

(For the Canadian Illustrated News.)

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN.

If—so and so, this might have been:  
Well, grant it: roll the years away,  
And be again on such a day,  
At such a point, in such a scene.

Thence starting fresh, thy course pursue  
Until the given time is gone,  
And be to-day just such a one  
As thou hadst been, if this were true.

Is there not something in the past—  
The real past—that thou wouldst save  
From cold oblivion's silent grave,  
Which, being what thou art, thou hast.

In that strange past thou hadst not met  
With many a friend thou holdest dear,  
In all thy trials proved sincere—  
Thou why what might have been regret?

Wouldst thou for wealth or power or fame  
Part with some joys, which, elsewhere placed,  
It had not been thy lot to taste—  
E'en joys that from thy sorrows came?

If rich, mayhap thou hadst not known  
The friendship that is never sold,  
The love with lack that grows not cold,  
The faith that stays when wealth has flown.

And what is power or renown  
To the true heart of one fond heart?  
Nay, nay: with this thou wouldst not part  
For all the splendours of a crown.

Then grieve for nothing but thy sin:  
That is thine own: the rest is His  
Who orders all of good that is—  
And never mind what might have been.

Nor with vain day-dreams of regret  
From present duties warp thy soul:  
The past is past beyond control—  
Thou hast the future left thee yet.

JOHN RICH.

June, 1873.

(For the Canadian Illustrated News.)

SOME WILD ANIMALS OF NEWFOUNDLAND.

THE OTTER.

In some of our stores, in St. John's, at certain seasons of the year, large quantities of otter skins may be seen hanging from the ceiling. These have been purchased from the Mic-Mac Indians and other distant settlers during their periodical visits to the capital, and are all exported to England. Judging by the number of otter skins brought in by the hunters every year, these animals must be very plentiful in the interior of Newfoundland. They bring here from five to seven dollars, according to size and quality, and during the last two years have risen in price, eight and even nine dollars being sometimes given for a superior skin. One of them is sufficiently large to make a winter cap and a pair of gauntlets, or a couple of caps. Our traders and settlers make two varieties of the Newfoundland otters. The most valuable, and that which is taken by the Indians, is called the "country otter," and principally frequents inland brooks and rivers. It has fur of a beautiful shining dark liver-brown, almost black on the back. The other variety, called the "salt-water otter," has fur of a rusty brown colour, and is considerably larger than the "country otter," although the skin is not nearly so valuable, rarely realizing more than three or four dollars. The food of the otter is chiefly fish, but the creature will eat anything that comes in its way—the flesh of other animals or the young of water-fowl; and it has even been known to enter a beaver's house and kill and devour the young. Its swimming powers are wonderful, and the rapidity with which it slides over or through the snow is also surprising. In both operations the tail acts a most prominent part, but this can best be seen when the animal is gliding through the snow. This it does by a succession of bounds, each of which ends in a "slide," often several feet in length, the impetus to which is given by a peculiar lateral curve of the thick tail, which is provided with two powerful muscles, one on each side. The presence of these muscles can be detected, even in a dried skin, by two deep furrows, which are not even obliterated by stretching and nailing the skin to a board. I have seen otter skins here which showed that the animal, when living, must have been upwards of four feet in length.

BLACK BEARS.

In his "Journey Across Newfoundland," Cormack mentions that, in the centre of the island, he crossed extensive districts remarkable for the abundance of berries, and that these are the favourite haunts of the black bears, who feed upon these berries. He tells us that the paths or beats of these animals, throughout their feeding grounds, are stamped with marks of antiquity seemingly coeval with the country. The points of rock that happen to project in their way are perfectly polished from having been continually trodden and rubbed. He shot one which weighed three hundred and fifty pounds, the fat round his body being four inches in some parts. The Indians esteem bear's flesh next to that of the beaver, and "it has the peculiar quality of not clogging the stomach, however much of it is eaten." When they kill a bear they give a practical exemplification of this by devouring the flesh in immense quantities, and almost unceasingly, till it is finished. Many persons besides the Mic-Macs consider bear's flesh a delicacy when roasted fresh. The pickled hams are undoubtedly good eating, but require great care in preserving, as the fatty parts are apt to turn rancid.

The black bear may be described as omnivorous. In the spring it is often seen by our settlers about the sea shore, feeding on any animal matter that may be cast up by the waves, such as putrid pieces of whales, fish, lobsters, crabs, &c. Only "hard times," however, drive the bears to this. They have a "good time" in summer when the berries are ripe. Then they revel upon the blue-berries or "hurtz," as we call them; cranberries and bake-apple berries, and they climb the mountain ash to feast on its beautiful red berries. The eggs of ants, too, and probably the ants themselves, also form part of their food. The instances are rare in which they attack domestic cattle; in fact their tracks are often seen around the settlements while sheep are roaming at pleasure and are unharmed. When driven by hunger, however, they

attack sheep and even larger domestic animals. Their fondness for molasses is proverbial, and many amusing anecdotes are related of young bears entering the houses of the settlers in search of this luxury.

The skin of the black bear is valuable and handsome, but the animal itself is most ungainly in appearance. It is at once the most harmless species of bear, and the most easily destroyed. An ounce of shot not smaller than No. 6 is sufficient to kill the largest of the species, if fired into the intestines behind the ribs, at a distance not exceeding twenty yards. Our settlers kill them frequently with an ordinary load of shot, such as would be fired at a single duck. There is little danger in approaching these animals, even when wounded. The sense of sight appears to be imperfectly developed in the black bear, but those of smell and hearing are sufficiently keen to make up for the deficiency. In stalking the bear it is necessary to keep well to leeward, and to approach as noiselessly as possible. Should the bear observe the hunter, a sudden halt must be made, but the precaution of secreting himself is unnecessary, for should he remain immovable the bear will commence feeding or walking. Usually the black bear is a solitary animal. Their young ones are brought forth in their snug winter caves, and in the spring they make their appearance accompanied by two, rarely three, young ones.

At one time the polar bear was common in Newfoundland, but is now seen only occasionally on the ice around the coast, and will probably soon be extinct. The extensive seal-fishery, in schooners and steamers around the coasts, seems to have driven off the polar bear to more northern regions. Rarely has this bear been known to act on the offensive; but when attacked and unable to escape, it will fight in a most determined manner. Its tenacity of life is said to be remarkable. A ball has been known to pass transversely through its body without touching a vital part, or producing fatal results.

THE WOLF.

There is no doubt that in the interior of Newfoundland wolves are in strong force. Cormack tells us that he everywhere met their tracks, but only in a few instances did he actually see any wolves. They lie in wait among the bushes to listen for the approach of deer, and then rush upon them; but when man appears they fly instantly. Cormack says there are two kinds of wolves in this island—one large, that prowls singly or in couples, another small, sometimes met with in packs. In reality, however, it does not appear that there are two species, but it is difficult to find two skins, even in the same litter of whelps, marked exactly alike, so great is the variation in the shades or degrees of colouring—from pure black to almost clear white. Settlers in the more remote localities often trap the wolves during winter, when they come prowling around their dwellings. Their cunning in capturing deer is sometimes surprising. During the winter season the deer feed in the marshes which are generally surrounded by belts of conifers. The ravenous wolves secret themselves in the deer paths while one or two of their number go round to windward of the deer and drive them through the paths, when some of them fall an easy prey to the secreted wolves. It is a rare event for them to attack human beings, and they never do so when aware of the presence of firearms.

THE FOX.

There are two species of foxes in Newfoundland—the common red fox, which has many varieties, and the blue or Arctic fox. Of the former there are the Cross fox, Silver fox, and the Black fox, varieties all belonging to the same species. Settlers say that they sometimes find, in the same litter, all these varieties—the black, the silver, the "patch" or cross fox, and the yellow. The most valuable is the black fox's skin, which is sold for £12 to £15; a "silver" brings from £8 to £10; a "cross" £2, and a "yellow" three dollars. The "patch" or cross fox is the smallest of these varieties. The Arctic or blue fox is much more easily taken than the former, as it invariably searches out and frequents human habitations. The other is shy and watchful and will merely go near a baited trap till driven by hunger. The white skin of the Arctic fox however fetches only one dollar. Since seal skins were introduced into the fashionable world the price of black and silver fox skins has fallen considerably.

MARTENS.

Martens or American Sables are still common in many parts of the island, but every year are becoming scarcer. It is a bold rapacious animal, not unlike the polecat in its habits, and is taken in traps placed in "cat-houses" or in "dead-falls."

MUSKRATS.

This animal has been called, and not without reason, "the beaver in miniature." In appearance the two animals are intimately connected, as well as in economy and habits. The food of the muskrat consists of the stems and roots of aquatic plants, bark, fresh water clams, and other mollusks. The females bring forth six to nine at a birth, during the summer, and breed only once a year. The skins are worth twenty cents, and in spring their musk-like odour is very powerful. They are easily taken by simply placing traps, without any covering, on the banks which are worn bare by their "footing." The houses of the muskrats, or "mus-quash," are built of mud and rushes and are frequently of considerable magnitude, but are tenanted only during winter. They are not built on the ice, but on the mud at the bottom of the shallow water and are raised some two feet above the surface so that the water at the bottom remains unfrozen by the animals continually breaking it to go off in search of food under the ice. The houses are also provided with a kind of second floor above the water-level, on which the muskrats lie on a bed of soft dry grass.

HARES.

The polar hare is the only species found in Newfoundland, and it is pretty common in most parts of the island. It is of great size, the ordinary specimens weighing nine or ten pounds, and others have been taken weighing fourteen or fifteen pounds. The flesh is not so palatable as that of the English hare in consequence of its feeding, during winter, on the tender shoots of birch. Nova Scotia hares have lately been introduced, and are multiplying with great rapidity in the neighbourhood of the settlements. Already they constitute an important addition to the winter fare of the working classes. They are much smaller than the polar hare, and the flesh is not so good. In St. John's they are sold in winter for eight-pence each.

NEW BOOKS.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SKETCHES IN SCOTLAND, District of Kintyre. By Capt. T. P. Whyte, R.E., F.R.S.E., F.S.A., &c. Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood & Sons. Montreal: Dawson Bros.

This work is alike creditable to the printers, publishers and author, and, we may add, artists. There are in it upwards of fifty well-executed plates of sculptured crosses, monumental slabs, old chapel sites and effigies of monks and knights. It contains a brief sketch of the history of Kintyre, and the great warrior chiefs who built up and supported the mediæval church. The history of the ancient Dalriad kings, and the connection of Norwegian and Manx history with localities and personages in Kintyre, the career of Sumarlid, the great Hebridean prince, and of his descendants, the powerful lords of the isles, are subjects which the author has admirably treated. He evidently is a man of cultivated tastes, and possesses a thorough knowledge of the subjects to which the book is directed, more particularly of those relating to church architecture, the mural monuments, sculptured effigies, and the mediæval slabs found in the ancient churchyards. Every archeologist, every lover of the antiquities of the West of Scotland will, we are sure, most readily acknowledge the great services of the author in having brought not only into notice, but, in some instances, into light, a series of most interesting monuments, relics of the past.

In this era of perverted taste, more particularly in church architecture, we hail with pleasure the accurate researches of such an enlightened archeologist as Captain Whyte, researches which ought to have a peculiar claim upon the patriotic feelings of every Scotchman, researches which we hope will stir up an ardent spirit of enquiry amongst those who value archeology as a link between the Past and the Present, as the handmaid and purveyor of history, as the sage commentator of ancient customs and ancient art, and as the acute and enlightened interpreter of the records and memorials of the Past.

AHN'S GERMAN READING CHARTS. By Dr. P. Henn. New York: E. Steiger.

AHN'S FIRST GERMAN BOOK. do., do.

AHN'S SECOND GERMAN BOOK. do., do.

AHN'S RUDIMENTS OF THE GERMAN LANGUAGE. do., do.

KEY TO AHN'S RUDIMENTS. do., do.

It is only very recently that the study of German has occupied its true position as a branch of ordinary education. At schools of any standing it is true that the language had a place on the programme, at all events as an "extra," but the instruction therein was usually conducted in a manner that could inspire but little hope of any results. An unwilling lot of pupils were dragged through a dreary, lifeless course, consisting generally of an hour a week devoted to droning over an unreliable and worthless text-book. At the present time the value of a thorough acquaintance with the German tongue is fully appreciated; but the means of obtaining an adequate knowledge of the language is, seemingly, as little understood as ever. There is no lack of instruction, but a very remarkable absence of results. If we except New York there are very few schools on the continent that can claim to have turned out a pupil capable of conducting an ordinary conversation in German, or of reading and understanding an easy German work. The true secret of this failure is, we fear, mainly due, not so much to the efforts of the teacher, as to the system that is employed. The systems of teaching the language that are now in use are almost as numerous and as varied as the irregularities of the German verb, and very few out of their number are fit for anything. The fact is, too many of the so-called Guides to German, and Hand-books of the German language are gotten up by needy book-makers, possessors of a smattering of the language, but too often with but little education and absolutely no experience in teaching—and are palmed off on unsuspecting or unaccustomed teachers, who have not discernment enough to penetrate their worthlessness. This is the true secret of the ill success that has attended so many efforts in this direction. A really valuable work on instruction in German is rare and should, when found, be made a note of. We have carefully examined the above elementary volumes of Steiger's German Series, and have no hesitation in recommending them to school trustees and teachers as valuable aids in studying the language. The instruction therein given is of the most elementary kind, and is intended simply as a stepping-stone to the more advanced portions. The elements of the German grammar are of such great importance to the student who aspires to a thorough acquaintance with the tongue that the grounding therein requires to be very perfect to ensure easy working later on. This we observe is properly attended to in Steiger's Series. The First and Second German Book, and the Rudiments, which are the same in different form—the Rudiments being merely the two first bound up in one volume—take the pupil by easy stages as far as the first half of the regular verb. The work is based upon Ahn's well-known system, but contains very many improvements thereon. Particular attention is paid to the pronunciation and handwriting, and we remark that the exercises are something more than a mere ringing of changes on Vater and Sohn, Gabel and Löffel, Baum and Blume. A pupil who has carefully gone over the two hundred exercises given herein should possess a very respectable German vocabulary, and be able to give some account of himself in an easy conversation. A remarkable feature of this system is the employment of reading charts by which both the letters and script are taught by the use of large bold type. This is the more important inasmuch as the pupil is extremely apt to confuse certain letters, especially in the running hand. By the use of these charts the most unaccustomed eye would speedily become used to the peculiar formations and combinations. So far as we have seen of this series it appears to fill a long neglected gap in the study of foreign languages. From a list we have received we observe that the course is continued in a Third German Book, Readers, Conversation Manuals, Letter Writers, etc., etc. The array is, it is true, somewhat imposing, but it must be borne in mind that the prices of these volumes are so extremely moderate as to place them within the reach of all: the Rudiments, a book of nearly two hundred pages, strongly bound in boards, costing only sixty-five cents, and in no case does the price of any one volume in this binding exceed a dollar. Thus for a very small sum a student can obtain a sufficient knowledge of the language to enjoy its best authors and to keep up a brisk conversation. Such imperfections of pronunciation as are unavoidable where the student has not enjoyed the privileges of continuous conversational exercises, are, after all, but of secondary consideration, and always remediable.