

## Reindeer--A Source of Food

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Lord Rhondda is recently reported to have said that while it is well to call attention to the pleasantly phrased "shortage of food," yet it is necessary to recognize that the world is face to face with what India has often experienced, that is, **A REAL FAMINE.**

In view of this serious statement from the foremost authority on the subject, the conservation of food, valuable as it is, is not sufficient. There is an absolute need of the increase of the supply of food for the future.

One very valuable but unused source of food for Canada was described in our pages several years ago, but it has been still neglected, although our neighbours have proved its success and great value. That is the introduction of reindeer into what are called the "barren lands" which extend all along the northern part of the Dominion.

In our issue of August, 1909, the Canadian Municipal Journal published an article on this subject written by Mr. F. S. Lawrence, F.R.G.S., whose long residence in the Peace River District gave him the experience which enabled him to speak as an authority. In this article, the possibilities of such a new industry for Canada were pointed out, and arguments advanced for the success of the enterprise based upon the experience of the United States in introducing reindeer into Alaska, which recent reports show to be a continued success. He drew attention to the various ways in which reindeer would be a valuable industry to Canada, and showed that the vast areas which are now useless would be a most suitable field for the reindeer. It was prophesied that reindeer meat would be brought into the markets in large quantities, while the natives would be made independent, instead of being on—or occasionally over—the verge of starvation; how the reindeer would make up for the gradual extinction of wild game; and allow of the exploration for minerals, and ultimately the utilization of the vast resources of that wide expanse in, or near the Arctic Circle.

When our Government tried a small experiment in 1911, the Canadian Municipal Journal again drew attention to the matter, and claimed that some of the R.N.W.M. Police, who had been starved to death on a trip, would have been saved if they had been provided with reindeer instead of dog teams. This editorial concluded:—"In a very few years, it will seem incredible that the introduction of reindeer has been so long delayed."

Reindeer are associated with childhood's earliest romance, for Santa Claus has always come behind a team, at all events until the aeroplane was practical. But the value of reindeer to the people who live in the far-off northland is beyond calculation. The animal provides milk and flesh for food; he is a most admirable draft animal, drawing the sledges at a good speed, and for long distances; while instead of having his food added to the load, as is the case with dog teams, he can always scrape away the snow and find his regular diet, the reindeer moss; his skin gives garments light and warm; his sinews furnish thread of great strength; he needs no shelter even with the mercury 50 to 60 below; he is docile and easily domesticated. Two very valuable qualities are that he can do without food, if necessary, for several days without apparent discomfort; and that the dogs begin to bear at a very early age. A perusal of those tales of heroism, the reports of the Royal North-West Mounted Police, shows the need of reindeer to lessen the dangers on the trails of justice.

Do not the following extracts from the Inspector's Log of Patrol from Chesterfield Inlet to Port Nelson in January, 1915, point towards the substitution of reindeer for dogs in the policing of the great northern regions?

"Left with dog train of 10 dogs, with 30 days' rations for our selves and 12 days' dog feed. . . Very cool, 48 below. Constable Pasley and natives in harness assisting dogs." He describes how the dogs were starved, turned sick and died, and says because so many dogs were sick, he left with only one dog team for a trip of 500 miles, and of these five died on the way. Compare this report with that of a missionary in Alaska:—"We were much pleased with our reindeer trip. My wife, for the greater part of the 175 mile trip, drove her own deer, handling them without difficulty." Mr. J. T. Lindseth, carrying mails for the U.S., made 260 miles in 8 days with heavy loads and passengers; dog teams would have required 15 to 20 days, and the passengers would have had to aid the dogs.

In a most interesting address before the Montreal Canadian Club, Mr. Lawrence alluded to the great good that would accrue to the whole of Northern Canada, and in the article already referred to, he quoted those who could speak from personal knowledge, advocating this plan. He summarised the experience of the Educational Department of the States, through whose good work the reindeer were introduced into Alaska, and gave the results up to that date. Mr. Summers, for 15 years a resident of Alaska, was quoted as saying:—"The reindeer are the salvation of that northern country," and "They are a God-send to that country." Mr. Gilder, writing in the Century Magazine said: "I much prefer reindeer (to horses), because they are much swifter and more docile." Mr. Lawrence concluded: "To reclaim and make valuable this vast area, to introduce a large and permanent industry where none previously existed, to take a barbarian people on the verge of starvation, and lift them up to a comfortable self-support and civilization, is certainly a great and important work. A wide and general distribution of the reindeer will develop these barren areas, lift the natives from the level of beggars and place them upon a plane of independence."

This has proved perfectly true in the case of Alaska, where the experiment has done far more than its most enthusiastic advocates dared to claim for it.

But at the present time, this question has a far more personal and important aspect. It is not merely enough to prove that the introduction of reindeer will make the natives of the far north more comfortable and prosperous. It is claimed that there would be a supply of splendid meat, which could be brought down into the markets of the less rigorous regions, and in this way help to alleviate the horror of famine, of which Lord Rhondda speaks. The whole question now becomes a much more selfish, and therefore more important one to the general public.

The recent development of the Canadian North-West has been marvellous, and wheat growing has gradually been pushed farther north, beyond the limits that were believed possible only a few years ago. Cattle ranching has grown immensely in the foothills. But the vast majority of people still believe that the fertile prairies and the luxuriant foothills are the limited area in which food can be produced. All the vast northland is considered a waste, so far as food production is concerned. And yet there are millions of acres that produce the favorite food of the reindeer, on which countless herds could be reared, with the minimum of cost and labor. The Dominion has a vast ranch for reindeer, sufficient to raise enough for her own use, with plenty for export.

Would such an experiment prove successful?

This can be answered by the results of similar trials in Alaska and Labrador. The former experiment was due to the foresight of Dr. Sheldon Jackson, of the U.S. Educational Department, who, when Congress at first refused to give any grant, secured private subscriptions, afterwards augmented by Congress, and brought some reindeer and Lapps to look after them, in 1893. From that date until 1916 the total Government appropriations had been only \$312,000. In his Report for 1917, the Governor of Alaska states as follows:—

Valuation of 56,045 reindeer owned by natives in 1916,	
at \$25.00. . . . .	\$1,401,125
Total income of natives from 1893-1916 . . . . .	470,837
26,106 reindeer owned by missionaries, etc. . . . .	652,650
Income of Mission, etc. . . . .	146,926
Total valuation and income . . . . .	\$2,671,538
Total Government Appropriations, 1893-1916 . . . . .	12,000
Gain (756.00 per cent.) . . . . .	\$2,359,538

As will be seen, the total number of deer is 82,151, while the number brought in originally was 1,280.

The actual results in a general way are thus summed up by the Governor:—

"This industry was introduced into Alaska for the sole purpose of making the natives economically independent in such portions of Alaska to which the industry could be adapted. In this the industry has been eminently successful. The distribution of the deer has been now firmly established and the natives affected thereby are assured