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THE EVENING GUARD.

THE WILY SEA OTTER

ITS PELT IS HIGHLY PRIZED AND HARD TO OBTAIN.

The Animal Is All Eyes, Ears and Nose When Alive and All Fur When Dead—Its Capture Is Attended With Great Dangers and Hardships.

Fifty pounds sterling, or $250, per skin is not an unusually high average price to pay for the fur of the sea otter, and at fur sales in London a much higher price has often been asked and received. Much, of course, in the matter of price depends upon the condition and size of the skin. The animal when it is alive and wearing the fur itself is from three to five feet in length from nose to tail tip, though the skin lying upon it in loose folds, the actual "pelt," is of fair size.

Ever since Bering, sailing from Russia, discovered Alaska and found its natives clad in otter skin this fur has been the prime object of the pelt hunters' desire. Sable, marten, mink and even ermine can be trapped or shot without extraordinary trouble. Seals are driven inland like fools to be slaughtered and skinned at their captors' leisure. But the sea otter must be sought diligently as the diamond, for three centuries of experience have made him wise.

Upon the map of North America may be seen jutting from the southern corner of Alaska, which is the northwest corner of the continent, Aliaska, a peninsula, which breaks off into a chain of islands called the Aleutians. Just where the peninsula ends and the islands begin a point may be noticed marked Belkovsky.

This is the headquarters of the sea otter hunters, and between here and Chernaboor island to the south and Sannak island to the southwest the bulk of the sea otters are taken.

Thoroughly impressed with the value of his own skin, the sea otter takes care of it by living far away from the mainland, sleeping with one eye open, upon the floating weed beds or a sea washed reef exposed to the full force of the north Pacific.

At the slightest sign of the approach of man he dives deep, and stays below for 20 minutes at a time.

Sometimes a stray otter may be shot from the land as he plays in the surf, but the chief methods of his capture are "the surround" and clubbing. In the former case a party of Aleutian islanders are conveyed to Sannak, there to encamp for two or three months.

Woe to the hunters if the wind be off the shore, for then no fire may be lit to make the beloved tea, no pipe of tobacco smoked, or the hope of a capture would be vain. For the otter is all eyes and ears and nose when alive; all fur when dead.

Upon a calm day the hunters paddle gently over the sea in their skin canoes, keeping an eager eye upon the rolling surf for a sign of the prey. A hunter sees an otter and makes a quiet signal to his mates. Like a flash the quarry has dived. Raising his oar aloft, the man who found the otter remains as a buoy above the place of the animal's disappearance, while his mates form in a huge circle with him in the center.

In 20 minutes, at most, the otter comes up again in sight of some of the canoe men. A frightful yell drives the poor brute below again before he has had time to fill his lungs. Shortly he is again seen, and the process repeated, till at length his body is so gas inflated that he cannot sink and falls a prey to the lucky hunter whose spear first pierces that too rich coat of his.

Luck varies, and the sea otter is yearly rarer and more shy, but, if fortunate, each hunter may have from two to five skins for the traders as the result of his three months' catch.

To be a successful hunter requires a Spartan scorn of comfort, huge patience, keenness of vision and readiness of resource, as well as great dexterity in the handling of a risky craft and an intimate knowledge of your quarry's habits which it requires a lifetime of observation under trying conditions to gain.

"The surround," then, is no joke, but clubbing next door to suicide. The hunters encamped upon Sannak have been for a day or two prevented by a howling gale from doing anything save sleep or smoke. One or two of the men, knowing, seemingly by instinct, that the gale has almost blown itself out, prepare for a clubbing expedition.

Should they in the dark and turmoil miss the islands some score of miles away they are carried out into the ocean and certain death. If, on the other hand, they make their haven, they land and creep, club in hand, over the rocky coast to the ocean swelled reef where the otters sleep.

The roar of the gale drowns the sound of their approach, and the poor otter is a mere "pelt" before he knows of his danger. Scores of otters have been killed in one night by a clubman or two. But otter clubbing is not a means of livelihood likely to become generally popular.—Chambers' Journal.

Chinese Boatwomen.

The boatwomen of China have no need to agitate for women's rights—they possess them. The boatwoman, whether she be a single woman or a wife or a widow, is the head of the house—that is to say, of the boat. If she is married, the husband takes the useful but subordinate place of deckhand or bow oarsman. She does the steering, makes bargains with the passengers, collects the money, buys supplies, and in general lords it over everything.—Keystone.

Ivory billiard balls, freshly turned, have to be treated very carefully, as a sudden change in temperature may cause them to crack. To prevent this they require to be placed for at least three months in a warm room in order to shrink them gradually and dry true before they are finished and polished.

The Appetite of a Goat

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Educate Your Bowels With Cascarets. Candy Cathartic, sure constipation forever. 10c, 25c. If C. C. C. fail, druggists refund money.

SUNDAY IN ENGLAND IN 1760.

The Pleasure Seekers Were More Numerous Than Churchgoers.

Would you like to know how the people of London observed their Sunday 150 years ago? The churches were open, of course, and there were two services in every one, and in some there were three; also the responsible and respectable citizen took his family to church as a matter of course.

He made his apprentices go to church as well and demanded the text when they came home as a proof of attendance. Alas, he little knew that the boys were larking all the morning, and when the congregation came out stopped the old woman and got the text from them!

However, those who went elsewhere formed the majority. The fields round the town were filled with companies of men, called rural societies, who rambled about all the morning and dined together at a tavern. The high constables went their rounds among the villages pretending to prevent profanation of the day, but they were squared by the publicans.

Informers were about threatening publicans, barbers and greengrocers for carrying on trade on the Sunday morning unless they paid a little blackmail. A shilling was understood to meet the case. Barbers sent their apprentices on Sunday morning to shave the prisoners in the Fleet for nothing, so that they might get practice.

Children were baptized after afternoon service, and a supper was given afterward to celebrate the occasion. At this supper the nurse, it was allowed, could blamelessly get drunk.

The beadles of churches were bribed by beggars to let them sit on the steps and ask charity of the congregation coming out. It was the best business of the week. The rails before the houses of gentlemen were crowded with beggars.

When the ladies got home after church, they did not disdain to slap their servant if dinner was delayed. The fields between the Tottenham court road and the Foundling hospital were the resort of the sporting fraternity, who were assembled to enjoy the innocent diversions of duck hunting and cat hunting, with prizefighting, quarterstaff, wrestling and other sports.

The pleasure gardens were open all day long. People crowded to them in the early morning for breakfast and staid all day. At 2 there was an ordinary, in the afternoon and evening an organ recital; there was tea in the alcoves, and in the evening there was supper.

In the evening, when they reluctantly came away, with as much punch as they could hold, they formed themselves in bands for purposes of protection, while the footpads looked out on the road for single passengers, or, haply, drunken passengers, whom it was easy and a pleasure to rob.

And this was the way of a Sunday in June or July, 1760.—London Queen.

JAMES COULDN'T IMAGINE.

A Story That a New York Clubwoman Tells About Herself.

Here is a good story which a clubwoman tells about herself.

"At one time," she says, "we had a colored butler who staid with us for years, and who admired my husband immensely. He thought that Dr. H. was a marvel of manly beauty, as well as the embodiment of all the virtues, domestic, professional and otherwise. Of course I quite agreed with the butler on this point, but the fact is I sometimes pined to have him pass his enthusiastic compliments around to the family and not bestow them all on the doctor. So one morning, when Dr. H. had just left the breakfast table and was even then to be seen, an imposing picture, as he stood on the front steps drawing on his gloves, I remarked to James:

"'Dr. H. is a handsome man, isn't he?'

"'Yes, ma'am. 'Deed an he is, ma'am!' with gratifying enthusiasm.

"Then, hoping to get a rise from James, I added with an absentminded air, as if I scarcely knew what I said, but was just uttering my inmost thoughts:

"'How in the world do you suppose that such a handsome man as Dr. H. ever happened to marry such a homely woman as I am?'

"Well, James just stopped short and rolled his eyes and shook his head as if he gave it up. Then he ejaculated:

"'Heaven knows, ma'am!'"—New York Sun.

Light From Sugar.

A phenomenon, the cause of which has not yet been satisfactorily explained, was described at a meeting of the British association. Disks of loaf sugar were mounted on a lathe and rapidly rotated while a hammer played lightly against them. An almost continuous radiation of light was thus produced from the sugar. It was shown that the light did not arise from heating of the sugar, and it is believed to be caused by some change taking place in the sugar crystals. The act of crystallization is known to be sometimes accompanied by flashes of light. The practical bearing of these experiments is on the question of the possibility of obtaining artificial light by methods as yet untried.—Youth's Companion.

A Poser.

Mrs. Jibbins (after gazing on a globe in a shop window)—Well, nothing won't persuade me but what the world's flat.

Mrs. Trimmins—Well, Mariar, if the world's flat, 'ow can yer account for 'Averstock hill?—London Punch.

Was Gathered In.

Watkyns—What did you say to your wife, anyhow, when you proposed?

Bjones—Well—I—er—well—the fact is, Mrs. Bjones was a widow when I married her.—Somerville Journal.

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