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THE VANISHED BUFFALO.

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It is hardly possible for the thoughtful traveller to cross the prairies of Western Canada without some reflections on the vanished buffalo. That these apparently interminable plains, now so silent and destitute of animal life, were once the pasture ground for incredibly vast herds of bison or American buffalo (*Bos americanus*) can scarcely be realised. For fully a couple of days the Pacific express speeds across this treeless waste, clothed with brown grass except in summer when it is carpeted with the strange flowers peculiar to these monotonous plains. In every direction the flat waste melts in the blue distance like the sea in mid-ocean but no sign of life appears except a few birds, and that ubiquitous prairie rodent, the gopher. Herds of domestic cattle, the property of isolated ranchers, roam at will ; but an occasional cayote or prairie wolf (*Canis latrans*, Say), a startled badger (*Taxidea americana*, Bod.), or a few antelope (*Antilocapra americanus*, Ord.) may be seen hastening away from the railway track.

It is fully twenty years ago since the buffalo in any considerable numbers were found on the plains. In 1884 out of a herd of twenty, eleven or twelve were killed in the vicinity of Cypress Hills not far from Maple Creek, and so recently as eight years ago a small herd of six or seven cows and calves was killed by Indians a little north of Swift Current, Assiniboia, N. W. T., these being probably the remnant of the Cypress Hills buffalo. In the early part of 1886 the Smithsonian expedition scoured Montana with the hope, a very meagre one, of finding