

THE SON OF AN EMPIREAN

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The following exquisite lines speak of an Irish legend. They are touching, melodious, and truly original, breathing the spirit of true poetry. The word "Banshee," means an Irish fairie or spirit. One can imagine the melancholy that would be spread over a beautiful country and neighbourhood by the death of a lovely girl—a flower of flowers, perishing in its blooming—Ed. Sox.

THE GERALDINE'S DAUGHTER

Speak low!—speak low—the Banshee is crying;
Hark, hark to the echo!—she's dying! "she's dying."
What shadow flits, dark'ning the face of the water?
'Tis the swan of the lake—'tis the Geraldine's daughter.

Hush, hush! have you heard what the Banshee said?
Oh, list to the echo! she's dead! "she's dead!"
No shadow now dims the face of the water;
Gone, gone is the wraith of the Geraldine's daughter.

The step of your train is heavy and slow,
There's wringing of hands, there's breathing of woe;
What melody rolls over mountain and water?
'Tis the funeral chant of the Geraldine's daughter.

The requiem sounds like the plaintive moan;
Which the wind makes o'er the sepulchre's stone;
"Oh, why did she die? our heart's blood had bought
her.

Oh! why did she die, the Geraldine's daughter?

The thistle-beard floats—the wild roses wave
With the blast that sweeps o'er the newly-made
grave;

The stars dimly twinkle, and hoarse falls the war, er,
While night birds are wailing the Geraldine's daughter!

THE CANADA BEAVER.

From an interesting episode in Thomas C. Keefer's Esq., recent Lecture on "The Ottawa," we extract the following sketch of the habits and instincts of that remarkable animal, the beaver:—

"One cannot fail to be struck with admiration and astonishment on visiting the haunts of the beaver, nor can we wonder that the red man should place him at the head of animal creation, or make a manitou of him, when Egypt, the mother of the arts, worshipped such stupid and disgusting Deities. Whether you call it instinct or whether it is to be called reason, one thing is certain, that if half of humanity were as intelligent, as provident, as laborious and as harmless as the beaver, ours would be a very different world from what it is.

The beaver is the original lumberman and the first of hydraulic engineers. Simple and unostentatious, his food is the bark of trees and his dwelling—a mud cabin, the door of which is always open, but under water—conditions which secure retirement, and are favourable to cool contemplation. The single object of his existence, being to secure bark enough for himself and family, one would suppose there would not be such difficulty in that;—but as neither beaver nor any other animal, except man, are addicted to works of supererogation, we may be sure that the former in all his laborious arrangements—and those too which alter the face of nature to such an important degree—does no more than

he builds permanently, and does not quit his habitation until driven from it, like other respectable emigrants, by stern necessity.

We cannot better illustrate the habits of this interesting animal than by accompanying a beaver family on some fine evening in May, in search of a new home. The papa beaver, with his sons and sons-in-law, wife, daughters and daughters-in-law, and it may be grand children, sallies forth "prospecting" the country for a good location—i. e. a stream of easy navigation, and having an abundant supply of their favourite food, the silver birch and poplar, growing as near the river as possible. Having selected these "limits" their next step is to place their dwelling so as to command the greatest amount of food. For this purpose they go as far below the supplies as the character of the stream will permit. A pond of deep still water being an indispensable adjunct to their dwelling, this is obtained by the construction of a dam, and few engineers could select a site to produce the required result so efficiently and economically.—The dam and dwelling are forthwith commenced, the materials employed in both being sticks, mud and stones, the two former being dragged by the teeth, the latter carried between the fore paws and the chin.

If the dam is extensive, whole trees are gnawed down, the largest of which are of the diameter of an ordinary stove-pipe, the stump being left standing about eighteen inches above the ground, and pointed like a crayon. Those trees which stand upon the bank of the stream they contrive to fall into the water as cleverly as the most experienced woodman; those which are more distant are cut up by their teeth into pieces, which can be dragged to the water. These trees and branches are floated down to the site of the dam, where they are dragged ashore and placed so that the tops shall be borne down by the current, and thus arrest the descending detritus and form a strong and tight dam. Critical parts are built up "by hand," the sticks and mud when placed, receiving a smart blow from the beaver's tail, just as a bricklayer settles his work with the handle of his trowel. The habitation or hut of the beaver is almost bomb-proof; rising like a dome from the ground on the margin of the pond, and sometimes six or eight feet in thickness in the crown. The only entrance is from a level of three or four feet under the water of the pond. These precautions are necessary, because, like all enterprising animals, the beaver is not without enemies.

The wolverine, who is as fond of beaver tail as an old nor-wester, would walk into his hut if he could only get there.—but having the same distaste for water as the cat, he must forego the luxury, it is not, however for safety that the beaver adopts the submarine communication with his dwelling, although it is for that he restricts himself to it, the same necessity which compels him to build a dam, and thus create a pond of water, obliges him to maintain communication with that pond when the ice is three feet thick upon its surface. Living upon the bark of trees, he is obliged to provide a comparatively great bulk for his winter's consumption; and he must secure it at the season when the new bark is formed, and before it commences to dry; he must also store up bark, which will not become

sagacity, or reason, is one which I have not seen mentioned by naturalists. His pond we have seen must be deep, so that it will not freeze to the bottom, and so that he can communicate with his food and his dam, in case of any accidents to the latter requiring repairs. But how does he keep his food—which has been floated down to his pond—from floating, when in it,—and thus becoming frozen in with the ice? I said that in gnawing down a tree, the top of the stump was left pointed like a crayon, the fallen tree has the same form—for the beaver cuts like a woodman, wide at the surface, and meeting in centre, with this distinction—the four-legged animal does his work more uniformly, cutting equally all around the log—while the two-legged one cuts only from two opposite sides.

Thus every stick of provender cut by the animal is pointed at both ends, and when brought opposite his dwelling, he thrusts the pointed ends into the mud bottom of his pond, sufficiently firm to prevent their being floated out, at the same time placing them in a position in which the water has the least lift upon them while he carefully apportions his different lengths of timber to the different depths of water in his pond, so that the upper point of none of them shall approach near enough to the surface to be caught by the winter ice.

When the family are in comfortable circumstances the winter supply nicely cut and stored away, the dam tight, and no indications of a wolverine in the neighbourhood, the patriarch of the hut takes out the youthful grovellers to give lessons in topographical engineering; and in order to try the strength of their tails encourages them to indulge in amateur damming. The beaver works always by night and to "work like a beaver," is a significant term for a man who not only works earnestly and understandingly, but one who works late and early.

From what has been said, it will be readily seen that the maintenance of the dam is a matter of vital importance to the beaver. Some say that the pilot beaver sleeps with his tail in the water in order to be warned of the first mishap to the dam; but as there is no foundation for this cool assertion, it may be set down as a very improbable tale.

The Indians avail themselves of this well-known solicitude, to catch them: having broken the dam the risk is immediately perceived by the lowering of the water in the hut, and the beaver's sallies forth to repair the breach are slaughtered in the trenches.

As the supply of food in the vicinity of the dam becomes diminished, the beaver is obliged to go higher up the stream, and more distant from its banks, to procure his winter stores: and this gives rise to fresh displays of his lumbering and engineering resources. In consequence of the distance, and the limited duration of the high-water period favourable to transport, the wood is collected into a kind of raft, which, a lumberman asserts, is manned by the beavers and steered by their tails, in the same way as Norway rats are known to cross streams of water. When the raft grounds, forthwith a temporary dam is thrown across the stream below the "jam," by which the waters are raised, and the raft floated off and brought down to the

WHY EPIDEMICS RAGE AT NIGHT

It was in one night that four thousand persons perished of the plague of London. It was in one night that the army of Sennacherib was destroyed. Both in England and on the continent, a large proportion of cholera cases, in its several forms, have been observed to have occurred between one and two o'clock in the morning. The danger of exposure to the night air has been a theme of physicians from time immemorial; but it is remarkable that they have never yet called in the aid of chemistry to account for the fact.

It is at night that the stratum of air nearest the ground must always be the most charged with the particles of animalized matter given out from the skin, and deleterious gases, such as carbonic acid gas, the product of respiration, and sulphuretted hydrogen, the product of the sewers. In the day gases and various substances of all kinds rise in the air by the rarefaction of the heat. At night, when this rarefaction leaves, they fall by an increase of gravity, if imperfectly mixed with the atmosphere, while the gases evolved during the night, instead of ascending, remain at nearly the same level. It is known that carbonic acid, at a low temperature partakes so nearly of the nature of a fluid, that it may be poured out of one vessel into another. It rises at the temperature at which it is exhaled from the lungs, but its tendency is towards the floor, or the bed of the sleeper, in cold and unventilated rooms.

At Hamburg, the alarm of cholera at night, in some parts of the city, was so great that many refused to go to bed, lest they should be attacked unawares in their sleep. Sitting up, they probably kept their stoves or open fires burning for the sake of warmth, and that warmth giving the expansion to any deleterious gases present which would best promote their escape, and promote their dilution in the atmosphere, the means of safety were thus unconsciously assured.

At Sierra Leone, the natives have a practice in the sickly seasons of keeping fires constantly burning in their huts at night, assigning that the fires keep away the evil spirits, to which, in their ignorance, they attributed fever and ague. Lately, Europeans have begun to adopt the same practice, and those who have tried it assert that they have now entire immunity from the tropical fevers to which they were formerly subjected.

In the epidemics of the middle ages, fires used to be lighted in the streets for the purification of the air, and in the plague of London, 1665, fires in the streets were at one time kept burning incessantly, till extinguished by a violent storm of rain. Lately trains of gunpowder have been fired, and cannon discharged for the same object; but it is obvious that these measures, although sound in principle, must necessarily, though out of doors, be on too small a scale, as measured against an ocean of atmospheric air, to produce any sensible effect. Within doors, however, the case is different. It is quite possible to heat a room sufficiently to produce a rarefaction and consequent dilution