

furs, were brought from countries far north; from the *land of Darkness*, and regions almost inaccessible by reason of morasses and ice. The Welsh set a high value on furs as early as the time of Howel Dda, who began his reign about 940. In the next age, furs became the fashionable magnificence of Europe. When Godfrey of Boulogne, and his followers, appeared before the Emperor Alexis Comnénus, at Constantinople, on their way to the Holy Land, he was struck with the richness of their dresses. How different was the advance of luxury in France from the time of their great monarch Charlemagne, who contented himself with the plain fur of the otter! Henry I. of England, wore fur; yet in his distress was obliged to change them for warm Welsh flannel. But in the year 1337, the luxury had got to such a head, that Edward III. enacted, that all persons who could not spend a hundred a-year should absolutely be prohibited the use of this species of finery. These, from their great expense, must have been foreign furs, obtained from the Italian commercial States, whose traffic was at this period boundless. How strange is the revolution of the Fur Trade! The north of Asia at that time supplied Europe with every valuable kind. At present we send from Canada and Hudson's Bay, furs, to an immense amount, even to Turkey and the distant China.

When the French made their first appearance in Canada, and before they had any intercourse with the aboriginal inhabitants, furs appeared not to have formed an article of the slightest commerce amongst them; and seemed only to have been used as clothing, or as tents to the more wandering tribes. Before the discovery of this country, the forests with which it was over-run were little more than the extensive haunt of wild beasts, which had multiplied prodigiously; because the few men who lived in those deserts having no flocks or tame animals, left more room and more food for such as were wandering and free like themselves. If the nature of the climate did not afford an infinite variety, each species produced, at least, a multitude of individuals. But, like the wild animals of the more ancient regions of the world, they at last paid tribute to the sovereignty of man, that cruel power which has always been exercised in a manner so fatal to every living creature. Having neither arts nor husbandry to employ them, the savages fed and clothed themselves entirely with the wild beasts they destroyed. As soon, however, as the natives were made to understand the value which luxury had led Europeans to put upon their skins, they waged a perpetual war against them; which was the more active, as it procured them plenty, and a variety of gratification which they were unaccustomed to; and the more destructive, as they had adopted the use of fire-arms. This fatal industry exercised in the woods of Canada, occasioned a great quantity and a prodigious variety of furs to be brought into the ports of France, some of which were consumed in the kingdom, and the rest disposed of in the neighbouring countries. We have already seen that most of these furs had been already known in Europe, but in too small quantities to supply a general demand. Caprice and novelty have made them always more or less in fashion, since it has been found to be the interest of the American colonies that they should be valued in the mother countries.

In 1626 the French had only three wretched settlements surrounded with pales in Canada. The largest of these contained but fifty inhabitants, including men, women, and children. The climate had not proved