

pean and American bison has been questioned by Cuvier and other naturalists, but there can be no doubt that they are closely related. The former frequents solely certain mountainous recesses, whilst the typical western animal, though by no means confined to them, is essentially a creature of the prairies. Remains of the ancient ure-ox of Europe seem to identify it with the American prairie bison; and, this being the case, we may infer that existing differences in structure are due to altered habitat brought about by that great enemy of wild nature, the white man. The physical differences consist mainly in the length of mane and leg, the American animal being more low-set than its European congener. But these differences are not greater than those which mark the animal's form and habit on this continent, if we can speak in the present tense of a race which has almost perished. During my long residence in the North-West I have had the opportunity of consulting many Indians and half-breeds of experience and of great repute in their day as plain hunters, and thus of pursuing inquiries into questions of interest, with regard to the bison on the safe ground of their daily contact with and intimate knowledge of its habits. Of course observation being a varying faculty, opinions did not always agree. Some men saw differences and made mental note of characteristics which were entirely unnoticed by others. Men, too, who were old twenty years ago, and whose memory ran back to days when the vast region west of the Mississippi was a howling wilderness, had a primitive knowledge not possessed by latter-day hunters. In those days the great buffalo herds roamed almost unmolested. The Indians of course lived upon them, but, with savage conservatism, severely punished anyone who wantonly butchered them. Left thus to follow their own instincts, not driven from place to place by merciless persecution, nor intermingled so as to blend all in indiscriminate hordes, the herds possessed a distinctive character, and seemed to have their roughly defined boundaries, like the Indians themselves. Even down to recent years the difference between the animals in size and general appearance—in a word in what may be called breed—was recognizable, and of course led to special nomenclature in the various Indian tongues. The southern or "Missouri cattle," as they were called by the plain hunters, varied in some degree from those of the Saskatchewan. They were long-backed and heavy, the full grown cow often dressing to five hundred pounds and over of clean meat. They were frequently seen north of the Missouri, and were readily identified by the practised eye of the plain hunter, not only by their mddy coats but by differences in form. The northern animal, called by the Crees Pusuawoo-moostooos, or "the prairie beast," was shorter in the back and was noted for its hardy constitution and fleetness. A third animal was known upon the plains as Amiskoo-sepe-moostooos, viz.: "the Beaver River" buffalo, for a reason I have never heard positively explained. There are two Beaver rivers in the North-West—one which joins the Assiniboine near Fort Ellice, and the other which falls into Lake Isle à la Crosse. The winter habitat of this variety of the buffalo in the last century may have been on one or other of those streams, and so have given a distinctive name to a remarkable breed. It was a diminutive animal compared with the ordinary prairie bison, and had a closely curled coat, and short, sharp horns which were small at the root and curiously turned up and bent backwards, not unlike a ram's, but quite unlike the bend of the horns of the ordinary bison. These animals were probably numerous at one time, but became rare, and were noted as the latest to go north in the fall. The thickwood buffalo again—the Sakawoo-moostooos of the Crees—differs strikingly from all the others, though some writers seem to