

CHAPTER X.—FUR RESOURCES AND FUR PRODUCTION.

The present treatment of the economic exploitation of the Dominion's resources in fur-bearing animals represents a revision of the treatments appearing in former Year Books. Heretofore, the comparatively new industry of fur farming has been dealt with in Subsection 5 of Chapter VIII, as a branch of agriculture. However, since fur farms are increasingly supplementing the supplies of pelts obtained from wild-life resources of fur-bearing animals and especially since the general statistics of furs produced in Canada have included those obtained from fur farms, it is felt that fur farming should be associated with general fur production. The chapter is, therefore, now divided into three sections dealing with: the fur trade, using that term in the sense which historical association has given it in Canada; fur farming, which follows closely the treatment formerly given the subject in the chapter on agriculture; and fur production and trade statistics, covering the total production and external trade in raw furs.

Section 1.—The Fur Trade.

Historical Sketch.—The place which the fur trade held during the French *régime* in Canada, when for a century and a half it was at once the mainspring of discovery and development and the curse of settled industry, is familiar history. Later, the Hudson's Bay Company may be said with truth to have held the West until the Dominion had grown to absorb it, bequeathing to the civilization which followed a native race accustomed to the white man and an example of organization and discipline that was of lasting value. The salient facts in the story are given in the Canada Year Book, 1934-35, pp. 343-4.

The Modern Industry.—Great changes have taken place in the fur trade since the early days. The railway revolutionized conditions of transportation to the West and indeed wherever its influence has reached, and more recently the motor vehicle and the extension of roads have provided access to outlying districts along the fringe of settlement. Vessels ply the larger lakes and rivers, while the gasoline-driven boat may be taken into quite remote water routes. Finally the aeroplane is frequently used for transportation of furs from the more inaccessible districts. Increase in trapping and improved methods of capture, together with the advance of lumbering, mining, and agricultural settlement have driven some fur-bearing animals farther and farther afield. However, this more widespread search for furs and more intensive exploitation has been followed by a more thorough regulation of the fur trade and the effort to administer more carefully the wild-life resources of the country so that the supply may be perpetuated. Furthermore, some of the fur-bearing animals appear to be adapting themselves to conditions in settled country as illustrated by the fact that Ontario and Quebec, the provinces with the largest populations, usually report the largest catches of furs. Fur farming, too, is playing an increasingly important part in the fur production of Canada, the value of pelts of ranch-bred animals having risen from about 3 p.c. of the total in 1921 to 30 p.c. in the latest years. While the settlement of the country has inevitably reduced the area in which some fur-bearing animals, such as the beaver, can survive, nevertheless a tremendous area remains which is unsuitable for agricultural settlement and which under proper administration should provide a natural habitat