CHAPTER II.

The Deer of Primitive Times—Their great abundance—Associated with many animals of prey, whose screams and howls at Night made the Forests hideous—The Villages of Greenwood and Cokesbury—An Old Hunter—John Duncan, of Duncan's Creek—Ancient Buffalo and Deer Licks—The Meriwethers, Wardlaws, Moores, Browns, McAlasters, and Logans, of Little Wilson's Creek—Idle and Disorderly Persons begin, just after the Revolution, to wander over the country, to the great annoyance of the peaceable residents—Legislative enactments in regard to them—The Indian method of dressing a Deer-skin—The famous Bezoar stones of the Cherokees—Elks, &c.

Deer were so numerous, at this period, in the upper-country, that large herds of them were scarcely ever out of sight of the pioneer, even while standing in his cabin-door. They were more numerous than hares are at present, while panthers, wolves, bears, catamounts, and wild cats, prowled in incredible numbers in the swamps and thickets, making night hideous with their cries.

When reading the accounts given by travelers in Africa, of this fearful concomitant of the gloom and savageness of its woodland solitudes, few would realize the fact, that similar startling noises were the familiar serenades with which our emigrant fathers were nightly greeted in their cabins, in Upper Carolina. Lawson describes the cries and howlings of the

wild animals at night, in the swamps of the Santee, even after that part of the province had been for some time in the possession of a European population, as terrific beyond measure.

On the beautiful ridge, the water shed between the Savannah and Saluda, and on which are situated, within eight miles of each other, the rural villages of Greenwood and Cokesbury, it was no uncommon occurrence in old times, to meet with herds of deer of sixty or seventy head. Deer Branch, that takes its rise in the former, just back of the residence of James Creswell, Esq., is a memorial of this fact, in its primitive history, not likely soon to perish. An old hunter is yet alive, though doubtless the very last survivor of his vigorous generation, who, in his youth, shot deer in great numbers, by means of blinds near their watering-places on the streams, that have their sources near those villages.*

It required of the hunter but a short walk, and ordinary skill with the rifle, to supply himself and family plentifully with venison and the flesh of the wild turkey. Old Anthony Park, who settled on lands now embraced in the District of Newberry, used to assert that a man could, at that time, stand in his own door, and kill more game than would be sufficient for the support of two families.†

When John Duncan built his house in a canebrake, on the creek, which bears his name, he opened

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* Old Isaac Logan, now a resident of Greene County, Alabama.

† Pearson's MS.

a path, some fifteen paces long, through the cane to the stream, for the convenience of getting water. In after years he related to his children, that there was scarcely a minute in the day that he could not see some wild animal moving stealthily up or down the creek across that path."

Sitting, one evening at dusk, in his door, with his foot against the frame, a bear slily approached the the house, and threw him for a moment into a great fright, by springing suddenly over his leg into the cabin. Recovering himself, he seized his gun, and before the bold intruder could effect his escape, shot him dead upon the hearth.

After a while, however, as the English hunters became more numerous and aggressive, the deer grew wilder and scarcer; and they were now more frequently taken by being ambuscaded at their watering places and licks. These last were, many of them, famous spots, and well known to all the hunters for miles around. The indestructible marks of some of them still remain.

On a plantation,* a few miles south-east of the village of Greenwood, the traces of one are yet remarkable. When the buffalo and deer first frequented this spot, the lick was evidently on the edge of a small branch, under a sloping hill; in the course of years, however—perhaps of an age—they wore away, by the incessant application of their tongues, a large portion of the slope; and when the

* Near the residence of James Pert, Sen.

last of them visited it, the steep excavated sides of the hill had gradually extended some thirty or forty paces from the rivulet.

Around this lick the last of the Revolutionary hunters of Little Wilson's Creek had their deer blinds; here the Meriwethers, Wardlaws, Moors, Browns, Bakers, McAlasters and Logans often met at nightfall, to kill deer, and recount, with a social sympathy that only those old people felt and knew how to manifest, the news of the day and their last hunting adventure.

At a spot, about the same distance north-east from Greenwood, in a deep ravine, where the bases of several hills come together, there was, in the earliest periods, a celebrated lick, at which, it is probable that, far back in the traditionary history of the Indians, it was a place of resort for buffalo and deer, and perhaps for other animals now extinct.*

These licks abounded, however, in the upper country, from the Savannah to the Catawba. The early settlers and hunters easily discovered them, by following up the deep narrow paths that led to them from every direction.

Deer were so abundant in the woods around the site of old Ninety-six, even at the close of the eighteenth century, that the carcass of a buck brought no more than half a dollar in the streets of Cambridge. Now, not one of the species is to be found in all that region between the Savannah and Saluda.

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* Near Chalk Level, on Dr. C. R. Mosely's plantation.

Of all the animals indigenous to this portion of the Cherokee country, the fallow deer was the most numerous and the most important; its flesh was the chief food of the Indians, and its skin one of the necessaries and luxuries of their domestic life. It was the material from which they constructed their mocassins, leggings and a hundred other things no less useful; while its strong, slender sinews served all the purposes of the most durable thread in their manufacture.

Next to success in war, the Indians honored the skill and good fortune of the warrior who took, in any season, the greatest number of deer. Success here was one of their great standards of worth; for, as in war, they regarded it as a special mark of divine favor, and of the moral purity of the hunter.

This was the taste of savages; but is it not more praiseworthy than that of a civilized Christian race, who make the ability to acquire wealth the chief standard of social excellence?

The Cherokee name for deer was *ahowwe*, and *awatahowwe*, a very common term among them, meant "the great deer-killer of God for the people." Says Adair: "since my time, this title was very honorable among them. Every town solemnly appointed one—him whom they saw that God had at sundry times blessed with better success than his brethren, in supplying them with a holy banquet, that they might eat and rejoice before the Divine Essence. But now it seems, by reason of their great intercourse with foreigners, they have left off that old social

religious custom, and even their former noted hospitality."

They always sewed their moccasins with deers' sinews, though of a sharp, cutting quality, for they reckon them more fortunate than the wild hemp; but to eat such, they imagine would breed worms and other ailments, in proportion to the number they eat. And I have been assured by a gentleman of character, who is now an inhabitant of South Carolina, and well acquainted with the customs of the Northern Indians, that they also cut a piece out of the thigh of every deer they kill, and throw it away; and reckon it such a dangerous pollution to eat it, as to occasion sickness and other misfortunes, especially by spoiling their guns from shooting with proper force and direction.

It is also to be observed, that although they made constant use of the bears' oil, and even applied it to religious purposes, they had no such title as the *bear killer of God:* not regarding that animal so clean and sacred as the deer, and therefore not to be eaten in their religious feasts, in which they ate, sang and danced in the presence of Yohewah. Before dressing their fresh-killed venison, they always passed it through the smoke and flame of fire, as a sacrificial offering; and the first buck that fell before the hand of the hunter, either in his summer or winter chase, was often sacrificed entire, but most frequently merely the melt, or a piece of the fat, was so disposed of.

"In the woods, they cut a small piece out of the

lower part of the thighs of the deer they had killed, lengthways, and pretty deep. Among the great number of venison-hams they brought to the English trading-houses, not one was observed to be without this mark."

When in pursuit of deer, it was their habit to range over a large extent of country, often traveling more than thirty miles before they returned loaded to the camp.

Previous to their acquaintance with the English, in these enterprises, as in the chase of the buffalo, the bow-and-arrow was their chief weapon; and even after they had learned from the whites the use of the rifle, they never went on a hunt or a war expedition, without arming themselves as well with the bow and quiver.

Just before the Revolution, a large class of roving vagabonds, of whom we shall have more to say, spent their whole time sauntering alone through the woods, visiting their Indian mistresses, and shooting deer at all seasons, both the young and full grown, for the sake of their skins, to the great destruction of that useful animal, and detriment of the growing up-country settlements. The people, anxious at length, to preserve their deer, and to get rid of the vagrants, laid the matter before the Executive Council, and procured the enactment of a statute whose preamble well explains the grounds of the people's complaints.

"Whereas, many idle, loose, and disorderly persons, as well residents as non-residents in this province, have made, and do make, a constant practice

of wandering up and down the same and of killing the deer merely for the sake of the skins, leaving the flesh to rot, whereby wolves, and other beasts of prey, are brought among the stocks of cattle, hogs and sheep, to the great annoyance and damage of the owners thereof; and whereas, the dangerous practice of hunting and killing of deer in the night-time, by carrying of lighted torches through the woods, is now become very common, by means whereof, several persons have been killed, and great numbers of all sorts of cattle are frequently destroyed, to the manifest injury of the owners of the same; for remedy thereof, and in order to prevent as much as may be, the like mischiefs in future, we humbly pray his most sacred Majesty that it may be enacted," &c.

Accordingly it was provided that no doe or fawn should be killed between the first day of January and the last of July, in any year ever after; nor any buck between the first day of September and the last Friday of October, and between the first day of March and the last of April. Two pounds of proclamation money, recoverable before any Justice of the Peace, was the penalty for the violation of this statute; and five pounds for the violation of the further provision; that no persons, whatever, (the Indians excepted,) should, in the night, hunt or kill deer, in any other place than their own grounds or enclosures.

It was finally enacted that no one should range the woods in search of game at a greater distance from his own residence than seven miles.* This Act was

* Statutes of South Carolina, Volume Fourth.

passed in August, 1769, the same year that by an order from the same authorities the first Court in the upper country was established at old Ninety-Six.

Two years after the Revolution, this interesting animal again became an object of legislative discussion and enactment. The people, it appears, were no longer annoyed by the offensive carcasses of deer slain around their plantations by the sauntering hunters; but a nuisance of greater magnitude had taken its place. Just as the manly tournament of the middle ages has degenerated into the effeminate, kid-glove exercise at arms of the present age, so the race of the old hero-hunters of Carolina had well nigh disappeared, and given place to a generation, not of hunters in the primitive sense of the term, but of night-walkers, whose chief skill in the art of taking deer, consisted in the ability to carry a pan, on which a bright lightwood torch blazed, to attract the eyes of their unsuspecting victims. This being effected, the magnanimous sportsman took deliberate aim, at his leisure, and as his musket, or great English shot-gun, carried a hand-full of buckshot, and the game was usually near at hand, he seldom missed his object. This method of killing deer was sufficiently objectionable, if only for the reason that it was greatly and wantonly destructive to them. But unfortunately for the peace and safety of these doughty pan-carriers, there were few of them who possessed the practical skill to distinguish, at night, between the eyes of a deer and those of a horse, or any other domestic animals; and many, it was strongly suspected at the

time, were not very anxious to acquire a skill so discriminating. The indignation of the people was at last thoroughly aroused, and resulted in an enactment of the Legislature, October, 1785, the preamble of which reads as follows:

"Whereas, many idle and disorderly persons do make a practice of hunting with fire in the night-time, whereby great numbers of deer are unnecessarily destroyed, and the cattle and other stock of the good citizens of this State frequently injured; for remedy whereof, it was ordained, that any person who should thereafter hunt with fire, or kill any deer, or horse, or cattle, or stock of other kind, in the night-time, should pay the sum of twenty pounds sterling."*

This, we believe, was the last Act of the State Legislature in favor of the poor deer; but no statute passed there, or remonstrance from the better sort of people, availed to preserve them long after the country became more thickly settled, and the race of fire-hunters had once got a taste of their easy slaughter. Like the hapless red men, for whose subsistence a munificent Providence first provided it, the deer is now nearly extinct in the upper country. In the swamps of the Savannah, on the more northern tributaries of the Broad and Saluda rivers, near the foot of the mountains, and in the vast solitudes of the pine lands of Edgefield, a few may yet linger; but soon not a representative of the race will be found

*Statutes at Large, Volume 4, page 719.

east of the Blue Ridge, and another link be broken forever that connects the present with the stirring age of Carolina's romance.

Lawson declares that the Indians were frequently in the habit of eating the deer cooked entire with its stomach and intestines, and their contents. But their daintiest dish consisted of a pair of young fawns boiled as they lay in the water and womb of the mother.

The method which they used to dress the skins of the deer, and of other animals, so as to impart to them the exquisite softness and flexibility that rendered them so valuable in commerce, was exceedingly simple, and appears to be the same still in use in the upper-country for a similar purpose.

The skins were first soaked in water, and the hair curried off with an instrument made from a deer's shank bone or rib. This rude implement was displaced after a while by an English currying-knife of iron; the Indians used to say, however, that they could curry a skin with the bone, with more dispatch than with the sharp iron of the English.

After the removal of the hair, the skins were soaked for some time in a solution of deers' brains and water; the brains had been previously made into a cake and baked in the ashes. They remained in this mixture till all the water had been absorbed; they were then taken out and constantly rubbed or scraped with an oyster-shell or muscle, till perfectly dry; they were now sufficiently soft and pliant for all purposes when not exposed to water. To secure them from being hardened by moisture, it was necessary

as at present, to tan them with bark. The Indians often used, in the first part of the process, the soft grains of their roasting-ears beaten to a pulp, instead of the deers' brains.

The same author observes that the famous bezoar stone, so much prized for its wonderful powers in medicine, was found chiefly in the deer that range near the mountains. The Indians valued it very highly; they were accustomed to reduce it to powder and carry it with them, in leathern pouches, on their expeditions. Lawson thus describes, in his journal, an interview which he had with a party of Indians, who were, no doubt, Cherokees, though he gives them a different name:

"This evening came down some Torteros—tall, likely men—having great plenty of buffaloes, elks, and bears, with other sort of deer amongst them, which strong food makes large, robust bodies. Inquiring of them if they never got any of the bezoar stone, and giving them a description how it was found, the Indians told me they had great plenty of it, and asked me what use I could make of it? I answered them that the white men used it in physic, and that I would buy some of them if they would get it against I came that way again. Thereupon one of them pulled out a leather pouch wherein was some of it in powder; he was a notable hunter, and affirmed to me that that powder blown into the eyes strengthened the sight and brain exceedingly—that being the most common use they made of it."*

* Lawson's Carolina, page 48.

It appears from this that the many strange stories related of the bezoars' never failing to extract the venom of the most poisonous reptiles, are unsustained by the experience and practice of the Indians. They were known to trust to other agents for the cure of the rattle-snake's bite, and that of other serpents nearly as deadly. The bezoar stone, it is now well ascertained, is nothing more than a calcareous formation in the deer and many other animals, like that which produces the painful disease of gravel in man.

Many wonderful stories are told of its curative powers. The bite of the most venemous serpent was harmless if a bezoar was at hand to absorb the poison from the wound; and here and there an old woman is still to be found in the upper-country whose child-like faith in all the virtues claimed for it is not surpassed by her belief in the creed or the gospel of St. John.

It is not, perhaps, generally known that the swift-footed, majestic elk was once an inhabitant of Upper Carolina. This animal "is a highly valued species of the deer, now only found in considerable herds in the wilds of the west, and north-west, to about the 50th degree of north latitude. The great forests were their favorite haunts, where were plenty of buds, and tender twigs; on those wide prairies, and plains, where man is seldom seen, but nature is bountiful in her supplies of verdant food."*

* Thatcher.

The elk is a large stately animal, and beautifully proportioned in all his parts. The towering antlers of the male are several feet in length, and have long been the admiration of the naturalist, as well as the hunter. His fleetness was incredible. When first aroused by the hunter, he disdained to fly at once, but bounded along a few paces only, as if trying his strength for flight. He stops to turn half round, and gaze again at his pursuer; then throwing back his branching horns upon his neck, and projecting his taper nose forward, he springs onward at a rate, which soon leaves the hunter far in the back ground.*

When wounded, and at bay, he was no less fierce, and dangerous than the buffalo or panther; the wary hunter knew better than to approach him, without great caution, under these circumstances. The name given him by the Indians was *hissooba;* they greatly prized his carcass, not so much for the sake of the flesh—for, like that of the buffalo, it was coarser, and not so sweet as venison—but for the horns and skin. The former, in their soft state, they esteemed excellent food; and when hard, and fully developed, they formed from them the best bows of which they were possessed. The latter they used in the manufacture of a great variety of domestic articles.

This exceedingly timid animal, was the first to disappear from the ancient hunting grounds of the upper-country, at the approach of the strange hunt-

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* Thatcher.

ers and settlers, with their echoing axes, and louder pealing rifles. Its only genial home was the deep solitudes of uncultivated tracts. Scarcely a tradition lingers among the people to cast a gleam of light upon the early history of the elk in Upper Carolina. Its memorials passed away with the last generation of the Indians, and English hunters, who pursued it in its native wilds, ere it disappeared forever beyond the Alleghany range.

We are informed, however, in Pearson's manuscript, that the last of the species, which was seen in the famous neutral hunting-ground between the Broad and Catawba Rivers, already described, was killed near Winn's Bridge in the present District of Fairfield. He thus relates the incident: "For a short time after the settlers began to clear their lands, the elk was frequently met with; but the strange sounds which now began to invade his haunts, soon drove him off into the uninhabited wilderness. The last one that remained was shot near Winn's Bridge, by Robert Newton. One of the hams, and the magnificent antlers of the slain animal, were presented to Capt. John Pearson, who, like a true Englishman, ate the ham, and sent the antlers to a museum in England. At that period no such institution as a museum was known in the upper-country; neither did the people possess the taste or the inclination, to collect, and preserve its curiosities—their mission then, was to clear, to plant and to build."

"The elk was once perhaps more widely distributed over the North American Continent than any other

quadruped; it existed throughout the entire territory lying between the northern provinces of Mexico and Hudson's Bay, and between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Within the United States, east of the Mississippi, very few are left, except in the region bordering Lake Superior. On the western tributaries of the Mississippi it is still very common, and perhaps equally so in California and Oregon. West of the Rocky Mountains, it was formerly most abundant, in California, where it is still far from rare. In the rich pasture lands of the San Joaquin and Sacramento, the old residents tell us, it formerly was to be seen in immense droves, and with the antelope, the black tailed deer, the wild cattle and mustangs, covered those plains with herds rivalling those of the buffalo east of the mountains, or of the antelope in South Africa."

The favorite haunts of the elk in California, are the wide stretches of "tule" bordering the rivers and lakes I have mention. It is said that unlike most large quadrupeds, the elk can never be "bogged," and he traverses these marshy districts with a facility possessed by no other animal.

During the rutting season, when the bucks are rushing through the tule in search of the females, a common mode of hunting them is to mount a horse, and riding along the edge of the marshes to call the buck by an imitation of the cry of the doe. He comes plunging on his course, marked for a long distance by the trembling rushes, till, led on by the fatal signal, he bursts out of the cover with stream-

ing sides, and, tossing his antlers, looks around to find the object of his search. This is the moment improved by the hunter to plant in his shaggy breast the fatal bullet.

The elk of the western coast, differs in nothing, so far as I could see from that of the Eastern States. Near Humboldt Bay, I am assured by intelligent men, that eight hundred, and even one thousand pounds, is not an unusual weight, and that individuals have been killed there, which are said to have weighed twelve hundred pounds. We saw the tracks of elks in the Cascade Mountains which were scarcely less in size than those of a bullock."*

Nothing gives us so vivid an idea of the vastness and fertility of the ancient natural pastures of this region, as these great herds of buffalo, deer, and elk, that in primitive times roamed over its hills and valleys. Our people are apt to forget, in view of their well-nigh exhausted and denuded soil, that at the period when this country bore to the inhabited and cultivated north-east the same relation that the unappropriated parts of Texas and Arkansas do at present to it, it was scarcely inferior to them in strength of soil or any natural production. And since its climate remains the same, and the stamina of its energies are not yet completely exhausted, a sure basis is afforded for the hope of its future resuscitation, and a progressive improvement, that shall ultimately as

* Explorations of Lieut. R. S. Williamson on the western slope of the Rocky Mountains.—Vol vi. p. 66 of Explorations, Surveys, &c.

far surpass its present productiveness or the wildest luxuriance of its primitive vigor, as the genius of the civilized man surpasses that of the improvident, untutored savage.

Bears were so numerous, at this period, in the upper-country, wherever they could find the covert of rocks, hollow trees, and cane-brakes, that a hunter of ordinary skill could kill, in a single season, enough to make him some three thousand pounds of bacon.*

This animal, coarse as he was, was hardly less useful to the Indians than the deer or the buffalo. From his skin were formed their warmest and most substantial winter shoes, and their most comfortable clothing for the same season. The oil extracted from his fat, was one of the essentials of their domestic and religious life.

The Cherokee priests and prophets were inducted into office by the unction of bears' oil. "All the Indian Americans," says Adair, "especially the female sex, reckon their bears' oil or grease very valuable, and use it after the same manner as the Asiatics did their fine essences and sweet perfumes. The young warriors and women are uneasy unless their hair is always shining with it; which is probably the reason that none of their heads are bald."

It is related that they were sometimes reduced to great straits from the difficulty of procuring this oil, both for their domestic and sacred uses, after the bear began to be less abundant in the woods, or the hunt-

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*Dr. Ramsay.

ers more indolent and less skillful than they had been previous to their intercourse with the whites.

The flesh of the bear was esteemed to be excellent food, and the traders and hunters from the English settlements soon learned to relish it as much as the Cherokees. "The industrious old traders have still a plenty of hogs, which they raise in folds, mostly on the weeds of the fields during the whole time the crops are in the ground; likewise some hundreds of fowls at once—plenty of venison—the dried flesh of bears and buffaloes—wild turkeys, ducks, geese, and pigeons, during the proper season of their being fat and plenty; for the former sort of fowls are lean in the summer, and the others are in these moderate climates only during the winter, for they return northward with the sun. The traders commonly make bacon of the bears in winter; but the Indians mostly flay off a thick tier of fat which lies over the flesh, and the latter they cut up into small pieces and thrust them on reeds or suckers of sweet tasted hickory or sassafras, which they barbacue over a slow fire. The fat they fry into clear, well-tasted oil, mixing plenty of sassafras and wild cinnamon with it over the fire, which keeps sweet from one winter to another, in large earthen jars covered in the ground. It is of a light digestion, and nutritive to hair. All who are acquainted with its qualities prefer it to any oil for any use whatever; smooth Florence is not to be compared in this respect with rough America.

"I have known gentlemen of the nicest taste, who, on the beginning of their first trip into the Indian

country, were so greatly prejudiced against eating bears' flesh, that they vehemently protested they would as soon eat part of a barbecued rib of a wolf, or any other beast of prey, as a spare-rib of a young bear; but by the help of a good appetite, which their exercise and change of air procured, they ventured to taste a little; and presently they fed on it more plentifully than others, to make up the loss they had sustained by their former squeamishness and neglect. In the spring of the year, bear bacon is a favorite dish with the traders, along with herbs that the woods afford in plenty; especially with the young tops of poke. And this method they pursue year by year as a physical regimen in order to purge their blood.

Though most of the traders who go to the remote Indian countries, have tame stock, as already described, and are very expert at fire-arms, and ranging the woods a hunting; yet every servant that each of them fits out for the winter's hunt, brings home to his master a large heap of fat barbacued briskets, rumps, and tongues of buffalo and deer, as well as plenty of bears' ribs, which are piled on large racks; these are laid up and used, not for necessity, but for the sake of variety."*

The Indians regarded all animals that subsisted on flesh or disgusting food—as hogs, wolves, panthers, foxes, and cats, as unfit to be eaten—they were forbidden as polluted. The only animal which may be ranked among beasts of prey, that they exempted from this proscription, was the bear.

* Adair.

The male bear invariably made his den in the ground, under the upturned root of some fallen tree, or the cavity of some precipitous hill-side, to which he generally retired for winter quarters, at the first fall of snow. The female sought a safer retreat in the highest parts of hollow trees, and here bore her young, and nourished them till sufficiently large to take care of themselves.

"About Christmas the he and she bears always separate. The former usually snaps off a great many branches of trees, with which he makes the bottom of his winter's bed, and carefully raises it to a proper height with the green tops of large canes; he choses such solitary thickets as are impenetrable by the sunbeams. The she bear takes an old, large, hollow tree, for her yeaning winter house, and chooses to have the door above, to protect her young ones from danger. When anything disturbs them, they gallop up a tree, champing their teeth and bristling their hair in a frightful manner; and when they are wounded, it is surprising from what a height they will pitch on the ground, with their weighty bodies, and how soon they get up and run off. When they take up their winter quarters, they continue the greater part of two months in almost an entire state of inactivity. During that time, their tracks reach no farther than to the next water, of which they seldom drink, as they frequently suck their paws in their lonely recess, and impoverish their bodies to nourish them.

While they are thus employed, they cannot con-

tain themselves in silence, but are so well pleased with their repast, that they continue singing "*hum-um-um*; and as their pipes are none of the weakest, the Indians, by this means, often are led to them from a considerable distance, and they are then easily knocked on the head. But the hunters are forced to cut a hole near the root of the tree, wherein the she bear and her cubs are lodged, in order to drive them out by the force of fire and suffocating smoke; and as the tree is partly rotten, and the inside dry, it soon takes fire. In this case they become very fierce, and would fight any kind of an enemy; but commonly at the first shot they are either killed or mortally wounded. If the hunter, however, chance to miss his aim he speedily makes off to a sappling, which the bear, by overclasping, cannot climb; the crafty hunting dogs then act their part, by biting behind and gnawing its hams till it takes up a tree. I have been often assured, both by Indians and others who get their bread by hunting in the woods, that the she bear always endeavors to keep apart from the male during the helpless state of her young ones; otherwise he would endeavor to kill them; and that they had frequently seen the she bear kill the male on the spot, after a desperate engagement, in defence of her young ones." *

Lawson during his travels and residence in Carolina, became well acquainted with this animal, and, from his account of it, it was scarcely less useful to the Indians than the deer. Its flesh was not inferior

* Adair.

to the best pork, and that of the cubs, a dish to tempt the palate of the most fastidious epicure. The fat was as white as snow, and a melted quart of it taken upon the stomach would not rise in acidity. Fish, and other meats prepared in it, as the English use the fat of the hog, were peculiarly excellent.

When in its season, the berry of the black gum tree was the favorite diet of the bear; but then its flesh was good for nothing, on account of a nauseous taste imparted to it by this food; and the same effect was produced in those that ranged so low down on the rivers as to prey periodically on the shoals of herrings which ran up from the sea. They devoured great quantities of acorns, and while in search of these, they occasionally, in times of scarcity, seized upon and made prey of as many hogs as came in their way.

The corn-patches of the Indians were frequently invaded by them, and in a short time completely destroyed, if the voracious intruders were not quickly driven off; for they broke down and trampled under their feet more than they could eat. The bear was particularly fond of the sweet potato, and when once a patch of them was so unlucky as to receive a visit from him, it was usually swept clean of its contents. He was often detected in the act of fishing for herrings and other fish, by watching his opportunity on the bank of some stream, to dash them on shore by a sudden stroke of his paw. His cousin, the raccoon, it is often related, had a similar habit of catching crabs with the end of his tail.

The same chronicler informs us of a very curious fact in the history of the Carolina bear. No man, whether Christian or savage, was ever known to kill a she bear big with young. It was accounted for by supposing that as soon as the females had conceived, they retired to some impenetrable fastness, where they lay concealed, till past the season of pregnancy. Yet it appears unaccountable that in no instance they should have been discovered by the Indians, who time immemorial had hunted in every covert of the woods with the sagacity of dogs.

A few years before Lawson's arrival in Carolina, there were killed in two counties of Virginia, during a single winter, as many as five hundred bears, and among them all there were but two females, and neither of them pregnant. We leave the solution of this curious problem in natural history to the philosophy of the reader.

The English hunters pursued the bear as often for the sake of the rare sport his chase and capture afforded, as for his skin and flesh. They hunted him with dogs, well trained for the purpose, and when once fairly in pursuit of their game, they did not cease to press him till he was forced to take a tree, whence the unerring rifle soon brought him to the ground. Two or three shots were always reserved, however, by the hunters, to be used in case he should come down merely stunned by the balls already fired at him; for, though not naturally ferocious, the bear when wounded becomes exceedingly fierce and dan

gerous. The dogs sometimes brought him to bay on the ground, and in these close quarters the hunters used their pistols, which they always carried in their girdles. "If a dog," says the old chronicler, "is apt to fasten upon, and run into a bear, he is not good, for the best dog in Europe is nothing in their paws; but if ever they get him in their clutches they blow his skin from his flesh like a bladder, and often kill him; or if he recovers it he is never good for anything after."

As the hump of the buffalo was regarded as the most delicious portion of his body, so the paws of the bear were eaten with most avidity by the Indians and old hunters. The head was thrown away as good for nothing.

In preparing the oil to be used for anointing their hair and persons, and the bodies of their dead, the Indians mixed with it a root known to the whites as the "blood root," which they gathered near the mountains. When this could not be procured, they used paccoon root, or sanguinaria; either of which gave it a strong medicinal, and anteceptic power, as well as beautiful color. This unguent was regarded as a sovereign remedy for strains, aches and old pains.

The Indians endeavored always to take this animal in its winter's den, for it was then exceedingly fat; they used to say, that for a short time even, after it had emerged again in the spring, it was still found to be in good condition. The bear is now extinct in

the upper-country, probably not one of the species can be found east of the Blue Ridge.*

The beaver, so deeply interesting for its wonderful sagacity, and for so long a time invaluable for its thick, strong fur, to the commerce of the world, and now only found in the remote regions of the west, was once abundant on all the creeks and rivulets of the upper-country. The waters of Fair-forest, Longcanes, Coronaka, and numerous other streams, were as famous for their beavers, as they were for their rich cane-brake bottoms.

A hunter has been known to take as many as twenty beavers in one season on the Fair-forest† of Union and Spartanburg, a large number, considering the value of their skins, and the difficulty of trapping this sagacious animal. It was exceedingly wary of any device of man to entangle it; and if way laid, and shot, unless killed dead on the spot, it most always managed to plunge into the water and dive into its burrow, before the hunter could secure it.

There is a history of the beaver, and of other animals that made their homes, in olden times, on the streams of the upper-country, far more truthful, and enduring than the records of the historian. Scarcely a neighborhood of its modern divisions, is without its "beaver" or "beaver dam" creek. And the

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* In all the minute records, in the Secretary of State's office, Columbia, of the peltry trade between the Cherokees and Carolina, I found the skin of the bear not once mentioned; those of the deer and beaver seemed to be chiefly in demand.

† Dr. Ramsay's South Carolina.

creeks of the bear, the wolf, the wild-cat, buffalo, and panther are no less numerous. York District, in one of its finest tributaries of Broad River, has a lasting memorial of its ancient herds of buffaloes. In the same district, three "beaver dams," a wolf, and turkey creek, are similar mementoes of the animals whose names they bear. Abbeville has its "Deerbranch," its Turkey and Buffalo creeks. Greenville records the history of its beavers, wild-cats, and panthers, in a "beaver dam" and "wild-cat" creek, and the "panther's fork." The wild turkey has also its commemorative stream in Edgefield and Chester, and the beaver its constant memorial. Like Abbeville and York, Newberry cannot forget its buffaloes of primitive times, while its most south-eastern water course bears its tributary currents to the Saluda.

The upper-country is full of monuments like these —a rich, unobtrusive history of the past. "It might at first sight appear as if language apart, that is, from literature, and books, and where these did not exist, was the frailest, the most untrustworthy of all the vehicles of knowledge, and that most likely to betray its charge: yet is it in fact the great, often times, the only connecting link between the present and the remotest past, an ark riding above the water-floods that have swept away every other landmark and memorial of ages and generations."*

Adair remarks of the southern Indians, "They rank all amphibious animals in the class of those

* French on the Study of Words.

prohibited for food. Our old traders remember when they first began the custom of eating beavers; and to this day none eat of them except those who kill them; though the flesh is very wholesome, on account of the bark of trees they live upon."

A curious tradition, however, has been discovered that would seem to prove that religious scruples of a different kind from those that feared contact with polluted things, caused this reluctance of the Indians to pursue the beaver as an object of food. It is too interesting to be omitted in its proper place.

Notwithstanding the great abundance of this animal at the opening of the Indian trade, so rapid was its destruction with the improved methods of trapping and hunting introduced by the whites, that it soon became very scarce, and, it is probable, wholly extinct before the end of the eighteenth century. The last one seen on the Coronaka, is said to have been taken by an old hunter living near that stream, in the last year of that period.

Few, if any, traditions relating to it are now to be found among the descendants of the early settlers and hunters of the upper-country.

The Indians named the beaver *keenta;* and by combining that word with *ooka*, water, and *heenna*, a path, formed the very expressive appellative, *keentookheenna*, a beaver dam, or the beaver's path over the water.*

"The beaver once inhabited all portions of the

* Adair.

globe lying in the northern temperate zone; yet from England, continental Europe, China, and all the eastern portions of the United States, it has been entirely exterminated, and a war so universal and relentless, has been waged upon this defenseless animal; his great intelligence has been so generally opposed by the intelligence of man, that it has seemed certain, unless some kind Providence should interpose, it must soon be found only in a fossil state. Happily, that Providence did interpose, through a certain ingenious somebody, who first suggested the use of silk in place of fur for the covering of hats. The beavers are not yet exterminated from Western America; and now since they are not "worth the killing," in those inhospitable regions where there is no encouragement to American enterprise or cupidity, we may hope that they will always there retain existence in a home exclusively their own.

In the streams flowing from the Rocky, the Blue and Cascade Mountains—the old stamping ground of Bill Williams, and that host of Black-foot-hating,* death-defying "mountain men," whose adventures and escapes, half fiction, and half fact, cover so broad a page of modern story—the sagacious beavers are still numerous; but it was in the fastnesses of the Cascades, one hundred and fifty miles south of Columbia, in the clear, cold streams which, trickling down from the eternal snows, flow, now bright and sparkling, now deep and still, through mountain

* Blackfeet Indians.

meadows, green as emerald, and daisy-decked, in a region never before profaned by the foot of a white man, and unoccupied by savages, that we found the beaver in numbers, of which, when applied to beavers, I had no conception. The sides of these streams were literally lined with their habitations, though we never saw their houses, and seldom a dam made by them, but usually their burrows pierced the sides of the stream, a sufficiently large and long excavation being made to form warm, roomy and comfortable quarters. From the point where these burrows terminate in the water, trails lead off to thickets of pine or willow, where the beavers find their food. These thickets exhibit the most surprising proofs of the power and industry of these animals; whole groves of young pine trees cut down within a few inches of the ground and carried off bodily. So well was the work done that one could hardly resist the conviction that the woodman's axe had not there been plied vigorously and well. These trees, when felled, are cut into convenient lengths and carried to the burrows, there to be stripped of their bark, and then thrown into the stream. We often saw trees of considerable size cut down by the beavers; the largest which I noticed was a spruce pine twelve inches in diameter.

In California the beaver is quite common, though less so than in Oregon. On Cotton-wood Creek, near Fort Reading, they abound, and have cut the cotton-wood trees, which line the banks of the stream, of a diameter from fifteen to eighteen inches. To any

one who has never seen the beaver in his native haunts the accounts of his mechanical skill and general intelligence, as exhibited in his dams, and "clearings," must seem almost fabulous; and when he has seen these with his own eyes, he cannot fail to feel that the profound respect entertained by the Indians and trappers for this sagacious animal is in a great degree deserved.

The value of beaver skins has so much depreciated that they were offered to some of our party, by the bale, at twenty-five cents each."*

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*Lieut. R. S. Williamson, corps of Topographical Engineers, Explorations on the Pacific.