

OUR BEAUTIFUL FURS, AND WHERE THEY COME FROM.

PART III.

Opossum.—The tree opossum is a native of the American continent, and is a large animal, its length from head to root of tail



COMMON OPOSSUM.

is twenty-two inches, and the tail fifteen inches.

The largest and most valued for its skin is the Virginian opossum (*Didelphis Virginiana*); it is not altogether a pleasing looking



MUSQUASH OR MUSK-RAT.

animal, about the size of a large cat. The colour of the animal varies a good bit from dirty board colour to a darker tinge; the ears are bare, so is the snout and end of tail which is white. It is also a pouched animal like the kangaroo. The young, directly they are born, are placed by the mother in the pouch, where they remain until old enough to run about for themselves. The teats are in the pouch of the mother. The fur is much valued for muffs, carriage wrappers and ladies' travelling hoods, etc.

Musquash.—I suppose all our readers have heard of the beautiful fur of the musquash, but, as far as I have seen, few know what the animal is like or how it lives, so a few words on this useful fur animal may be interesting.

The musquash is really a large water-rat amphibian, measuring about two feet, of which measurement the tail occupies about ten inches; its food mostly is of a vegetable nature, but will eat mussels and oysters when it can get at them; they are also dreadfully destructive in a garden, eating carrots, turnips, parsnips, maize and other vegetables. The animal lives in burrows, the entrance of which is mostly under water. The fur is much used for gentlemen's fur-lined coats. For trimmings of all kinds, and ladies' fur-lined circulars, the fur is much valued. The animal is also called musk-rat on account of the musky odour emanating from a gland in the body.

Grey Squirrel.—One of the largest of its kind, and I think the most valued of squirrel kind on account of its skin, comes from the south of Canada and Mexico; its length is about eighteen inches head and body. They vary in colour, some being much darker in colour than others. The destruction of these little animals is also very great, the demand being great, but fortunately they are pretty prolific. Ladies are very fond of the fur for

their driving coats, and ordinary fur-lined coats, and for luxurious opera and travelling hoods.

Every one is familiar with the lively little English squirrel, which we have all watched in the woods. I myself have often watched them in the quiet spots of Richmond Park, feeding upon the nuts and acorns to be found in such quantities there, and when winter comes how they lay up a store for themselves.

The grey squirrel is one of the same species, description is unnecessary. They are all hibernating little animals, and lay up a store every winter, and hide their nuts and acorns away in all sorts of odd corners, and even when the snow comes down and covers the ground with a white mantle, his memory is



GREY SQUIRREL.

so good that he does not forget where he has hidden his store away, but scratches away the snow until he comes upon it. A pity some of us human beings can't take a lesson, and lay up a store for a rainy day. I think few then would suffer so much as they do in our hard winter months.

The last but not the least valued fur is the beautiful little silver fox. The much valued skin comes from the upper reaches of the



GREY FOX.