

but less delicate, lay immediately beneath the hide, and ran along and over the back-bone. It was about two inches thick, but thinned towards the rump, and weighed about fifteen lbs. in an animal in good condition. Back-fat was very abundant in the buffalo, but is not found to any extent in the domestic ox. Marrow-fat was the plain Indian's butter, and surpassed it in richness if not in flavour. It was prepared by breaking all the bones, and boiling them in water till all their oil was extracted. This was skimmed off, boiled again and clarified, and then poured into buffalo bladders, where it hardened into a rich golden mass which looked exactly like well-made butter.

Dried meat was a staple food in the North-West, and was made from thighs and shoulders sliced circularly into large sheets, and dried on stages over slow fires, or in warm, clear weather, in the sun. It was then made up into bales and would not spoil unless exposed to the rain. Though a highly nourishing food it never seemed to satiate. In travelling it was actually munched between meals through sheer habit, akin to the gum chewing of the Americans. A story is told of a French half-breed guide who astonished a stranger by his performances in this way, and who, being asked by his amazed companion why he never ceased eating dried meat, replied: "Ah, Monsieur! c'est pour passer le temps!" (it is for pastime).

From the dried meat and tallow of the buffalo the famous pemmican was made, at once the most portable and sustaining of foods. Pemmican was the device of the plain Indians, and has been made by them from time immemorial. It is first mentioned in the narrative of Coronado's New Mexican expedition of 1541, and the last bag of it was probably eaten on the banks of the Saskatchewan in 1882. I mean, of course, the buffalo pemmican, for it has been made occasionally since by the half-breeds from domestic beef. A sack or "toreau" of pemmican, as it was called, consisted of nearly equal quantities of tallow and dried meat, the latter being pounded on bull hides with stone hammers, axe heads or flails. From the siftings of the dried meat the "fine pemmican" was made in which marrow-fat was used instead of tallow; and the "berry" pemmican, the most highly valued of all, consisted of these two and a due proportion of saskatoon berries, or of choke-cherries, if the other could not be had. The single toreau weighed about 100 lbs., a double sack being over twice that weight. In making it the pounded meat and fat were constantly stirred in a bull-hide trough till they "set," and the mixture was then run into bags made of buffalo hide, sewed with sinew, with the hair side out, and pounded down with a mallet till they were full and compact. The ends were then sewed up, and a sack of this food, when properly made and stored in a dry place, would keep for years. Its value as compared with fresh meat was in the ratio of four to one, eight pounds of the latter being the customary daily ration, which was all eaten, whilst two pounds of pemmican were sufficient.

The buffalo robe of commerce was probably looked upon by the outer world as the animal's final cause; but in the North-West the robe was of secondary importance. The leather, the raw hide and sinews were of the highest value to all classes of the people, and were such conveniences that even now they are greatly missed by all who have been accustomed to their use. The robe was not so much a necessity as the source of the plain Indian's or the plain hunter's luxuries—his trinkets, his finery, his sugar, tobacco and rum—though the latter was generally kept by the post trader to extort provisions from him, when they happened to be scarce.