

and often wear the skin as a charm, or *medicine*, as they term it. In summer the ermine-weasel is reddish brown. The best ermine comes from Siberia, Norway, and Russia. The black of the tail was, in the time of Edward III., forbidden to be worn by any but members of the royal family.

The Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*) is widely distributed throughout North and Northwest America. Crafty and artful, to an American proverb, his life is entirely one of brigandage; plundering on every available opportunity, and waging destructive war on any bird, beast, or reptile inferior to himself in strength, courage, or cunning. The fur is not very valuable, being principally used in making carriage rugs, and lining inferior cloaks and coats on the Continent. About five hundred and twenty thousand skins are sent annually from the Hudson's Bay Company's territories. They are generally shot; those that are trapped are taken in steel traps.

The three species of foxes traded by the Hudson's Bay Company are the Red Fox (*Vulpes macrourus*), the Cross Fox (*Var decussatus*), and the Silver Fox (*Var argentatus*). I quite concur with Professor Baird in making the red fox of British Columbia and Oregon a distinct species, and in considering the cross and silver foxes as varieties of the red. I have again and again carefully examined large numbers of fox skins at the different trading posts of the Company, and have invariably found every intermediate tint of color, merging by regular gradations, from the red into the cross, and from the cross into the silver and black, rendering it often a difficult question even for the trader himself to decide which of the varieties a skin really belonged to. The Indians also positively assert that *cubs* of the three varieties are constantly seen in the same litter. The black and silver fox skins are very valuable, a good skin fetching readily from forty to fifty dollars, £10 to £12; the red fox is only worth about as many shillings. About fifty thousand red foxes, forty-five hundred cross, and one thousand silver, are annually imported.

The Silver Fox fur is almost entirely purchased by the Chinese and Russian dealers. The animals are nearly all trap-

ped in fall traps, very similar in construction to those used for the martin.

The famed Beaver (*Castor fiber*), in both structure and habits, is by far the most interesting animal killed and hunted for the sake of its skin. So much was its fur in demand, prior to the introduction of silk and rabbits' fur, in the manufacture of hats, that the poor little rodent had in some districts become nearly exterminated. Descriptions of their *houses* and *dams* have been so frequently given by various writers that it would be waste of space to repeat them here. On the streams in Southern Oregon the beaver is most abundant, and one shallow lake I accidentally came upon was literally filled with beaver-houses; there must have been many hundred habitations, as the lake was quite a mile in width, and round it the trees were felled in all directions, as if the land was being cleared for farming. I do not believe the curiously flattened scaly *tail* is ever used, save as a powerful *oar*, or rather *rudder*, aiding the animal to dive and swim, but particularly in towing heavy sticks in rapid streams or across pools to its dams and houses. Quite as many trees are cut by the beaver's sharp teeth to procure food as to construct dams; the bark of the topmost branches of the *Populus tremuloides*, or aspen, being its favorite diet.

The beaver trapper, be he white man or Indian, must, of necessity, lead a solitary, desolate, and dangerous life. To be alone in the wildest solitudes of unknown wastes demands a courage and endurance of no ordinary kind. The lone trapper knows not the emulation, the wild hurrah and crash of music that cheers the soldier as he marches steadily up to the deadly breach; he cannot feel that powerful incentive to be brave arising from the knowledge that a gallant deed will be handed down with his name in the pages of history; he has no opportunity for display before his fellow-man; alone with nature and his Creator, he is self-dependent, and his indomitable courage can only spring from a firm reliance on his own strength, ever supported by an unseen hand. A beaver is a very difficult animal to trap. The trapper knows at a glance the various marks of the animal, called *signs*; these discovered, the next operation is to find