

THE
PRIVATE JOURNAL
OF
CAPTAIN G. F. LYON,
OF H. M. S. HECLA,
DURING
THE RECENT VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY UNDER
CAPTAIN PARRY.

WITH A MAP AND PLATES

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET.
1824.

excited some interest, I determined on following it to the northward. The people were left to pitch the tent, and, if possible, make a fire; and I then set out with Mr. Bushnan and one seaman. Having walked about six miles from the tent, we arrived on an open sea, over which the thick weather did not permit our obtaining a view of above half a mile. We were therefore constrained to return without having satisfied ourselves. A covey of ten ptarmigan flew past, and we also saw six very timid deer. A **marmotte** was added to our stock of specimens. We had endeavoured to take him alive, but as he ran under a large stone, and defended himself with great vigour, we killed him. This creature, on being first besieged, threw out of his mouth a great quantity of small roots and buds, on which he had been feeding, and repeatedly uttered a shrill cry, resembling a chirp and a whistle, if it be possible to combine two such sounds.

In the evening the rain ceased for the first time since leaving the ships, and permitted our making a fire and cooking our birds. The rocks being covered with wet spongy moss, we paved our tent with rough stones, and spreading the ashes of our fire of andromeda over these, made a tolerably dry bed. Constant snow fell during the night, which was very cold, and at 6 A.M. on the 25th, we again set out, coasting the little channel to the southward, and thence round to point Cheyne, where we arrived, after having walked about twelve miles over the most uneven rocks we had yet seen. Our view had been limited to a few yards

Deer were very numerous, but they invariably took the water on being disturbed, in preference to running inland, and they swam with great vigour. In one instance he chased some across an inlet a mile in breadth, in a boat pulling four oars, and they escaped.

Wishing to connect more satisfactorily the land between Gore Bay and our present inlet (which Captain Parry had done me the honour to name after me), and to examine carefully the land we had ran so rapidly past on the 5th and 6th, Captain Parry again left us on the evening of the 15th, provisioned for nine days. Mr. Hoppner, who had been away to examine a small inlet, returned at the same time, bringing with him the carcasses of three fine deer, killed by himself and crew. The wind continued fresh from the N.N.W. until the 21st, and, during this time, nothing of any interest occurred. Mr. Hoppner was sent to examine the south-eastern entrance of the large inlet.

While we remained at our different anchorages, our sportsmen had been pretty successful, and, to explain what I mean by this term, I subjoin a list of animals and birds killed by the Hecla's people in a fortnight: 4 deer, 40 hares, 82 ptarmigan, 50 ducks, 3 divers, 3 foxes, 3 ravens, 4 seals, ermines, marmottes, mice.

My English sporting friends must not laugh at the

number of animals I put in company with real game for it is to be understood that in the Arctic regions where for only three months in a year the sea is open or the land clear of snow, even a mouse is worthy of a chase, as a specimen ; but the foxes, ravens, &c. were not always thrown away when skinned ; and, latterly, they became dainties to many—myself amongst the number.

The form of the ermine is extremely elegant, the body being long and slender like that of the weasel ; the legs short and muscular and its motions extremely active and graceful, the piercing black and prominent eyes adding not a little to the pleasing appearance of the animal. The brown ones when running have the appearance of little foxes, carrying their tail horizontally, and taking surprising leaps. When pursued, the ermine has the power of emitting a very strong musky smell, which I once had an opportunity of observing in a chase that a boat's crew and myself had after a white one, over some steep rocks, where its colour alone enabled us to continue the pursuit.

On the 21st, finding the inlet nearly clear of ice, we weighed and stood down it, but baffling winds and calms allowed us to make very small progress ; and we esteemed ourselves highly fortunate at night-fall in finding the ships off a place where we could obtain soundings ; here we anchored, unprotected

their return. In the afternoon the wind came round and blew hard up the strait. From the mast head the sea was observed to be covered with heavy ice, but happily open towards where we expected the boats. In the evening we tried in vain for anchorage, and I found we must continue under sail in this place during a long dark night, half a gale blowing, and the ice setting in from seaward. Under all these circumstances it may be conceived how anxiously the boats were looked for: as for the ships, they were in no danger. At 8 P.M. the *Fury* burnt a blue light, which was answered instantly by a distant flash from a musket in the boats, who had before made the signal unperceived by us, while in the act of wearing. At 10, to my great satisfaction, Captain Parry and his people came back safe and well. I now learned, that on the second evening they were frozen up in a place where we had tried for anchorage this afternoon. Here he was detained two anxious days, and, at length getting clear, he ran down to, and sailed round, Gore Bay, at that time perfectly clear of ice, but by the next morning it was quite filled with heavy pieces, which much impeded his return. During the first night, the cries of Eskimaux calling to each other were heard on Georgina's Isle, and the boats instantly crossed; but it being dark, all search proved ineffectual. Having satisfactorily connected the land of Lyon Inlet with the Bay, Captain Parry again returned, but was once more frozen up in a small bay, where he was

detained three days; when, finding there was no chance of getting out, in consequence of the very rapid formation of young ice, he determined on carrying the boats over a low point of land, one mile and a half in width. This arduous task was accomplished after nine or ten hours severe exertion, and they then reached the ship.

Much game had been fortunately procured by the boats' crews, and consisted of two fine deer, about twenty hares, and a dozen grouse. From Captain Parry I learned an interesting anecdote of a doe and her fawn, which he had pursued across a small inlet. The mother, finding her young one could not swim so fast as herself, was observed to stop repeatedly, so as to allow the fawn to come up with her, and, having landed first, stood watching it with trembling anxiety as the boat chased it to the shore. She was repeatedly fired at, but remained immoveable until her offspring landed in safety, when they both cantered out of sight.

During the 25th we ran to the entrance of the strait, when finding the sea filled with large floes, we again ran a short distance up it. Some hours were occupied during very inclement weather in seeking an anchorage; one at length being found, we came to in the evening. Our anchorage becoming unsafe, in consequence of the approach of ice, we left it on the 26th, and ran to the opposite shore; the shortness of the daylight rendering it necessary to seek

for shelter many hours before the approach of night. In the evening, while off a shelving beach, the *Fury* grounded on a shoal; we immediately anchored as near as was consistent with our safety, and she hove off by us and making sail took a new birth. A boisterous night brought a quantity of ice down upon us, but we received no damage; and at daylight on the 27th the *Hecla* was found so close to the grounded ice on the shoal as to render it necessary to run into the strait again. With four boats Captain Parry and myself sounded for some hours, and at length succeeded in finding a snug cove, into which we gladly ran the ships. In this place, which from its security obtained the name of Safety Cove, we remained a week, during which we had so severe a northerly gale as to oblige us to strike the lower yards and topmasts; and it continued unabated with heavy rain for four days. In the meantime officers were sent on shore twice each day to walk to the hills and observe the state of the ice; all their reports, however, were unfavourable to our leaving the inlet.

We were surprised at finding three grouse, as we imagined they had all left the country. I killed them, and observed that they had now completely assumed their snowy plumage. The tracks of marmottes, mice, and ermines were very numerous; and I obtained one of the latter, after having been much amused by seeing it hunt over some mice tracks in exactly the same manner as a hound after a fox.

The lips are rather prominent, and I think, if any difference at all exists, that in the men the lower, and in the women the upper lip is the largest. The mouths are large, yet have a very wholesome healthy appearance. The teeth are strong, and deeply fixed in the gums. They are formed like rounded ivory pegs, and are as flat on the upper end as if filed down. Old people have them worn quite even with the gums, and it is but rarely that any are decayed. The chin is small and peaked, and what we call a double chin is rare, the skin generally collapsing in fat people, instead of forming in a roll. The beards of the men are scanty, but few instances occurring of the chin being entirely covered. The moustaches are more thick. The hair of both sexes is straight, coarse, and of a raven black. In infants it has, for a few years, a shade of brown. On the bodies of adults there is but little hair, in fact, some are totally destitute of it.

Dress and ornaments.—The costume of the people I am now describing differs very much from that of the Hudson's Strait savages, though an equal degree of neatness and ingenuity is displayed in the work of each. The clothes of both sexes are principally composed of fine and well prepared rein-deer pelts; the skins of bears, seals, wolves, foxes, and marmottes, are also used. The seal skins are seldom employed for any part of the dress, except boots and shoes, as being more capable of resisting water, and of far greater durability than other leather.

The general winter dress of the men is an ample

their haunts. Grouse being in large coveys, present an extensive mark for the hunter; and as they are stupid, and not easily persuaded to fly, will see the arrow fall amongst them with the greatest unconcern. The shooter walks to pick it up, and they remove a few paces only before him, so that he has repeated shots. Swans, geese, ducks, and other birds, if lying in the hunter's path, are killed by the same weapon; but they are so much more easily obtained by other means, that he never moves out for the express purpose of shooting them. Opinions vary considerably respecting the skill which the Eskimaux display in archery; but I am of that party which condemns them as very indifferent marksmen.

Ducks and divers of all descriptions, which frequent lakes, are caught by whalebone nooses, which being fastened in great numbers to a long line, and stretched between stones, placed at intervals across shallow lakes, easily catch the birds while diving for their prey, or more frequently, from being alarmed by women and children stationed for the purpose. The noose hangs below the water, but no sooner closes on a bird than the captive rises to the surface, where, when seen, some one wades in and secures him. Swans are caught by springes set in their nest, or near it, and the whalebone has sufficient strength to hold the bird by the foot until it can be taken out. The moulting season is the great bird harvest, as a few persons, wading in the shallow lakes, can soon tire out and catch the birds by hand. Marmottes

and ermines, but more especially the former, are caught by women, who suspend a noose over their hole, and catch them with great ease. Marmotte skins are frequently procured, in one summer, by a single female, to make herself a pair of breeches, in which she takes great pride; and some even equip a child or two besides themselves.

I now come to the traps used to catch wolves and foxes, and which are of two kinds in winter. The first is made of strong slabs of ice, long and narrow, so that a fox can with difficulty turn himself in it, but a wolf must actually remain in the position in which he is taken. The door is a heavy portcullis of ice, sliding in two well secured grooves of the same substance, and is kept up by a line, which, passing over the top of the trap, is carried through a hole at the farthest extremity: to the end of the line is fastened a small hoop of whalebone, and to this any kind of flesh bait is attached. From the slab which terminates the trap, a projection of ice, or a peg of wood or bone, points inwards near the bottom, and under this the hoop is lightly hooked: the slightest pull at the bait liberates it, and the door falls in an instant. Foxes are sometimes taken out by hand, but a wolf is speared as he lies confined. The second kind of trap is like a small lime-kiln in form, having a hole near the top, within which the bait is placed, and the foxes, for these animals alone are thus taken, are obliged to advance to it over a piece of whalebone,