

85. The periodical disappearance of the rabbits may be caused partly by their exhausting their more favourite foods when they are exceptionally numerous, but more probably it is the excessive breeding which excessive numbers presupposes or induces that kills them. However, naturalists may explain it otherwise if they prefer.

86. There are large arctic hares spoken of as existing in the barren grounds, but only one species of rabbit is common in Mackenzie River, grey in summer and white in winter. Some naturalists call it an arctic hare, because it does not burrow, but it seems to be a true rabbit.

87. All the rabbits are liable to fluctuations of increase and decrease every 8 or 10 years, but not necessarily in the same season in all parts of the country. Some attribute the periodical increase in numbers to migration, but I hardly think this, as the rabbits are poor and dead ones are found when their numbers begin to fail. Similar increase and decrease applies to wild cats and martin, and perhaps also to foxes, bears and other animals, but probably not so much to beaver, though these are said to be also liable to occasional disease. The moose are more or less numerous in different seasons, but probably not in regular periods, being highly nervous animals, they are probably driven from one part of the country to another by wolves and perhaps by the hunters. A systematic destruction of wolves would be a blessing to the country, but the use of poison might be dangerous to other animals.

88. The important food animals have been already named, viz.: bears, beaver, rabbits, wild rats, wild fowl, fish, and for the Esquimaux, whales and seals. The only one of which it might be useful or profitable to protect, seems to be the beaver, which with other fur animals might be preserved by a restricted fur-trade. The moose and reindeer are probably diminishing in numbers, and their absence may have to be supplied, as in Athabasca and Isle à la Grosse, and other districts, by importations of flour and bacon.

89. There is no encouragement for civilized man to enter Mackenzie River for agriculture, and any settlements for working minerals would be probably local and not numerous. The entering of a numerous band of petty fur traders would probably have an injurious effect on the Indians, if we may judge from the experience of outside districts: 1st. By tempting them through high prices to dishonesty in trade: 2nd. By introducing possibly some illicit drinking: 3rd. If the traders were of reckless or vicious habits, the imitation of these habits by the Indians.

90. If a mining industry were opened in Mackenzie River, the Indians could be employed as crews, in any vessels used, in hunting or fishing for those engaged in the industry, and in digging or any other manual labour involved in it. This might be good for the men, but the families might suffer from want of food while the men were taken from the hunts and fishing. To support the Indian families by imported provisions might be too expensive. However, these difficulties would be solved by the necessities of the case, some being retained for hunters and fishermen, whilst the others were at work.

*Conclusion.* It is apprehended that the chief object of these questions is to ascertain if any profitable exports can be made from Mackenzie River or the neighborhood besides fur. As far as present discoveries extend, the following are the only hopeful industries. 1st. In Athabasca, the timber trade. 2nd. In Athabasca and Great Slave Lake, mica works. 3rd. On the Upper Yukon, gold. The Peace River country alone invites agriculture.

If the inquiry relates to any benefit to be done for the Indians by the Canadian Government, I should say:—

1st. An Experimental Industrial Farm might be started on the Liard River or Upper Mackenzie River or both, as well for example as for training Indians in a knowledge of cultivation, and for raising vegetable provisions as conducive to health.

2nd. A school or schools might be advantageously opened in connection with such farms for the instruction of Indian youth.