

molested for four or five years, while they pursued the chase in other localities.

In addition to this, however, the imperfect weapons of the Indian hunter, formed no slight protection to the Beaver; and so long as it was pursued alone by the native, unaided by the traps and guns of the European, its numbers suffered no very material diminution. Its settlements formed accordingly a singularly characteristic feature of the New World, which could not fail to impress the observant traveller. I find it, indeed, assigned as the rival of the Indian in the occupation of the soil, in the manuscript journals of the late Mr. David Thompson,\* who upwards of sixty years ago explored the Great North West, and was the first discoverer of the passes in the Rocky Mountains, the importance of which is only now being recognised. Writing in 1794, he thus observes in reference to the beaver, and its native hunter:—

“Previous to the discovery of Canada, about 320 years ago, this Continent from the latitude of forty degrees north to the Arctic Circle, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, may be said to have been in the possession of two distinct races of beings,—man and the beaver. Man was naked and had to procure clothing from the skin of animals; his only arms were: a stake, pointed and hardened in the fire; a bow with arrows, the points hardened with fire, or headed with stone or bone of the legs of the deer; a spear, headed in the same manner, and a club of heavy wood, or made of a round stone of four or five pounds weight, inclosed in raw hide, and by the same wound round a handle of wood of about two feet in length, bound firm to the stone. Such were the weapons man had for self-defence, and with which to procure his food and clothing. Against the bones of an animal his arrows and spear had little effect, but the flank of every animal is open, and thither into the bowels the Indian directed his fatal and unerring arrows.

“Besides his weapons, the snare was much in use, and the spear to assist it for large animals; and by all accounts the deer and fur-bearing animals were very numerous, and thus man was lord of the dry land and all that was on it. The other race was the beaver, they were safe from every animal but man and wolvereens. Every year each pair having from five to seven young, which they carefully reared, they became innumerable; and, except the great lakes, the waves of which are too turbulent, occupied all the waters of the northern part of the Continent. Every river where the current was moderate and sufficiently deep, the banks at the water edge was occupied by their houses. To every small lake

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\* By the courteous permission of the son of the author, I have been favoured with access to Mr. Thompson's valuable journals, through the intervention of the Deputy Commissioner of Crown Lands, Andrew Russell, Esq. The journals embrace the results of observations extending over a period of 33 years: and are comprised in 67 volumes, full of information alike curious and valuable.