

be composed altogether of the remains of small plants, such as the asterophyllites and sphenophyllum, of which it preserves many beautiful impressions.

P. T. O.

THE BEAVER.

This animal, the *castor fiber* of Linnaeus, inhabits the temperate and sub-frigid climates of both continents; the American variety differing hardly at all from the European. Its body is nearly cylindrical, increasing, however, towards the hips. The fur is reddish brown above and greyish white beneath; that above is coarse, smooth and glossy, that below dense, soft and silky. Its limbs and neck are short, giving it a thickset, squat appearance. Its tail is flat, scaly and oval. Its general length is about three feet, and its weight twelve pounds; though much finer specimens than this have been met with. Indeed, some sportsmen state that they have taken them weighing near sixty pounds; but such assertions, like the narratives of veterans, often require the *cum grano salis* sauce to render them either digestible or palatable. The fore feet are used to convey food to the mouth, and are armed with claws. The hind feet are webbed. Like the kangaroo, the beaver has the habit of resting on the tripod formed by its hind feet and tail. An unctuous secretion is contained in a sac beneath the tail. Its teeth are twenty in number, consisting of two superior and two inferior incisors (of great strength) in the front of the mouth, and four molares on each side both above and below. The genus contains but one species, and we hardly need remind the reader that it forms one of the genera of that order of mammalia called, from their nibbling mode of feeding, the rodentia.

The beaver was once a denizen of all North America; but that ruthless policeman, civilization, has ordered it to "move on," with its brother foresters, both biped and quadruped, and it is now hardly found east of the Alleghanies, or south of Lat. 45. In northern Canada and the "Territory," as well as in the central and lonelier parts of these lower Provinces, it still plies its quiet toil, and is an object of interest both to the student of nature and the *courier du bois*. Between the upper course of the Ottawa and lake Huron they are especially numerous. The beaver is entirely a vegetable feeder, loving the bark of the birch, the cotton-wood, and the willow, eating also berries, leaves, etc., when not better provided. It is, as might be expected from the nature of its food, and its want of natural weapons, a gentle animal. The young are born in the spring, the litter usually numbering three or four: they remain a year or more with the parent. They prefer to live in societies on the banks of brooks or ponds, but occasionally near much larger bodies of water. Longfellow has distilled poetry from the subject of their haunts in *Hiawatha* :—

"In the middle of the forest,
By a streamlet, still and tranquil.