

With Joe leading we filed into the forest. All nature seemed asleep. The branches rustled, and the twigs crackled and snapped beneath our feet. Nothing else broke the silence, except the occasional chirp of a startled squirrel, or the long-drawn "who-oo-oo-oo" of an owl. The trees appeared larger than usual, and we fancied that they took ghostly shapes. We tramped along in silence for half an hour, when our leader motioned us to stop. "We come near brook now," Joe said, "you make no noise but keep eye on me."

Advancing slowly and cautiously we soon reached the bank. Then we crept along on our hands and knees till we came to a bend in the stream. Here Joe held up his hand to enjoin silence. A few yards further and a wonderful scene was disclosed.

The stream spread out on both sides forming a shallow pond nearly a hundred yards in length and perhaps thirty in breadth. At the lower end of this a rough dam was built across the stream. It was singular in shape, with the apex facing the current. Near this, with their tops just showing above the water, could be seen about a dozen piles of brush and dirt. These were the houses of the beavers.

The beavers were there sure enough and hard at work. They seemed to average about two feet in length, were brown in colour, in fact almost black, and covered with thick fur. Their heads were round, their ears very short and their eyes very far apart. The most striking thing about a beaver is his tail. It is about ten inches long and shaped something like the blade of a paddle. It is not covered with fur, but with a thick, dark-coloured skin.

The tail is of great importance. He uses it as a rudder when swimming, as a prop when sitting upon land, and as a mallet when building. He also signals danger with it, by slapping it on the water, when he dives.

We noticed that the beavers were excellent swimmers, and rather poor travellers on land. Their legs are very short. This makes them waddle along.

Some of them were on the bank near us cutting (or gnawing rather) trees, and floating them down to the dam. A couple of beavers would select a small tree near the edge of the stream. They would sit on their haunches, using their tails as props, and gnaw