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*The Canadian Snowshoe.*

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Presented by DUNCAN C. SCOTT F.R.S.C.

(Read May Meeting, 1916.)

It is impossible to give definite historical information about the Canadian snowshoe before the advent of the whiteman, and nothing absolute can be said as to its origin. Indian legends however tell us something about the subject, and one of these legends in a condensed form is given.

"In the winter when the swamps and muskegs and barrens harden in the cold, and the lakes congeal into ice, and the ground is covered with a thick mantle of snow, then the Wendigo, the cannibal frost-fiend, holds sway, and he skims swiftly over the surface of the snow on his fleet snowshoes carrying cold and terror wherever he goes. He watches for the lone hunter or trapper who, belated in the woods, makes camp at nightfall, cleans the snow away, spreads balsam boughs upon the ground and rests before a cheerful fire. After darkness comes the moon, and the air becomes colder and colder as it rises, the frost crystals sparkle like diamonds in the bright light, the northern lights rush crinkling across the sky, and the trees crack and snap in the clear frosty air like the discharge of artillery. Then the poor mortals shiver with fear and they say the Wendigo is abroad, and they pile wood upon the dying fire to keep him away till the morning comes, when the fiend retires baffled and defeated."

The snowshoe naturally originated in rude forms and in these rude forms is known elsewhere than in North America, as for instance in Norway and northern Asia. Very primitive forms are also reported from Japan, Korea and The Caucasus. These latter appliances are what might be called emergency snowshoes, roughly and quickly made for special and exceptional cases where heavy snowfalls have occurred in unusual places, and they are interesting as examples of the ingenuity of different aborigines under independent conditions. They

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