

fully overcome. According as civilization advanced the buffaloes were driven farther west. As autumn began the Saskatchewan herds always moved farther north, and when the cold season came on they retired to the woods and there passed the winter. As a proof of their hardy nature and great powers of endurance, the buffaloes were nearly always fat in the spring. A peculiar fact concerning their wandering tendencies is that for long periods they have been known to leave certain districts altogether and after the lapse of some years return in great numbers to their old feeding grounds.

The methods adopted by the hunters to slay the buffalo were numerous and varied. Before firearms became common among the Indians, bows and arrows were the only weapons used. The bow was usually about four feet in length and made of a wood called choke-cherry; in order to strengthen and keep it from cracking it was wrapped with sinew. The arrow was usually about half as long as the bow and was made of the saskatoon willow, which is very remarkable for its toughness. In order to prevent it from deviating in its course after being shot from the bow, a row of plumes was fastened along the lower part, for about six inches above the notch. It may appear very strange to many that an Indian, armed with such a small weapon, will attack and kill a huge animal like the buffalo. But such is the strength of these arrows, and the dexterity with which they are handled, that certain Indians have been known to shoot an arrow through the body of a buffalo and into that of another.

Many of the hunters formed small settlements in the interior, and hunted the buffalo in parties for the sake of the robes, which were in great demand, and sold at enormous prices in the great cities of the east. This system was organized early in the century, and was continued down to as late as 1869. Foremost among these, was the "Red River Settlement," situated at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, where the City of Winnipeg to-day stands. This settlement each year organized a buffalo hunt, in which half of the population of Red River took part. They would start out early in

the season, taking supplies and all they required for a hunt which often lasted months at a time, and in which were secured the pelts of thousands of buffaloes. They had no trouble in disposing of large numbers of them to the Hudson Bay Company's agents and those of other eastern firms stationed at Fort Garry. The agents would then forward them to the eastern markets, where they were sold at an enormous profit. One may form an estimate of the immense profits made by these dealers, when it is known that large quantities of robes were annually purchased as low as a bag of flour a skin, and sold in the eastern markets at all prices from \$30 to \$75.

The economic uses of the buffalo were of vast importance in those days, and many were the privations the Indians and early settlers would have suffered were it not for these "gifts of the Great Spirit," as the red men were wont to call them. As I have stated before, the Indians depended almost completely on the buffalo. Their tepees, saddles, clothes, harness, all were made of the skin of this animal. But the greatest benefit which the Indian derived from the buffalo was the pemmican made of his flesh. This meat was the most common article of food. The thighs and shoulders were generally considered the best parts for the preparation of pemmican. They were sliced into large sheets, and rolled into solid bales, in which condition the meat would keep for years, so long as it was not exposed to the rays of the sun.

The improvident Indian was no longer satisfied even with deadly firearms as a means of destroying the noble buffalo, when an unlimited number of skins could be disposed of. Whole herds were driven over precipices and thousands killed at once. To effect this a number of hunters took up their positions in such a manner that they would be able to head the buffaloes toward the precipice over which they wished to drive them. The animals, upon hearing the wild shouts of the Indians and seeing them approach on horseback, turned to flight. On and on they go, continually gaining speed, until suddenly the foremost of the herd are seen to slacken their speed a little, but it