

countries. The blackest furs are the most esteemed.* The difference of this skin and which so particularly distinguishes it from all others, consists in the fur having no grain, but rubbed any way, is equally smooth and irresistible; whereas the furs of all other animals, rubbed against the grain, give a sensation of roughness from their resistance.

The sable is chiefly hunted by condemned criminals, who are sent to Russia into these dreary and extensive forests; or by soldiers who are sent there on purpose. These unfortunate wretches remain there many years, and are obliged to furnish a certain number of skins annually; they only employ a single ball to kill this animal that they may damage the fur as little as possible; sometimes instead of fire-arms, they make use of the cross-bow and very small pointed arrows. As the success of this hunting requires address and great assiduity, the officers are permitted to encourage the criminals, by allowing them to share among themselves the surplus of the number they are obliged to procure; and this in a few years, frequently amounts to a considerable sum.

Some naturalists have imagined the sable to be the *satherius* of Aristotle, and their conjectures

* Sonnini says that there is a variety of the sable, entirely white; it is very rare. Another variety is equally rare, which has a white or yellow spot under the neck.