equally abundant. It is about the same size as the Canadian chipmunk, and its habits appear to be similar to those of the prairie-dog of the southern prairies. Like them, they live in colonies underground on the open treeless prairies, and are generally seen sitting erect and motionless on their hind quarters either perched on the hillocks or in the grass near their burrows into which they quickly disappear at the least alarm. Their skin is of no value, and, except foxes, they have few enemies to contend with in the 'struggle for life.' Moles, judging from the large earth-mounds thrown up by them over extensive areas, though we did not see any, must be almost as numerous as the gophers. The moles seem invariably to select the tracts of deep, rich, black soil, and the gophers and badgers the intervening dry, sandy and gravelly ridges, so that between them the greater part of the surface is more or less burrowed, ridged and furrowed; and where this is the case, the prairie, which would otherwise be as smooth and even as a lawn, becomes not only exceedingly rough and unpleasant to travel over on wheels, but also very dangerous to horsemen, and often fatal to the wooden cart axles.