

bitten off. One old beaver then came out and dragged the corpse through the mud out into the centre of the pond and left it there. I found out afterwards that the house was occupied by two big beavers and a pair of kittens. Two nights later the beavers had the dam repaired and the pond restored to its former level.

"The female otter brings forth her young about the latter part of May or first of June. I have heard of six kittens being found in a litter but have never seen more than three. I should judge that their mating time is in October or November, as I have often seen the trail at that time of five or six big otters travelling together. While the otter is a playful, affectionate animal, he is very unsociable at times. The old males will often be found alone, while the female, accompanied by last year's cubs is left to shift for herself. The otter is one of the easiest animals to tame in the world. After he has concluded that he belongs to you he will follow you around everywhere, until he becomes a thorough nuisance. The male otter is slightly larger than the female. Their pelts, like those of all small fur-bearers, are at their best in the winter and early spring.

"The nose of the otter is fully equal to that of the fox. I have seen their tracks in the deep snow, where they have turned about and made off on account of catching the scent of my trail two hundred yards away. Where they have been much hunted an otter will travel a long way rather than cross a human trail. Where they have not been disturbed the trail excites their curiosity and they will follow it quite a distance. I was going up the ice on Renous one winter's day, the wind blowing down stream, when I saw an otter a few rods ahead of me acting in a very peculiar manner, running up on a snow-bank, sniffing the air and finally diving plump into an air-hole. There was a second air-hole further down stream and, thinking it likely the otter would make his appearance there, I laid for him and shot him with a rifle as soon as he came out. Resuming my journey up stream I met my partner, Pringle, half a mile above, coming down the ice, so I concluded that the otter had smelt him when he must have been about a mile away. I suppose everybody is aware of the funny habit the otter has, in the course of his travels, of coasting down the bank of a lake or stream. It seems to be a sort of picnic they indulge in to add variety to their long journeys from place to place. I have often seen them amusing themselves in this way. They will roll around awhile on the bank sparring and tumbling over each other, then sliding down the chute on their bellies, one after the other, and splash in the water. This is their favorite sport as long as the lakes and brooks remain open. They hardly ever ascend the slide, generally climbing the bank perhaps a yard or ten feet to one side of it, where it is easier to get up. Then they will gambol about again previous to taking another slide. I have seen the whole family of old and young ones playing in this way for five or ten minutes.

"Some trappers set their traps at the head of the slide, carefully covered with earth or moss, or else under the water at the point where the otters start to climb, care being taken to place the trap a few inches to one side of the centre of the trail, because the otter's legs are very short and planted seven or eight inches apart on the body. If the trap was placed in the centre of the trail it would be sprung by the otter's body and he would surely escape. When coasting down the slide the otter's legs hang limp by his sides, so it is no use to set the trap at the bottom of the slide. I have never found it profitable to set my traps at or near the slide. You have got to disturb

something in doing the work and as otters are nowadays mighty wide awake they will be sure to notice it. Up on my grounds, which are as good as any in the province, if any change is made in the vicinity of the slide—such as the displacement of a stick, or even the blazing of a tree, the otters will go shy of that particular slide. When a trap is located at or near the slide no bait is necessary, except to rub a little castoreum on a stick or sliver placed a few yards away up the bank, with the scent side down, so that it will not be washed out by the rain.

"If a man knows his ground he can figure out pretty closely the otter's line of travel up or down the stream. The best plan is to select some place where there is a run of moderately deep water and where a root or rock projects from the bank. Place your trap alongside of that, using the castoreum in the ordinary way and also some stale fish for bait hung a little to one side of the trap, so that when the otter turns about to see what it is he will spring the trap with his foot. The trap, as well as the pole to which the chain is attached, should be placed under water, and so rigged that it will swing the otter out in the stream and keep him there, where he is soon drowned by the weight of the trap. He will keep afloat for a little while but will sink as soon as he gets tired. The question of where to set your trap is even more important than that of how to set it. With the sliding pole, used so much by old-time trappers, I have had very poor success. It is always a suspicious looking object. If you catch a beaver he is very likely to nip off the pole and get away. Otters can some times be taken through holes in the ice by setting the trap on what is called a crow's nest, that is a stick with three projecting prongs. But an otter that is up to snuff will not go near so clumsy a rig as that.

"I once knew of a yearling otter being caught in a most remarkable way. A Frenchman named Damien Gutro was fishing for sea-trout on Bathurst river when a big fish carried away his line. The trout went downstream about half a mile where the line became fast to a snag. An otter came along and made a grab for the trout but the hook in some way worked through the gills of the fish and entered the otter's neck. He splashed around at a shocking rate for a spell, finally winding himself up on the snag, where he was drowned. Gutro coming downstream in his Micmac canoe, noticed the rumpus in the water and recovered his line as well as the otter and the trout.

EXPLORATION IN NORTHWESTERN CANADA

By H. G. Tyrrell, C.E.

In the early summer of 1885 I had made preliminary arrangements with my brother Mr. J. B. Tyrrell, of Ottawa, to accompany him on a Geological Survey expedition to the Canadian Northwest. The country that we proposed exploring was that lying north of the Canadian Pacific Railroad for a distance of one hundred and fifty miles, and bounded on the east and west by the fourth and fifth principal meridians.

The starting of this and other survey expeditions had been delayed a month or more on account of the Indian rebellion that was then going on. Riel, the leader of the uprising, had not yet been captured, and the troops were still in camp, awaiting the settlement of affairs. But after the battle of Batoche, which seemed to be the final defeat of the natives, it was decided that exploring parties might safely proceed to the field.

After an interview with my brother at the Rossin House in Toronto, I took a train from that city at noon on June